

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: State Senator, 22nd LD

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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?

To at least \$15/hr with upward adjustments in areas with extremely high costs of living. I support utilizing a formula that would ensure that cost of living adjustments to the state and federal minimum wages be automatic, and adjusted for outliers where living costs are outpacing other areas. I believe there should be some offset for smaller businesses just getting off the ground as to not curtail job creation and hiring, but that they not be exempt from the minimum wage. Rather, they be able to take credits in other areas to ensure that paying a living wage to their workers doesn't restrict the growth of their companies.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I am currently an active union member and our local begins bargaining our next contract on June 10th. In trying to do outreach to other union members within our organization, I'm finding some members are very apprehensive in work areas with supervisors or directors that have made their anti-union opinions known to the line workers. I would first support action be taken against anyone that interferes with union activities that are within the guidelines laid out in contract and human resources guidelines. If the anti-union sentiments being expressed are dampening support of collective bargaining because of fear of reprisals, then those managers need to be made aware that they're the ones in violation of the personnel guidelines they purport to uphold.

Making membership aware of what the union has either gained for them, or the adverse actions they prevented, is up to the union itself. Legislators should make sure that state laws and corresponding administrative rules are strengthened and followed as intended.

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Education

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

I oppose any tests used as sole indicators of student intelligence and knowledge, or the evaluation of their teachers as being qualified or not. There can be great differences in learning styles, and the modern classroom curriculum and structure should be allowed to make adjustments or exceptions for students.

I believe teachers should be evaluated in a variety of ways, including self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and to a degree, student evaluation (tricky bit, this, but still provides good information). Teachers should be given time and resources for continuing education, and be provided rotating in-class assistants when they feel they are in periods for which it is needed. Teacher evaluations should also be adjusted to the grades which they are teaching, their student populations, the rigor of the curriculum they are teaching. There are too many variables under which teachers operate to not have varied and fair metrics for their performances in the classrooms.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

I am against charter schools as they draw resources from the publically-funded schools. Examples of successes of charter schools modeled after private schools always neglect to show the harm they cause by cherry-picking students and draining off publically-funded resources. I am especially against any charter school for which there is a financial profit motive for investors underpinning the endeavor. Corporations shouldn't be making profits from any service or operation traditionally provided by government.

Environment

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

Through increased public research financing and providing tax credits for development, purchase and usage of renewable and alternative energy in all economic sectors including the purchase and usage of public and private high-efficiency vehicles.

I would work to severely restrict access to public resources, only allowing operations that have a net positive benefit for the public which includes ensuring limited or no environmental harm. We especially have to curtail and eliminate operations around public natural resources that seemingly have limited impact, but end up causing harm through erosion or chemical and mineral contamination to plants, land animals and fish and our own water supplies.

In our district, we see thousands upon thousands of raw timber logs being loaded on ships for export. There is no reason that corporate profits should be made by selling off public raw timber to foreign customers when our own mills are mothballed or permanently closed. If public natural resources are to benefit the public, we can provide milled wood to foreign customers with greater benefit to our public coffers and our rural communities.

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

Use of tax rebates for construction of new housing developments and retrofitting of existing homes which utilize renewable energy sources. Using existing or new fuel tax funds to invest in research for greater efficiencies in renewable energy capture and transmission systems.

I favor wind and solar energy production, but living so near the Pacific, I'd love to see ocean wave energy generation if the floating platforms required no permanent infrastructure and could actually promote sea life in some way. There is so much potential energy in ocean currents and waves that it would be wonderful to make use of if no harm came to marine life. I also am extremely interested in solar energy and heat gathering panels that can be used on streets and sidewalks that provide power for illuminating those surfaces, as well as providing power to streetlights and traffic signals.

Finance/Taxation

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

I would join with other progressives to educate the public about the harm we suffer by the current structure of banking, especially with the privatization of increasing areas of transactions with public funds. We should not be paying tens of millions of dollars in service charges to private banks for transactions that utilize public funds. A state bank, using models successfully being utilized in other states and countries would eliminate private sector exploitation of public sector transactions, and would allow Washingtonians low-interest alternatives for funding education, home purchases & improvements, and starting small businesses with great public benefit.

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

First, we must sunset tax breaks to corporations that assured job growth and security, and technological innovations that would make Washington an ever-increasingly viable state. Some of the biggest beneficiaries of these tax breaks have actively worked to perform exactly the opposite of what was either implied or promised when they sought tax incentives to continue and expand operations and hiring. Continued negotiations for even greater tax breaks with disingenuous players is just foolishness by elected officials.

