

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: Deborah Lee

Position Sought: Olympia City Council, Pos. 5

Campaign Manager: Erik Lee (interim)

Consultant: Claudia Kauffman (mentor)

Campaign Email: Deb@deborah4oly.com

Campaign Phone: 360-515-0142

Website: deborah4oly.com

Campaign Address: PO Box 13126, Olympia, WA. 98508-3126

Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? Yes

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 do support raising the minimum wage at the local level, as it seems unlikely that any state and federal action will sufficiently address the issue. The \$15/hr is a target number in the national movement, but I'd like to see analyses done for the greater-Olympia economic area. Once a minimum wage is increased to meet current needs, the base level going forward should be indexed to the cost of living and adjusted with greater frequency, which will help prevent crises in the future that low-wage workers now suffer under.

Education

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

I am against any high stakes testing. Too much precious instruction time is being wasted teaching kids how to pass tests which are poor indicators of true knowledge and strip children of their natural love of learning. To deny children instruction and exploration in art, music, athletics, poetry, and independent learning all for the sake of passing standardized tests is shortsighted and cruel. To have teachers and students endure insufficient funding to study for tests which future funding is dependent is an outrage. I believe high stakes tests to be the hurdles or walls which are put in place to allow for-profit "educators" to use as poor excuses to rob the futures of our children and our society all for the sake of greed and quarterly dividends. Teachers should not be evaluated and compensated based on test scores. Dedicated educators who work with at-risk students would be penalized when they should be rewarded for the challenges they take on.

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire

Environment

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

There are many individuals and groups of environmentalists within the Olympia area that are ready resources for the council, and they have much greater personal and community interests at heart than most consulting firms which deliberative bodies often rely on rather than community experts.

As a city, we can support and encourage homeowners and businesses to convert their power use to environmentally sound sources. Unfortunately, our city is supplied with electricity and natural gas by Puget Sound Energy, despite ongoing efforts to regain public ownership and control of our power supplies. Some of PSE's reluctant customers could become power suppliers by feeding back into the power grid if they're able to convert to solar power with enough excess to sell off.

As we seek additional resources for Olympia to meet the demands of population growth and building construction, we need to be aware of the impacts we have on other areas, especially tribal lands and smaller communities.

The fastest way to be less dependent on carbon-based energy is to lower the demand for it by making community members aware of ways to lower their own carbon footprints. Homeowners and small businesses can be encouraged and supported with a shift to more efficient lighting and appliances and better insulating walls and windows of existing structures which could have a major and immediate impacts, as will requiring new construction within the city to attain the highest level of energy efficiencies. As a city and as individual consumers, we can demand that PSE provide us with greater percentages of alternative energy. We can also support ongoing efforts to reclaim our public utilities.

Finance/Taxation

What will you do to support public banking at the local level?

I support the creation of a state bank, which the state and the City of Olympia could use for all transactions and financing. I support the transition to public banking wherever possible.

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.

Single payer health care would have widespread benefits to society, allowing better access to good health care for every citizen, and ease the financial burden on employers which provide health care to their employees.

In the current health care system, the search for efficiencies should not be to allow for increased profit, but for making constant improvements to the system for the purpose of providing better and more extensive care.

We recently stayed in London within a working-class community in the east side of the city in an apartment complex across the street from a national health service clinic. It was open from 8am to 8pm and on weekends, to allow workers access before or after work. There were walk-in clinics for both medical and dental care, with a complete pharmacy. From what we saw and what people told us, there

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire

were no long lines, and nobody was turned away for lack of insurance. There are undoubtedly problems in such a massive system, but ready access to quality care isn't one of them.

Security/Public Safety

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

The first thing to stop the militarization of the local police is to completely retrain and provide ongoing training to officers who served as combat veterans. These former soldiers have skills that might prove helpful in extraordinary circumstances, but unless suppressed, can have disastrous outcomes for most situations where physical aggression may be involved. More police officers need to see the people they serve as their fellow community members, and not a population to control and contain.

The supply of military vehicles, weapons, and combat-style training needs to stop. We want our officers to be protected, and be fully able to carry out their duties, but the show of overwhelming force might have the opposite effect. Rather than ease tensions in a situation, the presence of armored vehicles and officers clad in body armor may incite some participants in otherwise peaceful gatherings to be more aggressive or even combative. Officers should be there to provide safe assembly for protests.

