

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: Jamie Smith

Position Sought: Washington State House of Representatives, District 25, Position 1

Campaign Manager: John Adams

Consultant: Dean Neilsen

Campaign Email: info@votejamiesmith.com, votejamiesmith@gmail.com

Campaign Phone: 253-286-9387

Website: VoteJamieSmith.com

Campaign Address: P.O. box 1342, Puyallup WA, 98371

Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? Yes

Labor

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

I support raising the states minimum wage because I believe that anyone that puts in a full work week should be able to support themselves and be able to live and shop around the area they work. While my opponent voted against the bill raising it to \$12 I would support that, and the \$13.50 initiative, while still giving local areas the option to raise it more based upon their own cost of living.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I firmly oppose any so-called "Right to Work" laws. Unions have always been the leaders in improving the rights, wages, and working conditions for all workers. Only when our unions are strong will our economy be strong. Growing up in a house with a mother who is a healthcare union representative, and a father that was not only a representative for his district but also the president of the union I know the importance of unions. I was a union representative for 10 years at Puyallup High School, I know the importance of collective bargaining, and I have heard the horror stories of teachers in "Right to Work" states and the negative impact such legislation has had on them. I will oppose any "right to work" legislation and speak out in support of unions. We need to strengthen the right of all workers to organize in their workplace. Workers should be free of intimidation and harassment when considering the question of forming a union. It should be required that employers recognize a union once a majority of the employees sign cards indicating that they want representation. The state government needs to actively enforce labor laws to protect employees seeking to unionize. Similar to my own union I believe all unions should be allowed to brief new members at orientation and have a dedicated space within staff rooms that they can post announcements and other information for all workers to see.

Education

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

I support reducing standardized tests. Our students are going through too many days of testing and not enough of educating. The tests are constantly changing, rendering year to year comparisons ineffective, and students and parents are left questioning not only the value of the tests, but if the test they are preparing for will even be around the following year. The SBA for instance, has been shown to be ineffective, inappropriate content for the student's grade levels, and is taking too many, already limited, resources away from the school's ability to educate students for college and the workforce. I was a member of the Teacher Principal Evaluation Program for the Puyallup School District for three years. I helped not only choose the framework from the three the state gave, but also worked to create the tools the teachers and principals within the district would use, then went back and revamped them after each year to make them more effective. The process of creating the conversations between teachers and principals is great. However, there are still some major issues. The amount of extra work required from both ends takes away from valuable contact time with students and discussions between the teacher and evaluator. We must work to keep a growth model that does not make them jump through hoops or unfairly punish the teacher from missing 1 of the 40+ points. Instead it must work to improve teaching through real discussions about practice and policy within the classroom. It must be set up to encourage teachers to strive for more difficult growth goals and not simply choose easy ones. Right now the fear the impact this one target has on their evaluation does not encourage teachers to push for larger goals.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

Our children's future is not a commodity and organizations should not be allowed to make money off of it. Schools are for educating our students, not revenue streams for businesses. Privatizing public schools will increase inequity in education. We need public oversight of education to guarantee all students are allowed the opportunity to receive a high quality education.

Environment

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

Washington state has an amazing opportunity to expand the workforce by transitioning to clean energy. With so many renewable resources within the state we can increase jobs in solar, hydroelectric, wind, geothermal, and in the work that the universities are doing with tidal energy. These industries will offer jobs not only in the day to day operations, but through design, construction, and maintenance as well. For instance, with our changing climate wind energy can also help sustain farms that are experiencing the loss of their crops due to pests and drought.

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

To do this we must promote the growth of these industries as well as an increase in job training. Job training is essential for a successful transition to renewable energy. New jobs, sustainable energy, safer jobs, and an increase in tech jobs that pay more will benefit the environment and the economy. While I do not have one form of energy I favor most I'm encouraged with the tidal energy work that is coming out of the universities for more power on the West side of the state, while wind and solar are incredibly viable on the east side. While I like the use of hydro-electric we must be careful when damming areas

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as it can have negative impacts on the environment due to flooding and stopping fish from being able to travel upstream.

Finance/Taxation

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

I am working to gather more information about this topic, to be able to form a plan in the future, but do not have one to provide at this time.

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

Washington relies too heavily on regressive taxes such as sales tax. Almost 80% of state revenue comes from sales taxes which unfairly punish the poor and working class. Our system does not cover all of the public safety, infrastructure, and educational needs. Our middle class is shrinking as more and more drop to lower middle-class/ poor, and yet the richest in the US are bringing in a higher and higher percentage of the nation's wealth. Family wage jobs are shrinking as laws such as "right to work" are enacted that benefit the wealthy, but not the average worker. We must work together with all stakeholders to create a more equitable tax system that works. Tax incentives must be tied to wage and job retention within the state. They should not be permanent, but have expiration dates allowing the legislature to determine if they should be continued, or removed, based upon their ability to improve the economy through job retention and competitive wages for their workers.

