

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire 2019

Submission Note: The submission deadline for this questionnaire is 12:01 PM PT, ten days prior to the membership meeting where the candidate's endorsement will be considered. Please refer to the questionnaire deadline and meeting date here:

<https://waprogressives.org/endorsements/endorsement-policy-and-timeline/>.

☐ This questionnaire must be submitted to waprogressives@gmail.com to be considered.

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: Jeanne Kohl-Welles

Position Sought: King County Council, District 4

Campaign Manager: Clara Manahan, campaign@jeannekohlwelles.com

Consultant: CN4 (Dean Nielsen, Parker Butterworth, Breann Pugnetti)

Campaign Email: jeanne@jeannekohlwelles.com; campaign@jeannekohlwelles.com (please cc both on any correspondence)

Campaign Phone: (206) 819-2640

Website: www.jeannekohlwelles.com

Campaign Address: PO Box 9100, Seattle, WA 98109

Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? Yes

Questions:

Labor

Do you support raising the minimum wage in your local jurisdiction if state and federal action continues to be stalled? To what level?

Unfortunately, anything we could do at the County would only apply to the unincorporated areas, which creates a challenge. But we have advocated and will continue to do so to the State Legislature to increase the minimum wage statewide. And, with my support, the Council passed the living wage ordinance for our contractors. It's important to have progressives on the Council (such as I) who will continue to advocate for living wages.

Education

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

I understand why high-stakes, standardized testing is common, as it makes it much easier for students to be

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compared and it creates data that can translate easily. However, standardized testing doesn't accurately capture the potential housed within all our students. Furthermore, standardized testing has the potential to further exacerbate inequities in our education system and larger society, including unequal resources among school districts and individual schools as well as structural discrimination that especially impacts students from low-income families and communities of color. Higher-income families are generally more readily able to provide tutors and other test-preparation assistance for their children. There also can be differences in students' exposure to broadening experiences that give advantages to some students over others. In addition, many students exhibit test-anxiety, especially knowing the high stakes nature of quantitative-based testing. I strongly favor a more holistic and comprehensive type of evaluation for students as well as teachers. As having been a public school teacher upon graduating from college, a training and demonstration teacher, and a faculty member at UW teaching courses in sociology, education, and gender, women & sexuality, especially regarding educational equity, and gender and education, I learned the value of giving open-ended question exams rather than standardized ones.

Environment

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

As I discuss in more detail below (see question on motivation for running for office), I believe the climate crisis – and environmental degradation generally – is one of the most urgent issues we face.

In my first year on the Council, I co-sponsored a motion with Councilmember Rod Dembowski directing Metro Transit to study the feasibility of achieving a zero-emissions bus fleet. I am continuing to work with Metro Transit and the Executive to speed up the timeline for achieving a zero-emissions fleet.

I also cosponsored a six-month moratorium on construction of fossil fuel infrastructure within the County. While this was only for six months, it included a provision for the County Executive to report on the impact of expanding coal terminals, oil pipelines, and other fossil fuel projects, and potential alternatives for the County to consider. I am now working with some of my colleagues on what to do when the moratorium expires to move toward 100% renewable (or at least carbon-neutral) energy.

King County has not yet acted on divesting from fossil fuels. I support divestment, as I believe economic pressure is extremely effective. I am interested in having the Council, as a first step, request a study from the office of Economic and Financial Analysis to determine how divestment would impact the County's finances, and how it would affect pensions, in particular.

I am committed to preserving and protecting our public green spaces, and to equitable access to open space and parks. I co-sponsored legislation to preserve vital and at-risk open space lands across the County, which also waived matching requirements in areas that have traditionally lacked access to open space. The process of developing this legislation utilized an Open Space Equity Cabinet so people of color and members of communities that have been traditionally left out when considering open space preservation had a seat at the table and were able to make their priorities a part of the final legislation.

I strongly support the Parks Levy that will appear on the August primary ballot. I was a sponsor of the ordinance to place it on the ballot and was pleased my amendment was included to create a Youth Conservation Corps.

