March 20, 2009

The Honorable Ross Hunter, Chair
Finance Committee, House of Representatives
Washington State Legislature
330 John L. O’Brien Building, PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA  98504-0600

Dear Chairman Hunter:

I'm writing to express the strong support of the King County Bar Association for SB5433, which would provide more budgetary flexibility to counties imposing the public safety sales and use tax. This legislation is scheduled for a hearing before the Committee on Tuesday, March 24.

Founded in 1886, KCBA is the largest voluntary bar association in the state of Washington, with over 5,000 members including attorneys, judges, and law professors. Our mission is to support our diverse membership by promoting a just, collegial, and accessible legal system and profession; working with the judiciary to achieve excellence in the administration of justice; and serving our local community through organized pro bono legal services.

Current law allows counties a local option to implement a 3/10 of one percent sales and use tax for new public safety services. However, current law prohibits use of monies collected to supplant funding for existing services. SB5433 would remove that prohibition.

As you know, King County is facing a dire financial situation in which it is unable to adequately pay for the maintenance of existing public safety functions, including court systems. Recognizing that courts are an integral part of the foundation of our government, KCBA is committed to advocating for adequate funding for our courts.

KCBA urges adoption of SB5433 so that counties have flexibility in this time of crisis to provide adequate funding for the courts.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Kindest Regards.

Sincerely yours,