

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: Cyrus Habib

Position Sought: Lieutenant Governor

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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 Initiative 1433 to raise the statewide minimum wage to \$13.50, and have personally committed to collecting 500 signatures to ensure it makes it to the ballot.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I have drafted and circulated a bill that would require at least one hour for an exclusive representative to present to new and current employees in the public sector. I support card check recognition. Also, though non-legislative, I support non-traditional organizing drives that seek to empower and represent misclassified independent contractors, and as Lt. Governor I would continue to support workers seeking to form a union and speak out against employers trying to deny this important right.

Education

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

Educators, students, and families have made it clear that the current culture of high-stakes testing isn't working for our kids and our schools. The Legislature made a positive step towards reducing high-stakes testing when we eliminated a redundant biology assessment last year. I will continue to push for policies that detach grade promotion and graduation from standardized test performance, and support legislators, educators, and families as we work to find better ways to measure and promote academic success for all Washington's students.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

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I voted against the charter school bill this year, and it is my belief that these innovative schools would have to be brought under school district control to pass constitutional muster.

Environment

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

As a State Senator, I introduced first of its kind legislative language recognizing that climate change is real, that human behavior is a significant contributing cause, and that it is an urgent issue that our state must face. As Lt. Governor I will use my role as presiding officer in the Senate to work with Senate Democrats to push for legislation that places a price on carbon, extends and expands the solar tax incentive, invests in clean energy research programs at the UW, develops and passes the next generation of renewable energy standards to build on the success of I-937, and closes the tax loophole enjoyed by the oil industry.

As the state's chief officer on economic development, I will work across the aisle, to bring local and state government, businesses, organized labor, and our tribal communities to the table to discuss meaningful solutions that transition Washington away from carbon-intense industries, protect and preserve public ownership of our natural resources, and position our state as the new home for clean energy development.

This past year I joined a group of fellow Legislators on a trip to Denmark to study what strategies have been employed there to combat climate change, and in 2014 I was selected as one of 8 elected officials from around the country to travel to China to learn about how the two countries can partner on environmental and national security issues. I hope to use the position of Lieutenant Governor to learn conservation strategies and solutions from our partners across the United States and internationally, to use our position as a trade-heavy state to engage in a global conversation on raising environmental standards, and to lead the way on developing clean energy solutions that can grow our economy.

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

We need to rethink our current tax-incentive structure, and ensure that our state is steadily divesting from dying fossil fuel industries and investing in clean technology research and development. While we have seen the most promising scalability from solar and wind, I am open to exploring the gamut as we seek a solution to our energy crisis.

Finance/Taxation

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

I'm intrigued by Senator Hasegawa's plan to establish a state bank, and eager to explore it further.

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

Our current system of taxation put the greatest tax burden on those who least equipped to bear it. In the short term I support the Governor's proposal to generate revenue by taxing carbon emissions. It is logical, progressive and popular. I am also open to other sorts of tax reform such as taxing capital

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gains. Tax preferences and exemptions should be reviewed regularly for effectiveness, and, whenever practicable, should contain clawback provisions that would allow the state to recoup the cost of the tax exemption if certain job targets were not met.

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.

While the Affordable Care Act made important first steps, millions of Americans still lack access to basic affordable healthcare. I support expanding Medicare for all to ensure that no one in our country is denied access to healthcare.

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

I oppose efforts to privatize social security, and support raising the cap on income contributions to bolster and strengthen both Social Security and Medicare.

Security/Public Safety

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

I support appointing citizen review panels, similar to that of my own City of Bellevue, which brings members of the community to advise and support our police force. I would like to see expanded education programs for new recruits and veteran officers that focus on cultural sensitivity training and de-escalation techniques.

General

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

I have been a Democrat my entire adult life, and have been proud to serve as a PCO, a member of the Senate Democratic Leadership Team, and a recently-appointed member of the 2016 DNC Platform Committee.

I have been active in Democratic Party organizations, working for Democratic elected officials, and on progressive issues. I am a 2010 Institute for a Democratic Future alumnus, a former staffer in the office of U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell and a former member of the King County Young Democrats Executive Board. In the Legislature, I have made fighting climate change, income inequality, and the opportunity gap my top priority and I will continue to do so as Lt. Governor.