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Similar to other conservation corps, this will be a summer youth employment program that engages young people in meaningful work experiences in King County parks, lands and regional trails.

Equitable access to green spaces, transit and health care, especially for historically marginalized groups, is critical. I will continue to examine all policies through the use of an equity and social justice lens, and using a public health and equity lens for many issues that come up on the Board of Health and on the Health, Housing and Human Services Committee, both of which I serve as Chair. I consider environmental health and equity to be critical public health issues.

Finance/Taxation

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

I would support a publicly-owned bank at the local level with a mandate to focus on serving otherwise underserved communities and business owners. I've long supported creation of a state bank. In fact, I cosponsored legislation while in the state Senate to establish a state bank (prime sponsored for years by Sen. Bob Hasegawa).

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 believe that equitable access to quality health care is a human right, and I support a single payer health care system. I have already co-written an Op-Ed calling for universal health care with the Teamsters 28, Bevin McLeod (President of Alliance for a Healthy Washington), and Vicki Lowe (ED of American Indian Health Commission) in March that was published in the Washington Wire. (<https://washingtonstatewire.com/op-ed-wa-is-one-floor-vote-away-from-a-pathway-to-universal-healthcare/>)

At the County level, I am committed to strengthening our local safety nets and developing our health care programs. As Chair of the Council's Health, Housing and Human Services Committee (HHHS) and of the King County Board of Health (BOH), my guiding belief is that investing in health care access – including reproductive health, behavioral health and substance abuse treatment – provides major dividends down the road. Investing in preventative health care and early interventions results in healthier children, families, and communities, but also in reduced juvenile detention, higher rates of high school graduation and better outcomes for the entire community. Lack of access to human service interventions has been identified as a factor in increased rates of homelessness.

Security/Public Safety

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

King County government does not have jurisdiction over the police departments in our cities. However, as a King County Councilmember, I do have a role in overseeing the operation of the King County Sheriff's Office which contracts with most of our suburban cities. During the past 2019-2020 Biennial Budget, we included several expenditure restrictions that require the KCSO to share its progress and provide evidence about the implementation of existing and new policies before releasing parts of their budget.

As a member of our four-person Budget Leadership Team, I secured funding to expedite the Sheriff's processing of U-visas (for immigrant victims of crime) and T-visas (for victims of trafficking) in order to smooth the path to citizenship. Now, the KCSO must demonstrate how it is processing these requests in order to release further funds. In addition, we have jurisdiction over OLEO, the Office of Law Enforcement Oversight, which has an overseeing role of the KCSO operations. We recently have approved additional FTEs for OLEO and provided it with additional authority.

I also support making King County ICE-free, with the recognition that there are limits to what the County can do, considering that ICE is a federal agency. For example, recently we were informed that the King County Airport was not directly contracting with ICE, but that they were contracting with companies that were performing deportation flights via King County Airport. I stand with County Executive Dow Constantine's decision to phase out our contract with these companies. A quote of mine was included in Exec. Dow Constantine's press release regarding this, "As a sanctuary county, it is important that our airport complies with all local immigration and human rights ordinances. I applaud Executive Constantine's actions and am committed to doing everything within our power to uphold the rights of every King County resident and do our part to raise awareness about infringing on immigrant rights."

As a member of the Council, I am committed to diligently monitoring the Sheriff's Office and ensuring that their trainings are up to date.

General

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

I am both! I have been an active Democrat for most of my adult life, and have always held progressive values. I'm not only a Democrat, but also have been actively involved in electing progressive Democrats to the Legislature and other offices, e.g., holding fundraisers at my home, "surplusing" campaign money I've raised to the Washington Senate Democrats Campaign, the 36th LD Democrats, the Metropolitan Democratic Club, and so forth. And my progressive work has been part of all professional spheres of my career. As an academic, I specialized in educational equity and anti-discrimination laws. As a state legislator, I championed progressive causes, including environmental protection, ending human trafficking, providing protections against commercial sexual exploitation of children and sexual misconduct in schools and in higher education, funding health care and other essential services for children and other populations in need, protecting workers, and many other initiatives. I also initiated and led for years in the Senate on medical marijuana legislation and criminal justice reforms.

