

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: Lisa Wellman

Position Sought: 41st LD, State Senate

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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 raising the minimum wage at both levels. While I would love to see WA State at \$15/hr, I also support the current proposal of \$13.50. Federally, I support Obama's proposal of \$10.10/hr.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I believe fundamentally in workers' rights to organize and collectively bargain. Once elected, I will be happy to support legislation that protects workers from retaliation when they organize, raises the minimum wage, provides paid sick and safe leave /or paid family leave, equal pay for equal work, strengthens enforcement of our current labor laws, and more.

Education

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

High stakes testing is all too prevalent in our schools. I don't believe that any student deemed otherwise ready to graduate should be held back because they are a bad test taker or because their teacher didn't teach to a test. Our teachers need to be able to teach our children a well-rounded curriculum rather than being shackled to ensuring that the children of our state are filling out the right bubble on a form. As a former teacher myself, I understand that evaluation needs to be bigger than statistics and that kids learn in different ways. We, as a state, needs to respect and encourage that.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

I am against the privatization of our schools. I think that we should focus on fully funding our existing public education system and keeping our eye on how we can make education better for the more than 1 million children in our public schools, rather than focusing time and money on a system that serves only hundreds.

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Environment

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

As a member of the Washington State Public Works Board, I have firsthand experience with our state's infrastructure system. I believe that Washington can and should lead on ensuring that new projects are built using sustainable energies and that we're supporting communities, particularly rural communities, in their embrace of sustainable and alternative energies. Our natural resources are one of our region's greatest assets. They not only make Washington a beautiful and desirable place to live but they serve a critical function in many of our lives. I'll stand against attempts to privatize our forests, waterways, and more.

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

Again, I believe that this starts with infrastructure. Whether it's wind farms in Central and Eastern Washington, solar panels on individual homes across the state, or hydroelectric energy, I support making sure that each community has access to the infrastructure that works for them.

Finance/Taxation

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

While I've heard of proposals for a public state bank, that's not an issue where I am an expert yet. I would love to get more information about it during the campaign and, once elected, look forward to sitting down with Senator Hasegawa to learn more.

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

It's no secret that Washington has the most regressive tax system in the country. It's a disgrace. I believe that the first place we need to look is at tax loopholes and corporate tax breaks. That the wealthiest individuals and corporations are able to duck transparency and accountability and get out of paying their fair share is not right and doesn't help make sure that we can fully fund our critical programs.

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.

Access to healthcare is critical and, I believe, a basic right. And I believe, if there were the political will in Congress or even our state legislature, it is possible to achieve a single payer system. In the meantime, I will fully support protecting and strengthening the ACA. While the ACA isn't perfect, nor does it achieve the ultimate goal of single payer healthcare, it was a solid step in the right direction and I believe is a foundation upon which we can build.

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

I oppose any attempt to privatize either Social Security or Medicare. I will support any policy that will expand, strengthen, and protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for those who rely upon them now and in the future.

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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?

Obviously, in the last 10 years we've seen a disturbing upward trend in excessive force, violence, racially biased policing, and deaths. This has disproportionately impacted communities of color. I believe that we need to look at every law on the books and every new piece of legislation to address the institutional and individual racism that leads to these instances. I believe we need to encourage and support municipalities in efforts around de-militarizing and support civilian oversight.

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

People's right to privacy is of the utmost importance. In America, we talk a lot about freedom and I believe that we can't truly be free unless we have a reasonable right to privacy. We just saw last week in SeaTac where the city manager wanted a 'tactical map' of Muslims in their communities. That's an incredible violation of privacy, is racist, and is wrong. There has to be just cause for action to be taken. I look forward to learning and working more on these issues once elected.

General

Do you consider yourself a Democrat? Do you consider yourself a progressive? Why?
Yes and yes.

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

While I haven't read each and every line of the 42-page platform, I fully agree with the summary of the platform. I look forward to seeing an updated platform for 2016 and to see what changes and additions and have been made. I'm hopeful that our party will continue to move in a more progressive direction and highlight the intersection of justice issues (racial, economic, reproductive, environmental, etc).

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 was on our local ballot twice when serving as a PCO, but I don't consider that I have run for office before.

I have taken part in every Presidential election since before I could vote. I have door-belled, phone-banked, marched, fund raised and supported candidates in any number of ways. I marched in my neighborhood with a candidate's sign when I was eight years old! Since then I marched for civil rights, against the war in Vietnam, for women's right to choose...

I learned that leadership matters. Elections matter. Who holds the gavel matters.

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

Yes, I served two terms as PCO. I served on the Board of the 41st Democrats for several years. In California I was on the board of DAWN (Democratic Activists for Women Now). We helped put Barbara Boxer, Diane Feinstein, Zoe Lofgren and Nancy Pelosi in office.

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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 issue that motivated me to run for office is education. In 2012, our state Supreme Court ruled that we are not meeting our constitutional duty to fully fund public education. It's four years later and we still haven't seen any progress toward that goal.

Our legislature, and the incumbent in my district in particular, are full of talking points on the issue but haven't taken much action. The children in our state don't have time to wait and, for them, I want to make sure that our legislature is being held accountable and is making decisions in a transparent way. As a former teacher, I want to make sure that all of our students and teachers have the support and resources they need to be successful. To make progress, we will need to change our regressive tax structure, and as I said above, I believe that begins with eliminating tax loopholes and examining our corporate tax breaks.

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

There is a litany of important secondary issues: transportation, creating jobs, equal pay, access to healthcare, reproductive rights, climate change, gun responsibility, workers' rights, income inequality... I could go on and on. We don't live in a world where issues and consequences are experienced in a silo and I believe that our solutions should reflect that reality. As a CEO, much of my experience has been looking at how the details impact the big picture and examining the long term effects of any decision. As a progressive, I know that we all experience the world in a web of identities and privileges (or lack thereof). I look forward to bringing both perspectives to the legislature.

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 actually "very moderate to leaning progressive" with both our representatives being Democrats and the incumbent in the position I'm running for labeling himself as a "moderate" Republican. He's not who he claims to be. He has aligned himself, when votes matter, with the ALEC agenda. After four years as Chair of the Senate Education Committee he has angered every teacher in the district and beyond.

I do have a reasonable chance at winning, I wouldn't be running if I didn't. It will be a tough campaign and it won't be won without hard work and support from individuals and organizations who want to see something accomplished in our legislature moving forward. I am working hard to raise the money that I need to communicate my message and contrast to the voters of the district, as well as out knocking on doors to have one on one conversations with voters about the issues that impact them the most. I hope to have your support in this campaign and look forward to working with you throughout the year, as well as in the legislature.