

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire

Explanatory Note: Our endorsements (and sometimes donations) are generally made to people running for the state legislature, municipal and county offices, public utility commissioners, etc. If you are running for such an office, you may wonder why we are asking questions about state-wide or national issues. The reason is that local officeholders are tomorrow's senators, representatives and governors. Even if you have nothing of the sort in mind now, you may easily feel differently in a few years. We want to put people into the pipeline from, as Howard Dean once put it, "the Democratic wing of the party." We are old fashioned enough to think that the New Deal and the Great Society were good ideas and modern enough to be up to speed on all the latest organizing methods and apps. If you have reservations about answering any of these questions, please explain why.

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Position Sought: 1st LD State Representative Position 2

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Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? Yes.

Labor

Do you support raising state and federal minimum wages? To what level?

I will vote to raise the minimum wage to \$15/hr. I would suggest subsequently indexing the minimum wage to the greater of inflation and the expansion of wealth in this country. In this way, workers will share in the wealth they create, rather than see their wages stagnate and the fruits of their labor going to stockholders and senior executives as they have for the last few decades. I will seek labor unions' & social organizations' input in making policy decisions such as whether a higher minimum wage should be phased in.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I will support legislation that requires that employees be allowed to anonymously indicate their willingness to unionize. Once a majority decides to form a union, strict oversight would ensure that employers do not retaliate as workers select representation and initiate collective bargaining. I will oppose right to work laws that would allow non-union members to benefit from the sacrifices made by union members.

Unions are an important force for increasing minimum wages, improving paid family and sick leave, ensuring that tax breaks to corporations are directly linked to the creation of jobs, and making sure the public is aware of this is important to rebuilding the union movement. Making sure tax dollars are spent more accountably and transparently at all government levels will build support for the jobs of members of public employee unions. I favor allowing employees to unionize so they can be represented properly, and society can benefit when concepts initiated by unions are made universal by law.

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Education

what is your opinion of high stakes testing? How would you change the way students and teachers are evaluated?

We should have comprehensive testing, but not high stakes testing. We need to understand that students vary in their ability to perform on tests in ways that have nothing to do with their academic achievement. Requiring teachers to “teach to tests” prevents teachers from matching content to student interests (reducing student motivation) and adopting practices that improve overall student performance at the expense of test scores (learning things that are not on the test, or using problem solving techniques that are not tested).

While student test scores can be a small part of teacher evaluation, we need to recognize that a single teacher’s performance is only a small factor in student test scores. Things outside the teacher’s control like the student’s socioeconomic status, family situation, support from the community, performance of the student’s other teachers, etc., are all important factors in student performance. It is not a safe assumption that differences in student aptitude are equally distributed across classes.

Some teachers are better at working with students who find learning difficult, while others are better at working with potentially high achievers. High stakes testing punishes teachers who help struggling learners rather than maximizing the number of talented students in their classes.

Teachers should be evaluated on how well they bring the best out in their students. They need to be observed by education professionals who can see how well they maintain their students’ attention, organize their classrooms, answer questions, and ensure that language and other barriers to learning do not lead to achievement gaps.

Evaluators need to be aware of students’ personal situations. They need to know the students’ and parents’ native languages, whether students are being raised by one or two parents or extended families, whether parents have time to help their children with their homework or are working multiple jobs, whether the community is providing support like reading to pre-schoolers and tutoring, etc. They need to know whether students are prioritizing their time to excel in subjects not tested like art and music. Only by understanding the degree of difficulty the teacher faces can test scores be placed in context.

It is also important to understand the support the teacher gets. Are teachers being effectively mentored by more-experienced teachers and getting support from administrators, or left to find their own solutions and deal with personal grudges?

Teacher performance should be evaluated by qualified, impartial professionals, not student performance on arbitrary tests.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

Education has been my pillar for success. I believe in innovation and am open minded about things we can improve. We should be looking at educational approaches used around the world and incorporating features that work best in our own system. We have high achievement/opportunity gaps, classroom sizes that are too large and curriculum that needs revising so students graduating are college ready and can compete with the best in the world. Parents are dissatisfied with the quality of their children’s educations, and supportive of anything that promises change for the better.

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Charter schools done well can be laboratories for innovation, and thus have a place. The effectiveness of their innovations should be carefully studied, and ones that work adopted by all schools.

However, we need to be sure that they are not used to promote ulterior motives. E.g., they should not be used as a way to deny union protections to teachers. They should be used as a way to reduce the achievement gap, not increase it. They should not be used as a way to evade supervision by the community. They should not be ways for educational businesses to profit from public education funds by teaching to less stringent standards, and not meeting standards for student health and safety.