We also need to move toward a progressive state income tax. It is immoral that the poorest among us pay such a large percentage of their meager incomes in sales tax. The elimination of sales tax on food items years ago was a great first step, but it didn't fully fix the problem of regressive taxation. We need to take the next step to a more just tax system where those high-income earners begin to pay a percentage of their incomes that is rightfully in line with the rest of the population.

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.

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I fully support single-payer healthcare which includes full dental and mental health care. While my family has directly benefited from the ACA, I'm upset that it has been a boon for the insurance industry even with the minimal restrictions placed on their activities. Medicare for all would ensure lower overall costs, removal of the profit incentive in healthcare decision making, allow providers to accept more patients as they'd be less burdened by paperwork, and repeatedly having to justify to an array of insurance companies why treatment they've deemed medically necessary for their patients should be provided. To be able to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for lower prices, especially given the significant public research investments made for the development of new drug therapies, would ensure that people could get the medications needed to improve or stabilize their health. Every citizen almost has to be an insurance policy expert in order to get the right coverage for themselves and their families under the current system. If we moved to single payer health care, we would remove that burden placed on those merely seeking access to what is a basic human right.

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

I would protect Social Security from being cut or privatized. A move to a single payer health care system would be the best way to ensure Medicare coverages were provided to all in perpetuity.

Security/Public Safety

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

One thing to stop the militarization of the local police forces is to remove the increasing threats to police by the sale of military-assault weapons to the general public. Officers and their departments are aware of the firepower that is readily-accessible with very little scrutiny to anyone with ID. Also, they know what the reports are of these types of weapons taken in home burglaries. The police feel that they face threats previously only seen by soldiers, knowing that a disturbance call or crime in process dispatch might have them facing individual(s) with AR15/M16 rifles with some of the most destructive small-fire projectiles known to man. We need to build alliances with the police departments and officers that seek gun control laws that would take these military weapons out of the hands of the general public.

That being said, I think there is also a growing attitude within police departments and among officers (especially those with recent urban combat deployments) that overwhelming force is the best strategy in every situation. Many police officers are starting to take the posture of soldiers of occupying armies, where distrust of civilians is self-fulfilling, as the general public is seeing ever-increasing levels of aggression in reaction to the mildest of infractions.

Having lived in public housing projects and communities that were predominately people of color, with a police force that didn't reflect the diversity of the community, I understand the underlying antipathy that can develop between the police and the general public. I believe that community policing is as important to developing goodwill toward the police, as it is for police to understand and appreciate the populations they have sworn to serve and protect.

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

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Ensure that the right to be free from illegal search and seizure be restored. Warrantless wiretaps have to cease, and judges need to be reviewed that do not have any record of denying warrants. We cannot trust that the police are always providing solid justification for warrants, but instead relying on good relationships with judges, or that prosecutors don't mislead judges in order to obtain warrants that would otherwise be denied if full disclosures were practiced, and falsification of evidence be severely punished.

General

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

I have considered myself a Democrat since I was 5-years-old in 1968 when my conservative grandfather told me and my 9-year-old brother that if we hoped to escape our impoverished situation, we needed to break from the rest of the family's tradition of being ardent Democrats. I declared myself a Democrat right then because I realized that's what the most caring members of our extended family were. Solid union leaders as well. I wouldn't understand what it all truly meant until much later, even well after I had voted for Democrats for years.

I consider myself a progressive because I believe that citizens and their institutions should be constantly improving the lives and life chances of all. I believe that workers doing any job should be treated with respect and be ensured working conditions that are safe, and be well-compensated for their labor. I believe that income generated by wealth and capital gains should be taxed just as salary and wages are, but in a progressive structure in which those with the least aren't burdened with paying a higher percentage of their income or meager wealth than those who have fortunes. I believe that representative democracy is flawed in that the majority of people are not actually represented. That true democracy begins in the community, the workplace, and with increased levels of access to information and ease of contact with those purported to represent us all. I believe that public education should be free starting in pre-K to at minimum through junior college or technical/trade school. I believe that war has been used too often to protect or promote the wealth of very few and not enough to protect vulnerable innocents from empire and tyranny. I believe healthcare, including dental and mental health care, are a basic human right, and that one's life chances shouldn't be determined by the ability of their family to pay for the very best care that is available. I don't believe corporations should be treated as equal to humans with the same rights. I believe that corporate heads should be individually prosecuted and punished for financial malfeasance and harms to the environment. I believe in protecting property rights, but not at the expense of human rights or the protection of the environment. I believe in supporting legislation, institutions and organizations that promote social, economic and environmental justice and equality. I believe mostly in supporting and protecting the right of every individual to live their life as they hope to, without any interference or restrictions because of their race, creed, color, culture, or self identity.

