



City of Seattle
Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

July 30, 2021

Monica Martinez Simmons
Seattle City Clerk
600 4th Avenue, 3rd Floor
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Ms. Martinez Simmons,

I am returning unsigned Council Bill 120124, which is advertised as creating an independent Office of Economic and Revenue Forecasts to provide the Mayor and City Council with economic projections and analysis, but really does not.

Currently, the City Charter clearly provides that the Mayor shall direct all subordinate officers, unless the Charter provides otherwise. I do not object to the concept of an independent forecasting office (though I think it is unnecessary). But based on legal analysis provided to my office, I am convinced that creation of such an office requires both a City Charter amendment, approved by a vote of the people and also requires a change in a change in state law, that specifically vests these powers in the Budget Director working under the direction of the Mayor (Chapter 35.32A RCW, the State Budget Law).

Council chose to cut corners and do neither. Ironically, the only thing that might “save” the legislation is that by its very terms the Mayor, Council and Budget Director can disregard the projections provided by the new office. In other words, the legislation spends significant money to create a new office that likely violates state and city law, and provides in the legislation that the key work of the office can be disregarded.

It is a waste of resources at a time we have so many critical needs. It shows contempt for the people’s right to vote on any Charter changes.

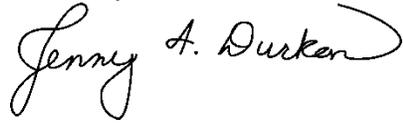
I would veto the legislation, but the margin by which it has passed makes that futile. I return the legislation unsigned. It will become law and the next Mayor can decide if she/he wants to challenge the creation of the office – or perhaps ignore its work as the ordinance provides.

It should be noted that by taking this shortcut to solve a problem that does not exist, Council may jeopardize other entities that were also created as “independent” bodies without seeking

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the required voter approved changes to the Charter. Some of those bodies perform very important functions and may be put at risk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny A. Durkan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor of Seattle