

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire

From David Spring M. Ed. Candidate for Progressive Caucus Chair Aug 31 2017

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Labor: Do you support raising the minimum wage in your local jurisdiction if state and federal action continues to be stalled? To what level?

I am a strong supporter of the \$15 Now Movement. But having taught courses in Problem Solving at Bellevue College for nearly 20 years, I think it is important to address the underlying causes of our economic problems. We currently have the worst wealth inequality since the Great Depression. This is caused by two factors: The first is billions of dollars in illegal tax breaks for the rich. Washington state leads the nation in giving away more than \$30 billion in tax breaks for the rich every year. Our state is literally a tax haven for billionaires. I have written several bills submitted by Senator Maralyn Chase to reduce these tax breaks for the rich so that we can fully fund our public schools. I have also ran for Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction in order to make parents and teachers more aware of these illegal tax breaks and how they harm our kids and our economy.

Our second problem is a lack of good paying full time jobs. A higher minimum wage does not help those who lack a job. Yet we cannot create jobs until we end the illegal tax breaks for the rich and end the US War machine – both of which are sucking the lifeblood out of our economy. We can not end tax breaks of the rich or end the US War Macine until we greatly expand the Progressive Caucus here in Washington state and across the nation. This is why I am running for Chair of the Progressive Caucus – to expand the Progressive Caucus into a more effective political force.

Education

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

I have a Masters Degree in Child Development. High Stakes tests are worse than meaningless, they are a form of child abuse and should be ended. I am therefore a leader of Opt Out Washington (dot org). On this website, I wrote and posted an opt out form that has been downloaded by more than 20,000 parents here in Washington state. I have also written numerous articles on the drawbacks of high stakes testing and testified in Olympia numerous times opposing high stakes testing.

Students should only be evaluated by those who know them best – their teachers. Teachers should first be supported by dramatically lowering class sizes so they can give struggling students the help they need to succeed in school and in life. Lowering class sizes requires doubling school funding in our state – which requires eliminating tax breaks for the rich.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

Charter schools simply transfer public funds to private for profit corporations. They rob our public schools of funding and rob our children of their future. I have written numerous articles and even a book opposing charter schools (see Weapons of Mass Deception.org). I have also testified numerous times against charter schools at public hearings on bills in Olympia.

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Environment: What can be accomplished at the local level to promote development of alternative energy and prevent privatization of natural resources?

This is really a political problem pitting the long term needs of people for a clean sustainable environment against the short term greed of private corporations and billionaires. We will not be able to stop the theft of natural resources until we have a much better organized and active Progressive Caucus that has much more influence in Olympia and in the Democratic Party than we currently have. This is another reason I am running for Chair.

Finance/Taxation: What will you do to support public banking at the local level?

I am a leader of the Washington Public Bank Coalition. I wrote the Resolution passed by the Washington State Democratic Party to create a public bank and I helped write the legislation to create a public bank in our State. A Public Bank would save our State's tax payers more than two billion dollars per year in payments currently going to Wall Street banks. A public bank would also cut the cost of building schools and roads in our state in half – creating more than 100,000 jobs. With the legislature failing to pass a Capital budget this year, the Progressive Caucus should take a much greater role in the creation of a public bank.

However, at the same time, we need to understand the political and legal obstacles to creating a Public Bank in our state. Our State Constitution is very clear that the only group with the ability to create a public bank is the State legislature. I have written several articles about this (See [Washington Public Bank Coalition dot org](http://WashingtonPublicBankCoalition.org)). We therefore need to have a stronger Progressive Caucus so we can convince the legislature to pass a Public Bank Bill. This is an ongoing effort that requires more than just showing up for a hearing on a Public Bank Bill. It requires actually meeting with individual legislators to help them better understand the need for a State Public Bank and addressing their concerns about issues such as start up capitalization. I have spent the past 8 years doing exactly that.

Health Care/Retirement: Explain your position (for or against) Medicare for All in terms of the effect on local citizens, service providers, and government.

I support Medicare for All. My own younger brother died a couple of years ago because he lacked access to a doctor. The question is how do we pay for Health Care for All? I have advocated for a Medicare for All paid for by repealing billions of dollars in illegal tax breaks here in Washington state. Again, until we have a much stronger and better organized Progressive Caucus, we will not be able to pass either a Tax Break Repeal bill or a Universal Health Care bill. Thus, the first step to nearly every political problem is to expand the Progressive Caucus.

