

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: Emily Myers

Position Sought: City Council District 4

Campaign Manager: Ceiran Crihfield

Consultant: NWP Consulting, Katherine Bobman Consulting (Fundraiser)

Campaign Email: Info@EmilyforSeattle.com

Campaign Phone: 360-559-1486

Website: EmilyforSeattle.com

Campaign Address: P.O. 95228 Seattle, Wa 98145

Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus?

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?

Seattle has the rare distinction of being one of the few states to raise its minimum wage to fifteen dollars an hour. Even so, as a Union member, I support higher pay for workers. I also think its critical we look at how the \$15 minimum wage is still not applied to much of the gig economy: from domestic workers to instacart delivery drivers -- many people are getting cut out of these workplace protections. I support increasing regulation of the gig economy so that every working person is making at least the minimum wage.

Education

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

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The data is clear - high stakes testing has done more to harm students and teachers than it has to improve performance of underserved schools. High stakes testing leads to lost learning time, reduces depth of learning, narrows curriculum focus and diverts most of the resources toward ELL and Math and away from history, world languages, and in depth science curriculum. It harms both students and teachers by leading to premature school closures and firing of high quality teachers due to poor evaluation metrics. It also leads to undue stress on young minds, psychological consequences of "failure" for students, and performance based competitive classroom cultures.

I believe there are strong models for evaluation for students using project based learning. Deborah Maier describes in her book "In Schools We Trust" a means by which to merge learning standards like Common Core and NGSS with project based learning as a way to evaluate student progress. These projects allow students to demonstrate deep learning and their accomplishment of learning objectives while also reinforcing their skills in reading, writing, and providing independence and creativity. Project-based learning leaves more space for culturally competent instruction and to set metrics based on an progress not an overall determination of "quality". Evaluation of PBL is much more complex, so it would not necessarily be scalable or feasible multiple times a year in every classroom, so we also need metrics in the interim. Adaptive assessments like MAP can be used more equitably as data tools to track student progress, but should not be key for teacher evaluation.

Teacher evaluation should look at a diverse set of criteria including in-classroom observation, portfolios of student progress, self-assessment, evaluation from principals, and the teacher's interpretive of adaptive testing. Classroom observation should look for traits like high expectations for student achievement, with a particular consideration for race and equity, ability to differentiate instruction and adapt lessons based on student needs, creating safe and respectful classroom environments, and demonstrating a commitment to pedagogical practice. and cultural competence. The question around testing should be "can the teacher intake the data and reorient instruction or identify resources for students stalling out on ELL or Math progress. It should not be that teachers showing low improvement rates lose their jobs. We have to work with teacher's unions, administrators, and teacher's themselves to determine the frequency of these assessment to prevent the process from being burdensome and disruptive to instruction. It will need to be more regular early in career.

Environment

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

At the local level we can balance incentives and mandates to encourage alternative energy development. The Clean Energy bill that just passed the state legislature sets strong guidelines for our energy structure to move to 100 percent clean, and will be a good backbone on which local guidance can be built. One means at the local level to encourage alternative energy is to instate green apprenticeships to prepare workers for building retrofits, electrification of our ports and public transportation, and for green new buildings. If our local builders have the skills to contract on green building projects it will facilitate a just transition and increase the use of alternative energy at the local level. We can also set mandates for buildings of a certain size to use alternative energy sources only and work clean energy retrofits into leases and mortgage agreements. My climate justice plan includes many of these suggestions.

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Finance/Taxation

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

[According to data from 2014](#), nearly 5% of Seattle residents are unbanked, and 14% are underbanked. Having access to banking is a critical step toward saving, gaining credit, and building wealth, thus I support public measures to improve banking access. Proposals, such as postal banking at a federal level, are a great opportunity to address this disparity and I would support this and help facilitate its implementation in the city and statewide. However, when it comes to supporting small businesses, particularly minority and immigrant-owned ones, and the ethical banking for our city's business, a public Seattle bank is the best option. A public bank would enable us to provide low-interest loans to support small business development and allow the city to finally uphold its 2017 promise of divestment from supporting fossil fuels, private prisons, and corporate greed by banking with Wells Fargo. I would support a Seattle public bank and support the current process, which under the leadership of Councilperson's Sawant and O'Brien has led to the carrying out of a successful feasibility study and the ongoing next step of building a business plan.

