

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: Rory Graves
Position Sought: Edmonds School Board
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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?

Yes. I think a living wage is crucial to improve quality of life across all professions and there are multiple models we can follow to determine what that wage is. I might start with the \$15 per hour wage which we have already successfully rolled out at Sea-Tac and Seattle proper (which might make it easier to pass). When the lowest earners among us do better, we all do better. \$3 more per hour is life-changing to someone making the state's minimum of \$12 hourly.

Education

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

The idea behind high-stakes testing -- the attempt to ensure that students are enrolled in effective schools and to close the achievement gap-- is well-intentioned, but we have seen it play out in a way that has been harmful to students and teachers. Every classroom is different and a teacher is dealing with a myriad of learning styles,

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social-emotional needs, languages, cultures. These tests fail to recognize the range of learning -- not just academic -- that goes on in a classroom. These tests also mean that time that could be tailored to a individual classroom's needs are instead being spent preparing students to fill in bubbles in a standardized test. There is a wide body of evidence that shows how high-stakes testing exacerbates inequities, both socioeconomic and racial, and many argue that this testing model helps feed the school-to-prison pipeline -- One study found that high school exit exams increase incarceration rates by 12.5 percent. Given the wide body of evidence we have in the wake of a push for high-stakes testing, I think we can find better options for helping guide school achievement.

Environment

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

We are lucky to live in a sunrise economy with billions of dollars invested in tech. The regulations that we make in our state end up influencing economies worldwide. While I am sure many of these companies are working on environmentally-friendly solutions and green energy, I think a good place to start is holding those businesses accountable for how they impact the environment by implementing a carbon tax. I was sad when we were unable to pass one, but am hopeful we will in the future. I also think rethinking out regressive tax structure in Washington will help our state have funds for more environmentally friendly investments. I can only imagine how paying for things like green transit and funding public education would improve if we had more money coming in from the wealthy corporations like Amazon in our state.

As far as the privatization of natural resources, I am a strong proponent of land protections and protecting our public lands. I think we can do more to protect our water and land from greedy investors through stringent regulation. Entire economies in our state rely on tourism and fishing, and I think recognizing the economic boon that a rich, clean, protected environment offers is important.

Finance/Taxation

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

The economic crisis of 2008-2009 and the subsequent bailout showed us how no bank is "too big to fail" and who the winners and losers are when they do.

One of the easiest ways we can stimulate our local economies is to move public funds into our own publicly owned banks. Public banks are also a good options for future recessions, as they can counter the cycles of recessions by making money available for local governments and businesses when private banks reduce lending. Local banks can be held accountable to public interest through their bank charters, and through affordable credit options, can reduce the need for government "rainy day" funds. I can't think of one good reason why we shouldn't invest in local banking.

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.

Everyone should have access to affordable and accessible medical care. When everyone can afford preventative care, such as vaccinations and cancer screenings, we actually see medical costs as a whole reduced. For example,

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it's more of an economic burden to deal with a measles outbreak than it is to give all citizens access to free vaccines. I also think the prohibitive cost of private insurance makes it harder for startups and small businesses. From a strictly economic argument, it makes sense. From a human standpoint, I don't want to see anyone in my community suffering financially, physically or emotionally simply because they could not afford the medical care they need. I don't want children in school to fall behind academically when a pair of prescription glasses or hearing aides would help them succeed. The more barriers there are to affordable health care, the higher the burden on our schools, on small businesses, and on medical providers.

Security/Public Safety

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

The school to prison pipeline is real. One major problem is a lack of oversight of School Resource Officers (SRO's). There is no available data for how officers are disciplining or arresting kids in our schools, and vulnerable students may be more at risk of being targeted by these officers, whether through racial profiling or through a failure to recognize the neurodiverse needs of a student to help de-escalate a situation. I plan to propose for better data on SRO interactions with our students to make sure that any disparities in disciplined incidents are continually addressed and that there is a model for accountability.

General

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

Yes. Yes. I believe in deconstructing systems that promote economic inequality, racism and sexism. I believe in doing all we can to protect the most vulnerable. I think Democrats and Progressives generally support policies that align with these beliefs, which is why I consider myself a democratic progressive.

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

I can't find anything 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 election. I have volunteered on many other campaigns for candidates and issues. I am most involved in campaigns for gun safety in our state, such as our background check initiative and extreme risk protection orders. I learned the power of grassroots organizing and storytelling to help create a groundswell of support for an important cause.

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

Not yet.

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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?

ESD laid off 25 teachers following a \$17.5 million shortfall. I will work to ensure that all students in our district have **equitable access to a quality education** and that schools remain safe, culturally competent, and trauma-informed spaces for all students. When staff reductions happen, it's often the students with the highest needs who suffer the most. **I stand with teachers.** Quality educators are the most important corollary to student achievement. I will be an advocate for lower student-to-teacher ratios and prioritize the retention of our quality teachers and aides. I will support increasing the resources available to English Language Learners and students who need extra educational support. I will advocate for clear communication and open, accessible tools to engage educators and parents with board decisions. I think this all comes to down to retaining and valuing educators so that they can serve our students. I know this may mean making cuts other parts of our district budget, but am willing to do that when needed.

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

Strong school systems include a curriculum that recognizes the neurodiverse and social-emotional needs of every student. It also means preparing students to find success in our sunrise economy, whether in trades or STEM fields. A quality education includes art, music, drama, and languages. I hope to do all I can to advocate for diverse options for students, and to help them find a successful path in a career track, whether it is college prep or exploring trade schools or another path. Options are important in helping students enjoy school and finding an area where they can feel confident in charting out their own path.

- 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 think we are a rather purple region, and am hopeful that democrats will come out to vote. People certainly seem driven to change things through democratic participation in recent years.