

# 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: Pete Holmes**

**Position Sought: City Attorney**

**Campaign Manager: Caitlin McCormick**

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**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?

Yes, I not only supported Seattle's groundbreaking \$15 minimum wage, I and my colleagues in the Seattle City Attorney's Office were instrumental in crafting, advocating for, and ultimately successfully defending our landmark ordinance in federal court against well-funded challengers. We are now active partners in seeing that the law is fully implemented through regulatory enforcement. Progressives cannot wait for our dysfunctional federal government to act; localities—especially metropolitan areas—must lead on income inequality—not to mention climate change, institutional racism, gender bias, gun safety (to name a few).

## **Education**

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

High stakes testing is pervasive. I had to take—and pass—the bar exam, for instance, to practice law. To protect the public from incompetent or unethical lawyers, is a good thing, even if the consequences for the failing test-taker are dire. When the stakes implicate two or more significant values, the balance is more difficult to strike. A pass/fail driver's license test is important to highway safety, for instance, though high fail rates can give rise to other negative outcomes beyond the individual failing driver: If immigrant communities struggle with a test due largely to language barriers instead of actual highway safety knowledge or skills, for instance, it can effectively impair the ability of whole communities to access work opportunities where other public transportation options are lacking. This demonstrates that high stakes testing must accurately measure the critical skill or knowledge that is critical to the public necessity.

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And there are other potentially unintended consequences to high stakes testing, as in education. Under No Child Left Behind, for instance, because individual student performance tests also impact a school's eligibility to federal financial assistance, there is strong incentive for instructors to "teach to the test"—possibly resulting in an education that does little to help students succeed in life. This high-stakes regime has even led to outright cheating—not by students, but by school teachers and administrators.

I am not an educator, but recognize the critical importance of strong schools that engage, inspire and...teach students. And until we finally begin (in Washington, especially) to adequately fund our schools, testing the performance of student and teacher alike is unlikely to measure what we truly need to know. My simplistic approach is to first determine age-appropriate curriculums that tell us the information or skills that students need to acquire to proceed to the next level. How we measure that must realistically reflect cultural, resource, familial and other factors. In other words, testing must have as its first objective an understanding of how best to impart necessary information to students across the school years.

## Environment

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

The local level represents a vital policy component of a sustainable energy future. While global/national policies are extremely important, unless local energy usage decisions achieve harmony with the planet, macro-level policies are useless.

And sometimes we at the local level must simply shame national "leaders" to do the right thing. Here in Seattle, we're taking action to mandate that fossil fuels be eliminated rapidly from the energy forms we consume. We are attempting to expand mass transit and bicycle usage to reduce reliance on one-driver cars. Even our Growth Management Act recognizes that urban/suburban sprawl increases energy consumption. Along with California, we on the Left Coast are establishing a wall to Trump efforts to roll back the Clean Power Plants initiative, CAFÉ standards, the Paris Climate Accord, and so forth. The choices we make as state and local governments in purchasing decisions can also have a positive impact on energy policy and natural resources.

## Finance/Taxation

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

Yes, though like a municipal income tax, we should expect well-financed legal challenges that will require political discipline coupled with expert legal guidance. That is how I can help, by mapping out the most promising avenues toward a legally-defensible municipal bank.

## 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.

I fully support single payer health care. It is inevitable, I believe, though unnecessarily delayed. I suspect that the genius of the Affordable Care Act is that it gave America a glimpse of what our people could be with almost-adequate health insurance, even if the finance model was overly complicated and

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gave too much to the entrenched insurance and pharmacology industries to win passage. Republicans are now learning firsthand the political difficulties and consequences of repealing “Obama Care”, even while Nevada may be the first state to make Medicare available to everyone as health insurers retreat from large regions amid Republican destabilization of ACA insurance markets. What could emerge from Republican-initiated chaos could be breathtaking: Imagine the new healthcare tools governments could bring to bear addressing, for instance, homelessness or the opioid crisis. Imagine public health solutions to public health problems, instead of criminal “remedies”!

## Security/Public Safety

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

Again, Seattle is modelling the way forward, and I am proud of my own efforts in police reform, too: This is why I first ran for Seattle City Attorney eight years ago! And what we’re learning here, after five years under federally-supervised police reform, is transferable nationally, even globally.

More than just an apt metaphor is the notion of our modern police officer as a Guardian rather than a Warrior. This is not only a much more community-oriented approach, it happens to be the only logical model for a free society such as ours that also wants to be safe. When we equip our local police departments with surplus military hardware we create a hostile “occupying force” rather than a compatriot team of first responders dedicated to keeping us safe. We achieve this by adopting appropriate use of force and hiring policies; by continually obtaining community input about the quality of police services; and by holding our officers and their leaders accountable. This is all based upon the simple concept that The Government’s Police Power is exercised legitimately only with the ongoing consent of The Governed. This is Civics 101; the basic social contract in a free society; the rationale behind the tenant that “Those who would sacrifice Liberty in order to achieve a measure of Safety deserve neither.”

## General

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

I am a lifelong Democrat. I am also a Progressive because I believe in making lives better today than they were yesterday. Because I can simultaneously hold Utopian aspirations and not allow the Perfect to be the Enemy of the Good. Because I believe in compromise and patient conversation that wins over hearts and minds in quiet revolution. Because I believe in having the courage to do the right thing, knowing that sometimes that will not be immediately evident to everyone else.

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

I support the party platform overall, but look forward to discussing particulars in my interview.

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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?

This is my third-term campaign for my first elected office as Seattle City Attorney. I have also participated in many other Democratic campaigns and initiatives.

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

Yes, I have been a PCO for many years. In my interview, I would love to explain my prior runs for Precinct Committee Officer in the 37th Legislative District Democrats!

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

I first ran for City Attorney for three principal reasons: Police Reform, Drug Policy Reform, and my drive to live up to the Seattle City Charter's charge that the City Attorney exercise "sole supervisory control over all the litigation of the City"—whether the defense of SPD officers, the resolution of the Seattle Sonics' Key Arena lease, or any number of legal representation responsibilities.

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

I am first and foremost a consensus-builder. While elected leaders can be single-issue, one hit wonders, to achieve truly transformative, lasting system improvements, it is critical to establish working relationships with others in government, NGOs and the communities we serve. I do and will continue to apply this approach to affordable housing, institutional racism and environmental concerns as I do to all other issues faced by the City of Seattle.

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 am constantly "paying it forward."