The push for a public bank in Seattle was led by activists and organizers, particularly because traditional for-profit banks, such as Wells Fargo, invested in the Dakota Access Pipeline. This exemplifies of how traditional banking institutions discriminate and marginalize communities of color, indigenous communities, and immigrant communities. Seattle has historically built systems, like our school systems and our zoning practices that entrench systemic racism and oppression. As such, we would need to let our communities of color and the organizers who pushed for a public bank maintain an oversight role and be involved in the development process. For public banking to be effective, we'd need to ensure it does not perpetuate the same injustices our traditional banking systems have.

If elected I will work to have the municipal bank business plan study completed and made public. Further, because there are state laws that will likely disrupt the development of a public bank, I will work with my colleagues to advocate for a change in the state policy to allow a public bank. This will take further engagement with the activists communities who support municipal banking to push state legislators to lift the regulations, and as an organizer, I am adept at building this type of public will for important policies like municipal 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.

I support Medicare for All for many reasons. First of all, a single payer healthcare system would give workers more freedom to leave unsafe work environments because their health insurance would not be tied to their jobs.

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Too often, I hear arguments against Medicare for All invoking people keeping their “high quality healthcare from their labor bargaining agreements”. In reality, every benefit that is tied to employment puts an employee at risk and vulnerable to coercion. It also increases the challenge of bargaining when complicated health insurance options are on the table. It would enable workers to fight for better pay and benefits and improved workplace safety protections if they did not also have to fight for good healthcare in their contracts. Second of all, a single payer system is a proven means by which to restructure the American Health Care System and get costs under control. Health economists cite the fee for service model of many insurers, largely unregulated by American law as the main to skyrocketing health care costs. Medicare for All would enable restructuring health care costs to be tied to results or outcomes instead of tied to each service. It would also give the government all of the negotiating power to lower drug prices and stabilize costs of medical procedures and equipment. My third major reason for supporting medicare for all is that our country has dramatic health disparities tied to unequal access to health care. Leading experts in behavioral health and addiction say that Medicare for All would do more than any of the rest of the opioid crisis policies to reduce overdose and help people reduce their risky drug use behavior. Access to long term care, medically assisted treatment, counseling services, and alternative therapies for chronic pain are all dependent on high quality health insurance, which many people experiencing opioid use disorder do not have. Opioid use disorder is just one example of how chronic health conditions are deeply challenging to manage for everyone but exacerbated by poverty. Medicare for All would help close these gaps in care and make it so that no American can go bankrupt because they get sick, get in an accident, or are born with a disability.

Security/Public Safety

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

I do not support the granting of Department of Defense grants to local police forces to fund militarization of police. In neighboring cities, like Portland, we see police show up to Black Lives Matter protests in full riot gear. These intimidation tactics are a threat to public safety and freedom of expression. I believe there are multiple paths we must take to reduce police use of force and prevent the militarization of local police. First, we should fund and expand programs like LEAD in Seattle that divert people being booked for behaviors that are symptomatic of poverty or mental illness into social services instead of the criminal justice system. Second, I believe we should increase the number of unarmed community resource workers, especially those with social work training, employed as public safety officers. Deescalation and mediation should be the primary goal of most public safety officers, and firearms can prevent this. Third, I believe we should work with police unions to strengthen their democratic unions so that front-line officers can be a part of the bargaining process and interface with community organizations and criminal justice reform leaders. These front-line officers often want more deescalation training and resources, and the change stalls out at the level of leadership in the police force. Finally, I think we need to look into how individuals are appointed to civilian oversight boards, what powers they have, and if it would be of value to elect representatives to police oversight. This could improve public accountability of the police force *and* the oversight.

General

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

I consider myself a progressive Democrat. I believe that Democrats, on the whole, represent

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working people and understand the importance for racial and social justice in our policy making. I consider myself a progressive because there is still too much corporate influence and resistance to new, diverse voices in parts of the Democratic party. I feel like we have the best potential to build strong, nationwide coalitions by strengthening the Democratic party and by moving it to the left while elevating marginalized voices.

