

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.

Candidate Name: Chris Reykdal

Position Sought: Superintendent of Public Instruction

Campaign Manager: Katy Payne

Consultant: Wyble

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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?

Yes, I support raising the State minimum wage to \$13.50 per hour with the Central Puget Sound allowed to go to \$15 per hour – no state pre-emption. The federal minimum wage should reflect some cost of living differences but be no less than \$13.50 per hour to discourage business flight.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I was vice-chair of House Labor Committee for four years and I was the Working Families Caucus Chair for three years. I have sponsored and co-sponsored bills to expand bargaining for community and technical college faculty, to ensure binding interest arbitration rights for corrections works, and multiple bills to ensure that employers could not interfere with organizing rights of workers.

Education

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

I do not support high-stakes testing. I have offered numerous bills to delink standardized tests from graduation requirements, grade promotion, and teacher evaluations. I do believe we need standards, but teachers should measure student progress against standards, not tests. I believe every student should have a pathway to graduation via standards-aligned courses – not tests!

What is your opinion of charter schools?

I have consistently opposed the privatization of public education and the public sector as a whole – including opposition to charter schools, vouchers, and high-stakes testing. All of these feed the

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privatization movement. I was the closing House speaker this year in opposition to the Charter School "fix" bill. It is still unconstitutional and the lawsuit is being put together. All candidates in this race should be asked two specific questions:

1) Have you ever testified in support of opening a charter school either to the Legislature or to the Charter School Commission?; and

2) Have you ever attended a GOP strategy meeting intended to "save" Charter Schools?

Simply asking people's "opinion" of charter schools does not get at the whole truth.

Environment

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

We need to be unyielding on I-937 when it comes to renewables. Our entire tax code should be turned upside down to create economic incentives around alternative energy and conservation. Today the tax code, specifically B&O tax credits, reward excessive consumption.

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

Change the tax incentives and simply compel the utilities by law. Solar and wind I favor the most.

Finance/Taxation

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

We need a state bank to handle as much of the public sector finances and pension funds as is practical.

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

In the very short-term, we need a capital gains tax of around 7%. This will yield roughly \$1.5 billion per biennium and be paid by less than 2% of Washingtonians – mostly those buying and selling investment instruments. This would still keep us below Oregon and Idaho. Longer term, we need to lower sales tax and shift our tax system to some form of income. With income inequality, we simply cannot sustain our vital services by taxing low- and middle-income payers who have a shrinking share of the aggregate personal income. Finally, we need to convert the B&O tax from gross receipts to profit if we are going to help small start-up businesses. The B&O tax is just as regressive as sales tax.

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.

We need a single-payer system, period. The effect will be greater access to healthcare, lower overall prices through bulk pricing, and almost total elimination of the middle-broker (insurance providers).

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

I support single-payer Medicare for all. I support removing the cap on Social Security as the first and best way to keep the system viable.

Security/Public Safety

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

Require civilian boards just as city councils have planning commissions as a first step to policy making and practices, so too should law enforcement. I was one of only a dozen House members to offer a bill that changes the legal defense of officer-involved shootings from “probable cause” to “imminent harm or threat”. I believe with a stronger law and training, officer-involved violence will drop substantially. If officers understood that they don’t have almost pure immunity, officers will train differently and respond differently.

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

Follow our protection laws, don’t force software vendors to give up our private data, and get the NSA under control with a more diverse group of overseers. The White House has too much singular control.

General

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

I am a Democrat and always have been. I didn’t adopt the label when I decided to run for office. I’m a long-term PCO and I’ve worked in Democratic politics for 25 years. My kids’ names are Carter and Kennedy! I am a progressive because I believe the root word matters – “progress”. Solutions via strong defense of our fundamental rights and preventative actions. The classic example between a progressive and a liberal is this. A liberal wants TANF for everyone who needs it. A progressive wants TANF to stabilize families, but then intensive child-care supports so that a parent can attend long-term education pathways (without cost) to ensure long-term employability. The progressive sees long-term solutions for those in need by empowering them for a lifetime and is willing to pay for it. The progressive invests in people while the conservative (root word “conserve”) would simply leave it up to a biased and rigged free market that traps almost everybody in their existing economic class. They literally seek to conserve or preserve existing power structures.

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

I don’t disagree with any of it. Timing is the only challenge. Some things we can have immediately, some things will take time as we educate our citizens. Some things will take time as we change Senate majorities, and some things will take time as we educate existing Democratic leaders about their own platform.

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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?

Tumwater School Board 2007-2011

State Representative three terms 2011-2017 (January term ending)

I've helped on dozens of campaigns and several initiatives at the local and state level

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

Yes. PCO off and on for nearly 25 years.

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

The biggest single issue compelling me to leave a House seat to run for OSPI is equitable and full funding for our schools without jeopardizing resources for the social safety net, higher education, or environmental protection. I want to bring my 20+ year career in K-12 education, higher education, and public sector finance to bear on a job that requires critical education policy and budget thinking. We cannot achieve true equity, close the opportunity gap, or move to 100% graduation rates until we get our funding adequate, stable, and fair. The Legislature will ultimately have to pass this, but it's time for a finance-oriented SPI who can facilitate bi-partisan work. Someone who will actually deliver a finance plan to achieve equity. Given split-partly control, the plan should include these basic elements:

1) Utilize some existing state property tax capacity since it is constitutionally dedicated to education. This will require raising the tax exemption caps for low-income families and seniors on fixed incomes; 2) Adopt a 7% capital gains tax; and 3) Adopt some reasonable regional compensation factors so that as the central Puget Sound pays more in taxes, they will see much of that returned to them to ensure that educators can afford to live in the communities in which they work.

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

1) Delink standardized tests from high school graduation requirements and get back to empowering teachers by utilizing high-quality courses aligned to standards as the pathways to graduation for students.

2) Return Career and Technical Education programs back to our schools so that EVERY student has a pathway to graduation and the middle-class even if they don't want to attend a university. One-size-fits-all education is not budging our graduation rate and it's not creating the workforce that is in high-demand right now.

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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?

I'm running statewide and I am working hard to connect progressives and real conservatives who share my interests in local control, classroom teacher empowerment, delinking standardized tests, and many other issues. The battle in education is not always Democrat vs. Republican. It's locally controlled public education vs. corporate-style factory education.