

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: Steve Gonzalez

Position Sought: Washington Supreme Court Justice Position 8 (incumbent)

Campaign Manager: Kenneth Fockele

Consultant: NWP

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Friends of Justice Gonzalez

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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?

I am prohibited by the Judicial Canons from answering this question as such cases could come before me.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I am prohibited by the Judicial Canons from supporting legislation.

Education

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

I am prohibited by the Judicial Canons from answering this question as such cases could come before me.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

I am prohibited by the Judicial Canons from answering this question as such a case is currently before my court.

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Environment

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

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

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Finance/Taxation

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

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

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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.

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

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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?

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

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General

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

As a judge, I am not permitted to belong to a party or take a position on specific policies. I have spent my career as an advocate for equal access to justice for all, including underrepresented and marginalized communities.

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 won election to the Washington Supreme Court in 2012. Before joining the Court, I served for ten years as a trial judge on the King County Superior Court, and served as a Federal and municipal criminal prosecutor. Prior to joining the court in King County, I practiced both criminal and civil law. I was an Assistant United States Attorney in the Western District of Washington where I was part of the team that successfully prosecuted the international terrorism case U.S. v. Ressam. I also prosecuted organized crime cases and served as the Hate Crimes Prosecution Coordinator. After September 11, I lectured on international terrorism prosecution to U.S. Attorneys in Washington D.C. I have also served as a Domestic Violence Prosecutor for the City of Seattle. I have worked on numerous judicial campaigns including my own. For example, I worked to help Judge Veronica Galvan get elected when she was a municipal court judge and I served on the campaign committee for Justice Mary Yu.

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

No

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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?

I have spent my career as an advocate for equal access to justice for all, including underrepresented and marginalized communities. As a past Chair of the WA State Access to Justice Board and a board member for many years, I am passionate about ensuring justice for ALL Washingtonians. That is why I worked on producing the Preliminary Report of the Task Force on Race and the Criminal Justice System in 2011. We could do a great deal more to improve access to justice by simplifying forms and writing them in plain and common language, reducing or eliminating user fees, ensuring that interpreters are available when needed and improving our openness as a coequal branch of government. We have a long way to go to keep the promise of this nation that we are all equal before the law. All of us have an obligation to eliminate bias because Black Lives Matter and our jurisprudence must show it.

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

We must: 1. Maintain the independence of the judicial branch; 2. Eliminate disproportionality; and 3. Issue our opinions sooner. The courts are facing significant budget reductions at a time when we see more people who are not able to afford attorneys. We must continue to adequately fund the courts. We must simplify the legal process and reduce the need to appear for multiple hearings when there are more efficient ways to manage cases. We must lead the effort to integrate technology in ways that improve access to justice, not diminish it, and allow us to issue our opinions sooner. We must bring creativity and leadership to the task of redesigning the jury system so that it remains relevant to our society.

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 running a statewide race. That means holding events and meeting communities across the state, from Seattle to Spokane, and from Bellingham to Vancouver. Not just during elections, but also as a Justice, I have worked to make the Court accessible to people across the state. In particular, I have brought the traveling Court to smaller towns, colleges, and schools outside of major population centers. We have often had our best attendance at small colleges, where students have a chance to experience the workings of our government in a way they otherwise would never have had.