I believe in continuous improvements of our public education system. Strengthening our public school systems needs to be our top priority, but I am open to learning more about specific approaches to charter schools and supporting ones that make sense for all our students, not the few who attend a good charter school.

Environment

How would you promote development of alternative energy and prevent privatization of natural resources?

I am all for reducing and ultimately removing our dependence on fossil fuels. We need to fund and explore ways to get the most out of wind, solar and bio-gas energy. State Govt. can take a lead on making state buildings run on clean energy. We need to keep in place requirements for utilities to provide increasing percentages of power from green energy to ensure the growth of the alternative energy industry.

We can finance conservation and installation of alternative energy with loans administered by a state bank. Carbon pricing, either through cap and trade or a carbon tax, will make alternative energy more cost-competitive and affordable for low income families.

We need to protect our natural resources and I will work with the governor and state legislators to toughen laws permitting use of natural resources. We need to recognize that privatization takes not only the form of selling rights to natural resources; it also includes allowing industries to destroy them. E.g., we cannot allow the fossil fuel to destroy our seafood resources by spilling oil and coal in the Salish Sea, changing climate, or acidifying the ocean.

What are your plans for increasing investments in renewable forms of energy production? What types of renewable energy do you favor most?

Putting a price on fossil fuel use can provide the state with revenue to support investment in alternative energy, as well as making investments in alternative energy more desirable. We should also study programs around the world to see what their strengths and weaknesses are. I will also seek advice from environmental groups and independent experts on ways to reduce fossil fuel use.

Another step I will take is to have state investment funds divest from fossil fuels. That would free up capital for investment in alternative energy ventures.

I favor solar, wind, and biofuels produced from sewage. I am concerned about the impact of tidal and wave energy on the scores of species of concern in the Salish Sea, so do not support its development here at this time. Likewise, I do not support micro hydroelectric power, nor biofuels from crops.

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I recognize that conservation, rather than alternative energy generation, is the most cost-effective approach to reducing fossil fuel use. I will emphasize that for capital investments until the state is on sounder financial footing and can invest more extensively in alternative energy.

Finance/Taxation

What would you do to facilitate implementation of public banking and monetary reform?

I will introduce legislation or support pending legislation to implement a public banking system. I will seek advice from experts about monetary reforms so the state is getting the most from their investments. Sen. Hasagawa's bill is in the right direction and I will support that bill. I would eliminate tax breaks for out-of-state banks. I can use my campaign to inform my constituents about the benefits of state banking.

What solutions do you propose to fix WA State's highly regressive tax system?

We need every taxpayer's dollar accounted for. Corporations that receive tax breaks need to show direct jobs creation and if not it needs to end. I believe in making every effort to balance the budget and if collected more going back to the taxpayers. I will vouch for progressive tax policies based on income levels.

We should start by reducing the sales tax. The lost revenue would be made up with a capital gains tax, elimination of corporate tax breaks, and from carbon pricing. Carbon rebates to low income families would further help make the system less regressive.

Implementation of an income tax would be the best way to make taxes progressive, but voters have been extremely reluctant to allow one. I would look into whether voters would support a constitutional amendment that limits the income tax to a small percentage of the state's highest earners. That would alleviate fears of a slippery slope leading to an income tax on most Washingtonians, so might be acceptable to voters when paired with a sales tax cut.

Health Care/Retirement

Explain your position (for or against) Medicare for All (aka single payer health care) in terms of the effect on local citizens, service providers, and government.

I support this effort. Medicare for All, provides savings relative to insurance based medical care. It eliminates the financial risk in our current system when people are underinsured. It improves medical outcomes and reduces costs by not letting disease go untreated over fear of cost.

I will push for more community health centers, as doctors will no longer have an incentive to locate in prosperous locations. They won't need to screen patients based on ability to pay. They won't need to negotiate billing rates with numerous insurance companies, and deal with complicated billing practices.

Government will no longer have to means test people to determine how much subsidy they should receive. Money that currently goes to insurance company overhead would be returned to taxpayers, making them more willing to fund government programs. Reduced health care costs as government takes over, in contrast to the increased cost of liquor that followed privatization, would help make the

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point that government does some things better than private industry.

What policies do you oppose and what policies would you promote with respect to Social Security and Medicare?

These are social fabric many people depend on and we need to continue. While these are not issues addressed by the state legislature, I will oppose privatization of Social Security and efforts to increase the retirement age. My core belief is that we need to make health care accessible and affordable for everyone by giving priorities to our country and people first, rather than wasting money on foreign wars.

Security/Public Safety

How would you act to stop the militarization of local police forces and establish civilian oversight of law enforcement?

