



ISLAND COUNTY COVID RESPONSE

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Commissioner named to state pandemic review task force

Melanie Bacon, chair for the Island County Board of Commissioners for 2022, will represent all of Washington state's 39 counties on a task force formed to improve the response to, and recovery from, possible future pandemics.

Bacon, whose district encompasses South and Central Whidbey, was recently appointed to the state Pandemic After-Action Review (AAR) Task Force by Gov. Jay Inslee.

"Serving the citizens of Washington is a real privilege, and I hope you find this to be a rewarding experience," Inslee said in a Dec. 29 letter to Bacon. "Thank you for your willingness to serve the people of Washington."

Bacon, who represents District One on the board of commissioners, was nominated to the task force by the Washington Association of Counties.

"I'm honored to have been selected and I'm very excited about it," she said.

While nobody was fully prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic, Bacon said she believes she was selected to serve on the state task force because Island County had "one of the better responses."

"We all knew there would be a pandemic sometime, and Island County did have an emergency plan in place, but that plan hadn't been updated, nor were people trained to respond to a pandemic," Bacon said. "It was the same across the state."

Island County was very proactive, being among the first, for example, to purchase special vaccine storage units prior to release of the vaccines, Bacon said. As a result, Island County was one of the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccines and was able to refrigerate vaccines for other entities in the county.

"I'm proud of how we handled our response to the pandemic," Bacon said. "This task force's findings will enable us to do even better next time."

The Board of Island County Commissioners is planning to conduct its own post-pandemic review, and Bacon said what she learns from serving on the state AAR task force will undoubtedly provide valuable information that will benefit Island County's effort.

As a member of the Washington Association of Counties, Bacon said she will also be sharing what she's learned with that organization so that all counties in the state benefit.

The state Military Department is facilitating the task force and conducting a comprehensive after-action review of the statewide pandemic response and recovery," said Sheri Sawyer, senior policy advisor for the governor's office.

The AAR task force is funded under the Legislature's 2020-23 operating budget, she said.

The task force is expected to report its initial findings and recommendations to the governor and legislative committees by June 20, 2022 and final recommendations and findings are due on June 20, 2023.

END