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

My views are in line with the planks of the Washington State Democratic Party 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?

I successfully ran for the State House of Representatives in 2012, and for the State Senate in 2014 where I currently serve.

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

I served as a Precinct Committee officer and a member of the 48th Legislative District Democrats, and as an Executive Board Member for the King County Young Democrats.

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

As a person of color, a child of immigrant parents, and a person with a disability, my lived experience has given me a unique perspective, and taught me the value of hard work and creative solutions—traits I have brought to my work in the state legislature on behalf of Washington's 48th District, and now want to bring to the office of Lieutenant Governor on behalf of all Washingtonians.

I believe the role of Lieutenant Governor is entrepreneurial in nature, and offers opportunities for innovation and leadership. I hope to utilize these opportunities to tackle the challenges our state faces: income inequality, the opportunity gap, and climate change.

As Lieutenant Governor I will focus primarily on the following three areas:

(1) As presiding officer in the senate I will rule on the constitutionality of bills and cast tie-breaking votes on legislation. Drawing upon my legal background, I will use my parliamentary and procedural powers to ensure that our values are reflected in the legislation we pass.

(2) I will have the responsibility of appointing officers to more than forty boards and commissions, and I'll do my part to make sure that they reflect the true geographic and demographic diversity of our state, and create leadership opportunities for those who are often not engaged in government.

(3) Finally, as the holder of a statewide office, I will have the ability to act as a statewide spokesperson and champion progressive values in every corner of the state. As Lieutenant Governor I intend to use the bully pulpit to advocate for progressive issues, create and take advantage of earned media opportunities, partner with the Governor, Legislative leaders and allied groups on key initiatives, and work with our party to help recruit and support our platform and candidates in all 49 legislative districts.

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

Education:

Securing a quality education for our children remains a critical issue statewide, and addressing the McCleary decision, as the Court, the public, and our conscience demand, is the key priority for our legislature in the upcoming 2017-18 biennium. As Lieutenant Governor, I will use the powers of the office to ensure we pass a

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budget that meets our state's constitutional obligations, including exercising my right to not sign a budget that clearly violates the constitutional right that every child has to an amply funded basic education.

Job Growth:

Contrary to what many conservatives say, our state's relatively high minimum wage, lack of tip credit, public worker's compensation insurance system, prevailing wage contracting provisions, and relatively high level of union density have all contributed to a state that is among the most economically sound of any in our country. We still have much more to do, however, if we hope to lift the hundreds of thousands of Washingtonians who experience economic insecurity in our state into the middle class. We must expand opportunity and enhance working conditions for all Washingtonians by establishing a minimum wage that reflects the high cost of living in our state, basic benefits like paid sick, safe and family medical leave, a better funded education system that addresses the teacher shortage and opportunity gap, labor reforms that will allow us to crack down on worker misclassification, wage theft and violations of apprenticeship utilization standards, housing policies that allow people to live near their workplaces, college and workforce training for the 21st century, and investments in infrastructure that improve our state while creating family wage jobs. By implementing these changes, we will continue to lead the country in both fairness and prosperity.

Building a Sustainable Future:

Washington State is home to abundant natural resources, and a thriving trade-based economy— two things that make our state a uniquely wonderful place to live and work. We are facing critical decisions on how to make sustainable investments in transportation and infrastructure that will serve our communities, reduce congestion, and enhance quality of life, while supporting our industries efficiently and effectively in the 21st Century economy. As Lieutenant Governor, I will continue to advocate for pro-growth, progressive policies that maintain and improve our roads, ports, and bridges, while investing in sustainable energy solutions that will power our state in a cleaner, more efficient way.

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 have already made a commitment that my first hire will be a full-time Outreach Director, whose sole job it will be to be a liaison to tribes, organized labor, and communities of color, so that communities across our state that are often unheard and underserved will have a point person for interacting with their state government.

I have also made it a key facet of my campaign to highlight the opportunity the Lt. Governor has in their ability to make appointments to nearly fifty boards and commissions. I hope to use those appointments to create boards and commissions that reflect the geographic and demographic diversity of our state, and give young, passionate, qualified people access to public service opportunities, building a farm team of future progressive leaders.