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 was a start towards ensuring more Americans it has also lead to an increase in many health care premiums. This has made healthcare less affordable for many and led to huge profits for the insurance companies. Medicaid has been shown to be one of the most cost effective plans. I encourage movement towards a single-payer health care system that can provide top care, while reigning in the costs for both patients and the hospitals.

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

I oppose the privatization of Social Security and Medicare. These programs have been put in place to help the citizens, not to make money for shareholders. When privatization occurs often shareholders' opinions are regarded as more important than the consumers. This then hurts consumers. I support full funding of these programs and not allowing the government to use the programs to fund other programs.

Security/Public Safety

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

We need more community policing measures to build bridges between the community and police. This helps build trust and greater community safety. Obtaining funds for items such as body cameras also helps to ensure the public has an accurate view of police events, and not only make sure police are

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following protocol but they also deters citizens from lashing out.

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

I believe the founding fathers new what they were doing when requiring a warrant before any searches and seizures. In today's society a warrant can be issued with a simple phone call. I do not support warrant-less wiretaps but believe that all law enforcement needs to allow these procedures for the safety and privacy of the citizens. Following the laws and procedures does not stop the government from being able to protect the citizens but rather helps protects citizens privacy while still allowing law enforcement to do their jobs.

General

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

Yes. I believe that the government is created by, of, and for the people to help and protect them, not to use them for the benefit of large corporations. While we must help the economy grow we should not sacrifice the population for the pockets of the top few. We need services in place to help people pull themselves up by their "bootstraps", but we must make sure that everyone has "bootstraps" to start with.

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

While I agree with the Party Platform I wasn't able to get the link above to work by clicking it or going to the party website - <http://www.wa-democrats.org/about/documents> to try there either. I look forward to seeing the 2016 updated version, but want to be careful speaking to it currently as I have not had the chance to review what may have been added/changed.

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?

This this the first campaign I have been a candidate for, but I helped gather signatures and get out information for initiative 1351 to lower class size. I found that volunteers are key to getting out the word and reaching the people.

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

I have been a union representative for my building for 10 years.

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

I am running for the legislature because our state faces many tough choices. Our schools desperately need support to provide the best education to our children. I want to advocate for the people of our community. We need leaders who care about our needs. I am the advocate who will make sure every child in our state gets a high quality education. As a teacher at Puyallup High School I have taught classes of 42 and of 22 and can tell you that the class with 22 got more done, had higher grades, and

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worked together better. Large class sizes are detrimental to student success and we must work to lower class sizes across the state.

To do this we must first stop depending upon local levy dollars, but adequately fund all districts based upon their local economic needs through the state. To do this we need end loopholes that allow Washington businesses to maintain tax breaks when they send jobs out of the state and use the recovered revenue for education. We must also re-evaluate the tax breaks that have been given in the past and not simply allow them to stay on the books indefinitely. The legislature should provide the funding and enforce a voter approved cap on class sizes, Districts should then be allowed to work with their stakeholders to create college and career readiness programs that best serve the needs of their students and community. For this to happen all stakeholders need to be at the table when creating legislation and when working at the district level to allocate funds.

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

Homelessness is on the rise in my areas and I have had multiple students that were living with their families in hotels or out of their cars. There are growing numbers of homeless coming in and living along the river and many in the community have been finding them cutting through and/or sleeping in their yards. The legislature must work bipartisanship with the counties to find solutions that work for each area. The counties should be allowed to take the lead as they can best meet their residents needs. The legislature should work to provide the funding and support needed by the counties to provide the a quality education for each child and help with those dealing with homelessness and transitional housing. We need programs to help encourage and support home ownership and education to inform buyers of the process and pitfalls they may experience. There needs to be more housing options for all income levels and good tenants should not be forced out because someone else can offer more money. Options such as encampments, shelters, rapid-rehousing tools, transitional and supportive housing should all be considered.

Another key concern is the ability of all workers to earn sick leave. While some jobs offer a set number of days, and others offer the ability to earn it over time, many do not have this option. All workers need to be able to earn sick leave in order to take care of themselves, their families, and protect their customers without the fear of losing their jobs or the loss of income. While my opponent voted against this, I support all workers being able to earn sick leave through work. For every 40 hours workers should be able to earn at least 1 hour of sick leave, resulting in a full time worker earning 1 day for every two months of work.

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?

While all three representatives in my area are currently republican 8 year ago they were all democrat. I live in a very swing district and have a good chance of winning as long as we can get out the voters.