

State Supreme Court won't review lawsuit; Valley Medical/UW strategic alliance valid

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The Washington Supreme Court will not review the lawsuit challenging the strategic alliance between Valley Medical Center and UW Medicine, Valley Medical announced Friday.

The decision comes after the state Court of Appeals in June affirmed the legality of the alliance, which began in July 2011 after months of legal review and community meetings and is designed to improve the public's health.

“For over three years now, our health-care professionals have been working very well together to improve quality and safety of care, control and reduce costs, and improve access to care for citizens of South King County,” said Paul Ramsey, CEO of UW Medicine, in a statement to staff.

The Supreme Court's decision means the lower court's ruling is final, according to a Valley Medical press release.

Dr. Paul Joos, the board's president, and attorney Phil Talmadge, who represented the commission in its appeals to the Supreme Court, couldn't be reached for comment Friday.

The Board of Commissioners of Public Hospital District No. 1, which owns Valley Medical Center, appealed the appeals-court decision to the state's highest court.

The legal challenge to the strategic alliance began two years ago, when hospital commissioners sought to have a King County Superior Court judge invalidate the strategic alliance.

The judge ruled against the commission, which appealed his decision to the state Supreme Court. The state's highest court remanded the case to the appeals court.

In an interview with the Renton Reporter in June, Talmadge said he believes the courts did not fully understand the scope of the strategic alliance and its effect on the ability of the elected commissioners to run the district in a way that represents the will of the voters.

A 13-member Board of Trustees – eight of whom are appointed – oversees the operations and budget of Valley Medical Center. The five elected hospital district commissioners are responsible for the public side of the medical center, such as levying taxes, but they also serve as trustees.