

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: Wesley Irwin

Position Sought: 32nd LD State Rep, position 2

Campaign Manager: Dinea Evans

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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, \$15 is just a bare minimum. I believe if corporations were paying their fair share our minimum wage would be at least \$20-\$25.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I would support legislation that makes it illegal to intimidate or fire people who try to unionize. Unions are necessary for collective bargaining and fair labor practices. I was part of the AFT Union as a community college instructor at North Seattle College. Without that union we would have lost the small benefits that we had.

Education

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

I am opposed to high stakes testing. My mother was a 4th grade teacher for 39 years and she based her teaching on creativity, imagination, and love for students. When high stakes testing is in place teachers teach to the tests, which doesn't make the students more creative, it makes them hate school and sometimes even hate themselves. Teaching should be creative at all costs, which means we need class sizes that are about half of what they are in Public Schools today.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

I strongly oppose charter schools. They disenfranchise many students. Also, my opponent Ruth

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Kagi voted “YES” on Charter Schools this year, defying both the Democratic Party platform as well as the WA State Constitution. This is one of the major reasons I’m running for office.

Environment

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

I am opposed to privatization of natural resources across the board. I will promote the development of alternative energy beginning with the necessary construction and re-construction of WA State schools to be earthquake proof and to be fitted with solar panels on every roof to show our youth what sustainable living looks like in practice in everyday life.

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

I think tax incentives for renewables is a good start. I favor solar, wind, and geo-thermal power sources.

Finance/Taxation

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

I am in favor of a public bank for long term investments in infrastructure and other state improvements that benefit the public good.

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

I will propose a bill for a more progressive tax structure, one that taxes the financial elite heavily, in the first days after I take office.

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 am FOR single payer health care. I think forcing people to invest in private insurance is wrong, particularly when drug prices and care are so costly, much costlier than any other developed industrial nation per capita. Obamacare gave coverage to more people, but a single payer healthcare system is what we need and Bernie is leading the charge to make that happen. I support it strongly. Eliminating por-profit health care is hugely important for the well-being of our citizens.

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

We should expand Social Security and Medicare. We can do that through rolling back corporate tax breaks and making sure the giant corporations pay their fair share.

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Security/Public Safety

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

It's going to be a tough battle, but I think mandatory cameras on every officer is a good start. I would support efforts to create civilian oversight of law enforcement. We cannot allow further militarization of our police force.

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

I am greatly concerned about Americans losing their right to privacy. I see through the justification for undermining our constitution through "terror threats". I support the actions of Edward Snowden and other whistleblowers who warn the public against unlawful surveillance. The best national security comes through having an educated and well-informed population, and through a foreign policy that does not allow for the indiscriminant bombing of people in foreign countries.

General

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

I am a Bernie-crat. Bernie brought me back into the party. ☺ I have been a PCO in the party for 12 years but stopped going to meetings for some time until Bernie announced his candidacy. I am a die-hard progressive.

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

I agree with and support the Party Platform. I would add a statement to the effect that "we oppose for-profit prisons" (P.35 of the State Constitution under The Law and Justice System)

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 have not run for office before other than to be a PCO in the party. I have volunteered on other campaigns including both the Kshama Sawant campaigns, the Fight for \$15, and the Bernie Sanders campaign. What I learned from those campaigns is that real change is built from the grassroots up. If you want to make change you have to work hard and organize like hell!

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

Yes, PCO 12 years.

I was the Chair of the Caucus Advisory Group for Bernie Sander's Presidential campaign in WA State. I also worked tirelessly as a field organizer for that same campaign.

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

The need to solve the WA State Public Schools funding crisis is a big deal as is the issue of our regressive tax code and corporate welfare give aways. I propose we deal with the former by transforming the latter. This will not be an easy thing to do but I'm up for the challenge.

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

I am part of a growing progressive movement across the country to bring back transparency in government. I believe that to have a strong democracy we must achieve this and soon. The implementation of the policies I am proposing is nothing short of a peaceful revolution in progressive ideals. It will not happen over night, but together, with the leadership of Bernie Sanders and others I am confident that we will get enough people engaged and re-engaged in the democratic process that we can do it!

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 am continuing to reach out to State Reps and Senators in my area like Sen. Marilyn Chase, Rep. Luis Moscoso, and others. I am not an incumbent, however, I am a very strong progressive voice and I expect to receive support from many other progressive voices because of my values. I have worked on the campaigns of both Kshama Sawant (election and re-election) and Bernie Sanders for the past 3 years. I have already signed up more than 60 volunteers to my campaign. Once elected, I will continue to fight for working class issues in the legislature that support the needs of all of us, not just the wealthy elite. Ruth Kagi did not receive the endorsement of the 32nd LD Dems but there is a very good chance that I will. I missed the early endorsement by one vote, 41-21 in favor of my candidacy. I expect to earn the endorsement at the next meeting on June 8th. There is a lot of support for my ideas in my district and I have a more than reasonable chance of winning. Regardless, I will continue to build lasting connections around my progressive ideas that are meaningful. People see that my campaign is one of hope and change and they know that I will fight for them. Indeed, I will.