I would make it illegal to militarize the police forces. There are growing gaps between large segments of the population and the police force. I strongly believe in civil and equal rights of everyone and the laws must be strong to protect every individual. We must have a civilian oversight of police departments and focus on community policing and community building efforts.

There are some fundamental changes we can make. First, psychological evaluations of prospective police officers are needed to ensure that they are motivated by public service, not seeking the authority to oppress segments of the population. We need officers who can be combative when subduing a resisting suspect, but instantly transition to being supportive once the suspect is subdued. It is very challenging to be able to make the mental switch from fighting for one's life to rendering first aid to an injured suspect, so we need to employ officers capable of doing that.

Second, we can significantly improve training. Police need to be able to recognize mental illness, hearing impairment, limited mental capacity, language barriers, and other characters that may lead to non-malicious refusal to obey police commands. Police need to be trained to de-escalate situations, and to have the patience to allow a suspect to submit to a non-violent arrest. Police need to be trained to become members of the community they serve, so they can earn the trust of people they will encounter in less pleasant circumstances. Training the public in how to react to being approached by police would minimize the chance of interactions escalating. Requiring police to wear body cameras would be a way to make the public feel safer from abusive police tactics.

Third, the state should support research into technology to facilitate policing. Police need to be equipped with weapons intended to subdue suspects causing a minimum of harm. They need improved body armor that lets them feel safe. Smart weapons that only can be used by the police officer would allow them to feel safer, as a suspect that stole an officer's gun would not be able to use it. Alternatives to high speed chases need to be developed (e.g., a drone might be developed that could track a suspect until the suspect can be safely arrested). Rather than relying on hand-me-downs from the Department of Defense, officers should be provided with equipment optimized for community policing.

How would you preserve national security while protecting American's right to privacy?

We must follow constitution and make sure our priorities and policies are right in terms of international affairs. I will protect right to privacy at every level above government overreach. We also need to be mindful that law enforcement has effective and efficient tools to fight terrorism. But we need to

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recognize that terrorists can have any religious background, and that only a tiny fraction of members of any religion are terrorists, so we need to avoid racial and religious profiling.

General

Do you consider yourself a Democrat? Do you consider yourself a progressive? Why?

I am a lifelong Democrat and have been involved with the local democrats over 10 years. I am the most progressive candidate out there. We need to build a party based on diversity and inclusiveness that reflect people's basic needs and concerns of good governance.

What parts, if any, of the [Washington State Democratic Party Platform](#) (← click link to view) do you disagree with? Why?

I agree with the principals set forth, but believe the implementation needs improvement. For example, Washington Democrats call for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, but have not attempted to impose economic sanctions on states that have not ratified it, much less have taken action against states that oppress women's reproductive rights. Similarly, we are not doing what we can to support voting rights in other states. It calls for diverse representation, but does not provide for actively seeking input from people who are not represented despite our best efforts. It calls for limits on corporate power, but corporate funding of Democratic candidates is seen as positive as it improves the candidates' chances of winning elections. It calls for multinational companies to pay their fair share of taxes, but Democrats voted to have Boeing not pay its fair share of taxes. I could cite numerous other examples, but I think the point is made.

If this is not your first election, what other offices have you run for? If it is your first campaign, what other campaigns (candidate or issue) have you participated in? What did you learn from those campaigns?

I ran for US House of Representatives from 1st District in 2012. I learned a great deal about campaigning, building grassroots supports, fundraising and folding people's issues into a platform to help them.

Have you ever been a precinct committee officer or held other Democratic organization offices?

Yes, since 2008 I have been elected ever since. I have been an executive member of 1st LD and representative to the Snohomish County Democrats.

What single issue is the most important motivator for your run for office? What proposals do you have for dealing with it?

The focus of my campaign will be on Transportation issues that the district is facing. We need to revise tolling policy on I-405 that has basically made it an expressway for the wealthy while creating gridlock for everyone else. We must focus on making public transit available to all areas and reduce reliance on private cars to alleviate traffic congestion. We had better rail service in the 1890's than we do today, and that service needs to be restored in the near future in the 1st LD, not 30-50 years from now.

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Are there also important secondary issues? Describe your approach to implementing solutions?

I also equally will fight for fully funding for the education system with a more progressive tax policy, and making that accessible and affordable for all our children (including college). Some of the others are reducing inequality, increasing affordable housing, protecting women's reproductive rights, and improving the environment.

If you are running in a heavily Republican area, do you have a reasonable chance at winning? If not, how do you plan to use your candidacy to build ongoing connections among local people who share progressive values?

1st legislative district is a safe democrat district and progressive candidates can win here. Engaging the Democratic part, labor organizations, and environmental groups in the campaigns has led to successful outcomes. I will strengthen the progressive coalitions.