- **What parts, if any, of the [Washington State Democratic Party Platform](#) (☐ click link to view) do you disagree with? Why?**
 - There are several provisions related to GMOs in the platform that I believe are non-scientific and contribute to fear-mongering around GMOs
 - I support adding public climate art to the arts platform
 - Achieving a net-zero carbon emission economy by 2050 - I believe we need a more aggressive timeline in Washington State. We should target 2035, the standard Sweden is aiming for, because we already have a robust renewable infrastructure and we do not have time to wait.
 - Within the “health care” reform section, it asks for NIH funding based on scientific merit not political agenda, but also asks for more “Research into cannabis-based pharmaceuticals.”, which is a political statement requesting a form of research. We should not have contradictory statements, and perhaps instead this should call for changing the schedule of cannabis products, so they are easier to research, when awarded high-merit scores by NIH review committees. This is a wonky one I’d address only because of the contradiction & my deep understanding of scientific grant review.
 - “Employers must provide a safe and harassment - hostility free work environment that 18 meets state and federal standards” -> the state and federal standards like Title IX are insufficient to protect vulnerable people in the workplace and the party should be advocating for a higher standard.
 - “Policies and public funding that make travel as safe and efficient as possible for all 14 modes of transportation, whether motorized or non-motorized;” - This stipulation implies that single occupancy vehicles should be allowed “efficient” use of roadways. Improved traffic flow for single occupancy vehicles cannot be prioritized over non-carbon alternatives at this point and we need to be sure our platform does not imply this.
 - “Addressing the achievement gap and disparities in education of Native students”: I support changing this language to “opportunity gap”.
- **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 campaign, but I participated in the Emerge Washington training program in 2018. I registered voters in 2008 in at my college, University of California Irvine, because I was excited to vote for Obama in the general election. I phone-banked for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 general, and learned by talking to voters that the expected outcome of that election was less certain than assumed by most. I volunteered for two of my fellow Emerge sisters, Congresswoman Dr. Kim Schrier and WA Senator Claire Wilson, including doorbelling and fundraising. I also phonebanked for Jessa Lewis who ran in 6th LD in 2018. From these races, through both volunteering and my personal friendships with Lewis and Wilson, I learned about the grit and determination it takes to run for office, how important a strong field game is, and

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how to stick your values and be true to yourself. I also collected signatures, knocked doors, and worked to support Initiative 1631 and Initiative 940. These campaigns taught me a lot about how to talk to voters, to meet them where they are, and to build momentum and support for issues important to me.

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

Yes, I was a PCO in the 43rd 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 was motivated to run for office because of the IPCC Report on Climate Change. I am also running because I'm a labor organizer and believe that worker protections that fight discrimination, sexual harassment, pay inequity, and more are essential. I list both because I believe that we can do more for workers and address climate change through smart, progressive climate justice policy. I have proposed a climate justice platform that centers a just transition for workers: green apprenticeship programs to help electrify our ports and transit, retrofit old homes and buildings, and build large new public works projects like green social housing. This program, aligned with the national goals of a green new deal, would make Seattle a leader in climate policy but also create opportunity for high paying, stable careers.

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

Seattle is facing a crisis of inequality. This means that affordable childcare and stable housing are unattainable for a large minority of people living in the city. My approach to solving these problems will rely on coalition building between vulnerable communities, organized labor, business leaders, and policy experts. We have to determine when zoning changes and incentives can help support new housing development and when we need to have a larger investment in publicly funding childcare and housing. I believe ultimately, we have to win changes to the state's tax codes to enable progressive income taxation to help fund housing, childcare, and other education infrastructure to reduce inequality.

- **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 not running in a heavily Republican area. I am running in a Democratic city and believe that my district will be torn between progressive and centrist democrats. I am running to earn the progressive vote on the basis of evidence based policy that centers human rights and believe that my argument will resonate strongly in the district, despite the loud voices of the anti-growth centrists based on past election results in the district, wherein candidates with similar platforms won the majority of votes.