

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire

Explanatory Note: The Washington State Progressive Caucus supports candidates 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: Daniel Smith
Position Sought: WA 9th Congressional District
Campaign Manager: Andrew Saturn
Consultant:
Campaign Email: DanielSmith9th@gmail.com
Campaign Phone: 206-406-0823
Website: VoteDanSmith.com
Campaign Address: 1511 S Stevens St Seattle, WA 98144
Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? Yes

Labor

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

Income inequality is my primary issue. I will push for significant increases to the minimum wage (\$14.00/hr for starters across WA, and \$10.00 for an aggressive minimum wage nationally). I am a firm believer that any employer claiming they can only afford to pay \$7 or \$8 an hour is running a business that needs to restructure, or not exist.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I support workers’ right to privately meet and organize without repercussion from management. Workers’ private emails, phone calls, and other communications should be private, and not subject to employer surveillance. I am not suggesting that oversight of workplace activities, or monitoring of everyday workplace communications by management should be barred, but specific to labor organizing activities, management must not have the ability to punish such actions. I will follow Bernie Sanders’ lead here, as I currently have no specific suggestion for new legislation.

Education

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

I am no fan of putting our children through a tortuous litany of standardized tests three weeks or more per year. (My 6th grader just finished his 3-day round of testing, but the previous two weeks have been disrupted for all his classes, and for all students, whether testing or not, because of the need to pull teachers out of classes to help administer the testing of the other grades). Across the country, states’ education money is being siphoned away to a growing industry of student-standardized-testing consultancies. Often these consultancies are comprised of former principals and administrators.... Bottom line: They are not doing our children a favor. There may be a place for standardized testing in our K-12 schools, but I see mostly an expensive mess across the board right now.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

I would like to see our public schools integrated in a single system. AP and STEM programs along with foreign language, music and art should be available across all districts, and in all schools. There are some success stories in Charter Schools, but I am simply an advocate of giving teachers what they need. I am a fan of reducing administration staff in most cases, and empowering teachers (with better pay), and parent-teacher councils to drive each school’s agenda, in line with district and state guidelines. Our schools should be architectural treasures in our neighborhoods. I support the modernization of our school buildings as part of a massive national infrastructure projects administration (read: FDR New Deal in scope) Our first budget priority must be to get the necessary money to the schools (not simply because it says so in the WA state constitution, but that is certainly a good reason to make it happen).

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Environment

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

Our hydroelectric dams are like double edged swords set to block our great rivers. On one edge they show our beautiful rivers segmented and historic salmon runs decimated; On the other, we see an amazing gift of energy and productivity, to which the entire Northwest owes its existence. The dams will mostly stay, but there will be no more in our region. We will increase the incentives to move toward solar, wind, and geothermal energy production in new construction and large-scale retrofits. The Seattle area is a world leader in making advances in Passive House design. Let's incentivize such projects with tax relief for their builders and tenants. I am in favor of a carbon-tax on gasoline and diesel consumers. Natural gas users can pay a smaller tax, due to the cleaner emissions per the efficiency.

Our natural resources belong to us all. I am against allowing the privatization of ANY natural resources (water, timber, grazing land, littoral/tidal zones, minerals, etc). But I know it happens. Our state and national law-makers must protect the interests of "We, the People..." first and foremost, in any deals with private business. There is a difference between allowing rural ranchers to seasonally graze public lands, and allowing Nestle to come into a pristine mountain spring and take fundamental ownership of a public aquifer. I will remain ever vigilant, to protect what belongs to all of us, and if reasonable public/private projects can be agreed to, it will be because they add benefit and profit to our citizens, first and always.

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

I love this issue, and it is critical that we increase investment in cities across the country, to incentivize and implement solar, wind, geothermal, large scale waste digester power plants, construction of small and large scale "Passive House" type projects, and other green energy models. I support carbon taxation (for lack of more creative methods, which I want to push for) for polluters, be they transportation, manufacturing, or any other business. Businesses would be motivated to offset taxes by investing in clean energy and other system improvements.

Finance/Taxation

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

Bring back Glass-Steagal for starters. Anyone who says banks should be allowed to regulate themselves.... well, they clearly need counseling on a number of personal issues.

How would you restructure the federal taxation system to address the growing problem of income inequality in America?

This is my signature issue. Simply: The top income earners will pay their fair share of taxes. Wall Street mega-fund traders will pay a 0.2 – 0.5% tax per transaction on the huge trades they make daily (just like 40 other countries around the world). That Wall Street money is OUR MONEY already. They don't trade their own money. It is our retirement funds, mortgages, and block investments, and we will use that money to pay for advanced education for all Americans. As to the Right to Healthcare, we will all pay an increased tax in order to pay for this right, but healthcare premiums will become a thing of the past for most working class Americans, and the overall cost of healthcare will actually drop.