In my first term on the Council, I have focused on protecting Puget Sound, tackling climate change and alleviating homelessness, and on expanding funding for and access to transit, affordable housing, health care, human services, and an equitable justice system.

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As Chair of the Council's Health, Housing and Human Services Committee and of the King County Board of Health, I will continue leading in my second term on public health issues, including domestic and sexual violence, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, gun violence, climate change, and environmental health and justice.

I have been driving significant progressive change while in office. A good example is my having introduced anti-harassment and anti-discrimination legislation last year following months of preparation and work with the Executive Department, the Courts, departments headed by other separately-elected officials, and the Council itself. It was very challenging, even building support among my Council colleagues. The legislation required the overhaul and update of the County's discrimination, harassment—including sexual harassment—and workplace misconduct policies, procedures, and training protocols. The workplace misconduct provisions were new. The Council eventually passed my legislation unanimously, and its implementation will have a significant impact on the working conditions and lives of the County's nearly 16,000 employees.

I also believe that it is important to use my platform to explore issues in public discourse, specifically by lifting up voices, such as of women, LGBTQ, persons of color, low-income individuals. For this reason, I have hosted an annual Womxn's History Month panel focusing on issues relevant to women and other demographic groups for each year that I've served on the Council. Topics range from #MeToo to leadership, intersectionality and more. In these panels, I ensure that panelists represent a wide range of lived experiences and identities and a diversity of viewpoints.

- **What parts, if any, of the Washington State Democratic Party Platform (click link below to view) do you disagree with? Why? JKW**

I do not disagree with any of the fundamental parts of the Washington State Democratic Party Platform.

CORRECT LINK:

<https://www.wa-democrats.org/sites/wadems/files/documents/Washington%20State%20Democrats%20-%20Platform%20-%2020180616.pdf>

- **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 served as the King County Councilmember for District 4 since January 2016 and served in the Washington State Senate from 1994 to 2015 and previously in the House of Representatives for three years. During all my years of service as well as in my campaigns, I learned about what my constituents cared about and the many different ways that I as a public servant can be most effective in serving. Through interacting with my constituents, I have become even more certain that my values of precision, integrity, and compassion are important to have in public office.

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

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Yes, I was an elected PCO in the 36th LD Democrats for several years, a delegate to County and State Conventions and 36th LD and 7th Congressional District Caucuses, and was a delegate to the DNC three times for Howard Dean, Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton.

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

I'm motivated to run for a second term because it is my calling, and as I am well positioned to continue contributing to and addressing the urgent issues we are facing in our county, state, country and world. While I am very proficient in multi-tasking and in working effectively in getting progressive results, I have three main areas of focus, and I think it is accurate to say that they all fall under the umbrella of public health and equity/social justice.

Given that health--both of the environment and of our residents--enables people to live their lives fully and contextualizes most other challenges, I believe that the most urgent single issue is environmental health.

The following summarizes my plan as a Councilmember to continue tackling the climate crisis and environmental degradation in a just and equitable way:

- Using my leadership positions to call attention to the severe public health threat and inequitable impacts of climate change and pollution and to increase support for funding programs that reduce air pollution, water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Continuing to advocate for increased service hours, availability and accessibility of transit options throughout the region, both through Metro Transit and Sound Transit;
- Continuing working with Metro Transit in "greening" the bus fleet, and in working to speed up the timeline for achieving a zero-emissions bus and van fleet;
- Protecting Puget Sound by focusing on reducing the use of pesticides and other toxic chemicals; monitoring the County's implementation of recommended changes - resulting from Council mandate - in the aftermath of the failure of the West Point Treatment Plant; coordinating with the City of Seattle on management of CSO systems and reducing lead in drinking water (being addressed this year by the King County Board of Health);
- Supporting the campaign for voter approval of the 2020-2025 Parks, Trails and Open Space Levy that will appear on the August ballot;
- Preserving the Growth Management Act and pushing for land-use decisions that are just and equitable, including increased transit-oriented development and equitable decisions on distributing growth and siting pollution-creating facilities.
- Protecting our natural wildlife, including monitoring the study of which I secured funding on the impact of storm water effluent on marine life, especially Southern Resident Orcas and Chinook Salmon.

