

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: Jessa Lewis

Position Sought: State Senator, 6th Legislative District

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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?

Our state has lead the way in fighting for a fair minimum wage, the Fight for 15 has helped to get the ball rolling nationally and I look forward to continuing this fight as no one who works full time should be in poverty.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I come from a union household and I know the value that unions bring to our families and communities. My campaign staff is in the process of becoming the first unionized campaign staff in the state, I will continue to fight against any right to work efforts in our state.

Education

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

Teaching for the test is not an effective barometer for success in the classroom, and can often serve as a distraction from the learning that should be taking place. I would advocate removing the emphasis on these high stakes tests as it disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

People should have the option of how and where to educate their students, but not with taxpayer money. We can't allow public schools to be undermined nor should we extend such options only to a select few lottery winners.

Environment

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

We must prioritize alternative and safe energy solutions, and this means in addition to pursuing these alternatives we must take care of the current workers in the fossil fuel industry. This means training and equipping them with the skills they need to work in these new energy fields protects our environment as well as our job market. Our state's natural resources must be protected and preserved as it is the heritage we pass on to future generations and is essential to our survival.

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

We need to continue with solar energy incentives and explore similar programs with other forms of renewable energy, and retrofitting for efficiencies. I favor exploration of suitable applications of all renewable energy technologies. The bonding capacity of a state bank would go a long way with facilitating these efforts in renewable energy and improving our infrastructure.

Finance/Taxation

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

I will be a champion for establishing a state bank.

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

I am in full support of the work being done by All In For Washington, and believe that our state needs an overhaul of its tax system and I will champion reducing the burdens of B&O tax, sales tax, property taxes and other regressive forms of taxation while working to close loopholes and supporting a more progressive tax structure.

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.

My current job is working as the Eastern Washington Director for Healthcare For All-WA, and in this role I am fighting to provide quality healthcare to everyone in our state. The ACA has done tremendous good for so many people, but it does not go far enough.

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

I will stand firmly against any attempts to raid or undermine pensions, and am a champion for expansion for Medicare. It is crucial that we allow for retirement with dignity, and we are on the verge of a crisis with more people reaching their golden years without sufficient resources to survive.

Security/Public Safety

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

I'm proud of the work I did supporting I-940 and as someone who saw firsthand the impacts of militarization of police while at Standing Rock, you can count on me to be an ally on supporting reforms. I have family and friends who have served in law enforcement and we agree that we must act for re-establishment of trust between the police and the communities they serve.

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

Our state has set an example for the nation on issues of Net Neutrality, and any opportunity to take such a stance on issues within our state's borders as a legislator in Olympia is one that I will not pass up.

General

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

I consider myself a Democrat and a progressive because it is the closest I can align to my values and desire to be effective at driving change.

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

I do not necessarily agree with the rapid phase-out of all farm subsidies, as I have concerns about the resulting rise in food costs for the already vulnerable in our state. We need to build a sustainable local food economy and have a just transition to better and healthier food options.

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 not run for office before outside of PCO or within the party infrastructure, but I have worked on campaigns and with the state coordinated campaign in the past. I know what it takes to run a successful race and I understand the commitments that go along with running for office.

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

Yes. I have been a PCO, committeewoman, and a delegate to the State convention for President Obama in 2008 and the National Convention in 2016 for Bernie Sanders.

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

Ensuring the creation for a single payer trust for all people in our state.

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

I am committed to fighting to improve education in my district. Ensuring that students in our district no longer need to ride the bus for an hour to get to school and that these schools have the proper resources to educate them is of the highest priority. We must also bolster our local economies so that our students don't need to leave the area to find work.

Working with Labor to protect the rights of workers and fight against any and all right to work efforts will be a priority as well.

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 6th LD is currently represented by three Republican men, but the district is hardly a safe republican district. This Senate seat was held by Democrat Chris Marr until 2010, and Democrats Dennis Dellwo and Lynnette Vehrs both ran competitive races for the House in 2012 and 2016. The district was also carried by President Obama and Senator Maria Cantwell in 2012 and 2010 respectively. The district leans to the right, but is extremely winnable for a Democrat and this campaign has the right message to do that.