In other words, I'm with Bernie! We can afford it. More importantly, we cannot afford not to make these improvements. My opponent wants to do just enough to get re-elected, and keep his big donors happy, and the Middle Class in a status quo, that continues to fade and fail. He is far from Progressive! Vote Dan Smith for WA District 09.

Health Care/Retirement

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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 am 100% for a single payer solution to healthcare, with Medicare for All. Insurance should never be "for profit." There are massive challenges to the changes and implementation of this system, vis a vis the mess that already exists. Again, I am with Bernie on this, and will support ideas he is already leading on.

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

I am a firm believer that Social Security was never really broken until the GOP aggressively tried to gut it. Just yesterday, President Obama changed his tune, and said SS should be increased and strengthened.... No kidding, you really think so?? Social Security is an absolute MUST, and I will work to increase its benefit, never decrease. Medicare is the basis for Bernie's healthcare plan, and therefore will see massive investment and improvement.

Security/Public Safety

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

Seattle just showed a proposed \$160 million downtown police headquarters that is so offensive to my ideals of a free society, that I almost choked. Any feelings about transparency or accountability, let alone the idea of protecting and serving the public, would be crushed when you walk up to that windowless, armored, inhuman pill-box of militaristic police power. Civilians—including average citizens, and skilled professionals like psychologists and even public image marketers— must oversee our police. Transparency is vital. Community involvement and awareness must be improved.

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

The incumbent has supported giving full access to the NSA, to gather all electronic communications by everyone in the US. This is atrocious. Warrants work. Get a warrant. I oppose any extension of the Patriot Act. I believe in a strong military, and I want to see better policy guidance and results when it comes to our country's decisions to go into battle. I will work to significantly cut military spending, and move those funds (and jobs) directly into Bernie's massive Infrastructure investment plan. The best way to protect national security, is to be strong and be right, and not appear belligerent. For decades, I would say that it has been easy for many of our potential adversaries around the world, to say that the US indeed appears belligerent. A great start is seriously to build bridges and not walls.

General

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

Years ago, I would always say "I am a Democrat." Since high school (mid 1980s), I have always known that I am to the political left of the Democratic party. Since my great disappointment with the efficacy of President Obama, starting almost right away, after his inauguration, I have called myself a Social Democrat. I am a huge fan of FDR's New Deal, especially the BPA, WPA, and my favorite the CCC. It speaks volumes, that my favorite little local tennis court, at Mt Baker Park has a placard in the corner: "Placed by Civilian Conservation Corps, 1942." We have a chance to make a lasting legacy, and I will push to exponentially expand similar existing and new programs that educate our young and recently un-incarcerated, or recently discharged service veterans by giving them pride in a trade, and the satisfaction of being part of something bigger than themselves.

Social Security will be made to last. Healthcare will be a right of US citizenship. College Tuition will be free or essentially free (for some length of time... maybe two years at first, but we try for four years), and also a basic right of US citizenship. We have the means to pay for this (Bernie's 0.5% tax on wall-street big-traders for

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starters, and this tax is used by 40 other countries), and raise the 99% back into a secure Middle Class. Yes, I am a Progressive.

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

I am a political campaign neophyte. I am extremely disappointed with the Clinton and Obama Neo-Liberal school, that says the Democratic party's core constituency is the mid-level and higher executive class. The Dem Party and the middle class will continue to stagnate and die if Hillary Clinton is allowed to drive policy for the next four years. Bernie has pulled Hillary much farther to the left than she is really comfortable with. Thank the Lord for that! However, I am still hoping for a Bernie presidency, and I will be a dedicated disciple, whether he is POTUS or back in the Senate.

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?

Have you ever been a precinct committee officer or held other Democratic organization offices?
No

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

Primary motivator was the WA SuperDelegates going for Hillary, despite the caucus results.
Biggest issue I will be activist for: Addressing Income Inequality; getting the rich and big business to pay their fair share; Expanding our economy, and re-growing the Middle Class while we are at it.

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

No TPP or any trade agreement reached without involvement of labor and environmental groups, and Congress. No fast track TPA. Cut the military, using reasonable and undeniable arguments. Move that military spending directly over to massive infrastructure projects across the nation, creating local, long-term, living-wage jobs.

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?

The incumbent, Adam Smith, is like a Republican, in my opinion. A founding member of the "New Democrats", financed by defense contracting firms, he has lost his way, and to my intuition, is patronizing, and doing just enough to get re-elected... Leading us in a status quo, that simply means the Middle Class will pay for everything, and continue to fade away, while he is lobbied by Big Business, and gives them further tax breaks, under the false guise of job creation. The revolution is under way. Go Bernie!