Pollution-creating facilities and infrastructure are disproportionately sited in low-income communities and communities of color, leading to serious public health consequences. I am committed to continue working with groups dedicated to environmental justice, including Front and Centered, an organized coalition of groups rooted in impacted communities that work together to advocate for environmental equity and justice.

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

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Truthfully, I don't consider these issues as "secondary," as they are inextricably linked when viewed through the lenses of public health and equity. As I wrote in the question above, I believe my three areas of focus all fall under the umbrella of public health and equity/social justice.

They are:

- Expanding affordable housing and alleviating homelessness
- Expanding access to equitable health care, child care, essential services, and our justice system
- Expanding transit, protecting Puget Sound, and tackling climate change

My approach to tackling these problems is to look at them holistically. I will continue working to expand equitable and affordable transit access and service hours as well as affordable transit-oriented development (TOD). Expanding transit and developing affordable housing close to transit through TODs are two of the most effective steps we can take to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions while still accommodating the projected population growth.

I obtained funding in the 2019-2020 Biennial budget for 200,000 hours of increased bus service, as well as funding for bases to maintain current and future bus fleets. I recently introduced legislation to waive Metro fares when Metro Transit activates its Emergency Snow Network to ensure that individuals are able to move safely through snowy conditions without driving their vehicles in unsafe conditions and for some to access shelter and services. And, working with Metro Transit, we were also able to make fare enforcement policies less punitive and harmful to our most vulnerable residents.

As a member of the Regional Affordable Housing Task Force (RAHTF) and One Table, I know that an adequate supply of affordable housing is critical. I also know that solving homelessness requires a holistic approach. Income inequality, structural racism, displacement of existing affordable housing, an inadequate supply of affordable housing and substance use factor into homelessness. I will continue working for policies that prevent displacement of affordable housing, expand treatment services and ensure public safety in our neighborhoods. This means also supporting the expansion of mental health and behavioral health treatment for those in need.

In my second term, I'll continue my focus on increasing both the supply of affordable housing and the number of 24/7 enhanced shelter beds with services provided to assist in exiting homelessness. I'll use my leadership positions to push for increasing access to services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and helping with the transition to permanent housing. In addition, I am convening this coming week a select committee with the purpose of guiding the review process and making recommendations to the HHHS Committee and to the entire Council on a major new homeless governance (HG) interlocal agreement (ILA) proposal to be transmitted by the Executive likely in August. The County's creation of a new joint authority with the City of Seattle and potentially suburban cities will be a major development. I can provide additional information if requested.

I believe equitable access to quality health care, child care, housing and essential services is a human right. As Chair of the Board of Health and of the Council's Health, Housing & Human Services Committee, I will continue to lead on making these important investments in our children and our communities. Investing in public health and preventative care pays big dividends down the road.

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- 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 very fortunate to be running in an exceptionally strong Democratic and progressive area. Even so, as an elected official, I have a track record of being able to get progressive results. I have always put a high priority on being accessible and responsive to my constituents and transparent in my decision-making. I have always been active in the community and have worked closely with numerous individuals and organizations throughout the county and region on progressive issues. I have consistently contributed my time and efforts to support progressive organizations, including hosting many fundraisers over the years in my home for Legislative District Democrat Organizations and the Metropolitan Democratic Caucus. Along with State Senator Karen Keiser, I co-convened Win With Women, a PAC dedicated to electing progressive women to the state legislature. Given that I have a long history of service, I've been committed to supporting and mentoring young people, and especially young women, to become advocates for progressive issues in a variety of fields.