I am in full support of civilian oversight of law enforcement, where relationships with police forces can be strengthened and public trust can be attained and maintained. During my time as State Human Rights Commissioner, and in my capacity as chair of the Washington Indian Civil Rights Commission, I was directly involved for an extended period in the aftermath of the killing of a Native woodcarver in Seattle. I worked with the Seattle Police chiefs, Mayor McGinn and his staff, city council members, and the Department of Justice to ease tensions between the police and the Native Community by participating in ongoing meetings held at city hall, police headquarters, DOJ offices, and other venues, and by personally organizing a listening session where the family and friends of the victim addressed all parties involved to let them know what the split decision actions of an officer can do to a family and the community. We pulled together a coalition of representatives from local communities of color to form a support group in response to the killing of John T. Williams to highlight the impacts of police actions on the Native Community, but also to address all communities' experiences with the SPD.

General

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

I have considered myself a Democrat since childhood, as my family of predominantly union workers made it clear that the Democrats were the only ones in power that cared about working families and not the bankers and industry leaders. I came to realize that's not fully the case, but know that it still mostly holds true, especially from what we've seen in the first months of the current administration and Republican-controlled Congress. The Democrats can reestablish themselves as the party of the People as long as they embrace the progressive wing and their constituencies.

I consider myself a progressive because I support a living wage, universal healthcare, and ending the regressive state and federal tax structures. I believe government institutions and policies should be for the benefit of the People, and I don't believe that corporations are people.

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire

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

There are no parts of the platform that I disagree with.

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 is my first time running for office. My only political experience has been as a political appointee as commissioner on the Washington State Human Rights Commission, being originally appointed by Governor Locke and twice reappointed by Governor Gregoire.

I have not worked on any campaigns.

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

No

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

I want to work to increase civic engagement and community partnership by improving the relationship of our local government with every citizen. We are facing a period of rapid growth in the greater-Olympia area, with many opportunities and challenges, but those individuals and families that are least likely to benefit from the changes that growth will bring, many who might be actually harmed, are not at the table nor at the forefront of the planning discussions and decisions. My experience with and observations of the Olympia City Council over the years has shown many council members are not committed to listening to the concerns of all of our community members who seek redress or want to bring a new perspective to issues which concern us all. There is a strong appearance of favoritism, as prominent community members are warmly welcomed by fully attentive and friendly council members, who smile, nod in agreement and make encouraging comments, whereas others who appear before the council face blank stares or averted eyes that watch the timer clock on the wall and are curtly cut off. These are not just unfounded perceptions, as a few years back, there was a scandal when it was revealed that several council members were using text messages and passing notes to mock community members who were giving public testimony. The fallout had the minimum impact of council members not texting during public testimony, but they need to go much further. I believe it's essential that council members routinely meet with individuals and groups, and not just listen, or pretend to listen, during an obligatory 3-minute public statement.

As a woman of Native American and Chicano heritage, I also believe it's important that our elected bodies reflect the diversity in the communities they represent. My presence on the council alone will encourage community members of all backgrounds to engage, as they will see the possibilities of a council that can evolve to become a place of inclusion, where the voices of all citizens matter.

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire

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

Though listed here as secondary, there are critical issues which civic engagement and community partnership are heavily dependent. We need to make sure that as our community grows in population, which we are currently doing at a more rapid rate than any other city in the state, we have measures in place to prevent the economic displacement of our community members, which will help protect the existing culture(s) which make Olympia such a special place to live. We need to be committed that Olympia remain a place where the artists, musicians, small business owners, and unique community members in various stages of their lives, of all income levels, in any occupation, are secure throughout the city and aren't priced-out of living downtown or anywhere else. Greater community participation is needed to ensure we protect the community we have well before it's too late to save 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?

The City of Olympia is somewhat of a Democratic stronghold with a sizable and active progressive community which is offset with more conservative voters in adjacent municipalities and unincorporated Thurston County. In last year's election, two candidates for county commissioner ran as Independents even though they clearly held conservative views and garnered Republican support. The 22nd LD is wholly contained within Thurston County and fully encompasses Olympia, and has a delegation of all Democrats that comfortably won their races against the Republican candidates.

There are two other people running for the Pos. 5 seat, (the incumbent did not seek reelection), one of which is a progressive Democrat, and the other is a conservative who sought support from the Democratic Party, but has a long record of supporting Republican candidates for local and statewide office. The Thurston County Democrats recently declined to support the conservative candidate.

Ideally, it would be myself and the other progressive candidate in the general election, where we could discuss and promote progressive values and policy proposals which hopefully will attract more voters to participate in an off-year election. All of the progressive candidates are supportive of each other, as there are great opportunities to promote and implement progressive policies from this election onward. It is also my hope that having a woman of color on the ballot will also increase voter participation.