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

There is nothing in the Washington State Democratic Party Platform that I disagree with.

If this is not your first election, what other offices have you run for? If it is your first campaign, what

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other campaigns (candidate or issue) have you participated in? What did you learn from those campaigns?

I ran for the state senate in 2008, not as a viable candidate, but initially to talk about protecting small business as collectively large and important employers, and within weeks of filing I shifted to begin a dialogue about what I saw as a looming financial collapse. I was taking a refresher course at the UW-Evans School because one of the senior lecturers who I greatly respected was teaching his public sector financing course. He broke from the syllabus for an entire two-hour class session to tell us of all the indicators he recognized as precursors to imminent financial collapse. He was CFO of the City of Seattle, and knew what he was talking about. The other students and I were mortified. He said that no politician would dare discuss this, but I made it the central message any chance I was allowed to discuss it.

I learned a few things:

Even a candidacy that was never intended to be a winning venture builds a constituency that a candidate is obligated to represent. The effort became a sense of duty I had to my supporters, even those that I never met who would vote for me.

I learned that my opponent was a seasoned politician who knew better than to discuss a looming financial crisis, but rather characterize it as a “small fiscal black cloud that we can navigate away from” where I sounded like a street corner prophet in robes saying that “it is no small cloud we’re facing, but a deep entrenched fog that won’t allow us to get our bearings for years, and that all programs would be on the table for cuts.” I wasn’t vindicated in what was described as my “chicken little rant” until the impending crash became terrifyingly apparent in the fall of 2008.

I also realized that Democrats aren’t necessarily always democratic, as the incumbent and I were asked by Governor Evans and the dean of the Evans School to have a debate in front of the students, as we’re both alums of the school. The incumbent declined, saying she wanted to discuss Thurston County issues in Thurston County. When she also declined a debate in Thurston County hosted by Evergreen State, the incumbent’s husband told me that their strategy was just to ignore me until my eventual defeat in November. When I conveyed that message to the editor of the local newspaper, he said that I was an idiot if I thought she should do anything else. “She won’t gain anything by debating you, and could lose some votes,” he said laughing at my greenhorn shock.

I also learned the power of the political establishment, because during the next year’s local election cycle, a former city councilmember told me how she and another councilmember, and three other local activists had rehearsed an assault on me at a PCO meeting at which they were voting on whether to give me campaign services support. She said she was embarrassed and ashamed that she participated in that plan, but since she didn’t previously know me, she had been convinced that I was an interloper and a threat to the order of things. The other councilmember had an eye on higher office, and she said he was angered that I leapfrogged to run for senate.

I learned many lessons that election cycle. One of the big ones was also the power of money and incumbency trumping fresh ideas and new faces willing to represent. I never expected to win the race, but I thought I would be treated with respect, or at least tolerance. I was told by another party insider that there had been several meetings on how to quickly take me down, even though I was a democrat. They treated me as if I were a member of an opposition party even though we shared the same political philosophies.

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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?

Improvements to health care system that includes increased coverage for dental, mental health and other areas of whole body care not fully covered by most insurance plans.

I would work tirelessly with other progressives at all levels of government to increase public support for moving Washington State toward a model single payer health care system.

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

I believe that good jobs that are well-paying and provide a path to a career is one of the best benefits an individual and families can attain.

I believe fixing the education system to ensure we have a fully-educated and trained workforce of well-rounded independent thinkers with innovative ideas is the best way to attract and grow the right kind of businesses for our communities across the state.

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?

My district is very progressive, and my campaign is building upon connections established and strengthened during the unprecedented surge of grassroots activities brought about by an open discussion of progressive ideas on a national level. We have a legions of mobilized impassioned citizens that are beginning to shift their focus from the presidential race to more local races in order to bring about the revolutionary changes and improvements they want for all institutions that affect all our lives. We have young people and those who've seen many election cycles, all recognizing this is an opportunity that we have to take now, as it's something we've not seen before, and aren't likely to see again in our lives.