Security/Public Safety: How would you act to stop the militarization of local police forces and establish civilian oversight of law enforcement?

In addition to teaching courses in Problem Solving at Bellevue College, I also taught courses in Non-Violent Conflict Resolution. I think we need to add courses in Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution to our public schools. We must first teach our children that warfare and the US Military Machine are not the answer to solving problems. Only then can we reduce the tendency of local police to see violence and force as a solution to problems.

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

I am a lifelong Progressive Democrat as were my parents and grand parents. To me, being a Progressive means understanding that we cannot have a fair economy without a Progressive Taxation System that redistributes wealth from billionaires and corporate monopolies back into the economy. But being a progressive means more than simply having progressive views. It means taking progressive actions on a daily basis. Words are not enough. We need action. This is another reason I am running for Chair of the Progressive Caucus.

What parts, if any, of the Washington State Democratic Party Platform do you disagree with? Why?

I agree with the entire platform. In fact, I wrote numerous resolutions that were passed by the State Party and later became part of the platform. But a Platform does us no good if our elected representatives fail to follow the platform. We need to hold elected officials to the platform and when they fail to follow the platform, we need to replace them.

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 run for the state legislature in the 5th Legislative District in East King County. I have also run for the local school board and for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. I have learned that it is possible to win with a low budget campaign if you have the right message. In 2010, I defeat a candidate in the Primary who outspent me 40 to 1. I have also learned that elections are about more than winning. They are a chance to expose corruption and advance progressive ideals. We as a Progressive Caucus should do a much better job of encouraging and helping all progressives to run for local, state and national offices.

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

I have been a Precinct Committee Officer for the Twin Peaks Precinct in North Bend for many years. I have also held numerous positions in the Democratic Party including being the 5th LD Representative to the King County Democrats and the Training Advisor of the King County Democrats. I was also the the Technology Person for the Washington Progressive Caucus and a member of the King County Legislative Action Committee.

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

I believe the Democratic Party must be reformed and that this reform should be led by the Progressive Caucus. Real Change can only come from the bottom up - not the top down. I therefore want to empower every member of the Progressive Caucus by giving them greater access to the database of the Progressive Caucus and the Democratic Party so that each member can organize and build progressive connections in their own community. By providing more support for local progressives, we can greatly expand the Progressive Caucus and thereby have more influence in the Democratic Party and the State legislature.

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The Washington Progressive Caucus should be a powerful group of tens of thousands of Progressive Voters who feel their voices and energy are welcome and important. Because I am retired, I have the time and motivation to travel around the state to help organize Progressive Chapters in every legislative district. Instead of the current system where only a few Progressives in our state meet for one hour only a couple of times each year, I want to organize meetings in every county to help local progressives turn their words and passion into action. By empowering local progressives and holding many more local meetings, we can turn the Progressive Caucus into a political force and achieve real change.

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

I think there are two very important issues that we can win across party lines here in Washington state and use to build the Progressive Caucus at the same time. The first is school funding. Washington state has among the lowest school funding and highest class sizes in the nation. Every parent and teacher knows this. The “Levy Swipe” school funding plan just passed by the state legislature is completely fake. It will reduce rather than increase school funding. We as the Washington Progressive Caucus should stand with parents and teachers and demand real school funding by eliminating illegal corporate tax breaks.

Second, the legislature also failed to pass a capital budget. Our state has billions of dollars in infrastructure projects that will halt in the next year – costing tens of thousands of jobs. We also have a \$40 billion school construction back log. Currently more than half of the schools in Washington state do not meet the health codes or earthquake codes. The solution to this problem is to promote and pass a Public Bank bill -which will save our state billions of dollars and create more than 100,000 jobs.

We also need universal health care and free higher education. But these are harder challenges. We have two urgent issues we can win on with Independent Voters. We should use these issues to build our movement and help kids get the schools they need and their parents get the jobs they need.

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 run for office in a heavily Republic area. I have learned that we need to build better bridges to independent swing voters. This means doing much more than merely preaching to the converted. We need to understand swing voters to understand why the Democratic party keeps losing election. We need to focus on issues important to swing voters like schools and jobs. We also need to reach out to Socialists and Greens – not to recruit them but to understand them and find ways to work together for common goals. I have reached out to Greens, Socialists and Indendents in the past and I will continue to do so if elected Chair of the Progressive Caucus. Thanks for taking the time to read my questionnaire. Feel free to email me if you have any more questions!

Regards, David Spring M. Ed. springforschools@gmail.com