

Washington State Progressive Caucus Questionnaire 2020

Submission Note: The submission deadline for this questionnaire is 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: Mary Ellen Biggerstaff

Position Sought: Position #2, LD22

Campaign Manager: My campaign is run as a collective, volunteer organization

Consultant:

Campaign Email: biggerstaffld22@gmail.com

Campaign Phone: 1- 360-704-0397

Website: Maryellenbiggerstaff.com

Campaign Address: P.O. Box 894 Olympia, WA 98507

Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? Yes

Labor

Do you support raising state and federal minimum wages? To what level? Yes, to 15\$ an hour state wide.

What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier? Support changing State laws so that all professions can engage in collective bargaining.

Education

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

I am not in support of high stakes testing, and am especially concerned that it is very inequitable. I have four teenagers, two who did well with standardized tests and two who struggled in that system. The two that struggled were able to thrive in schools that had performance based measures. After experiencing this first hand as a parent, I am a big supporter of performance based evaluations for teacher and students.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

I am against Charter schools, and would support eliminating them from the State and the Country.

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Environment

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

I would promote a carbon tax to help pay for the transition to renewable energy. I also am in favor of the initiative to create public power in Thurston County.

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

In the 2017 A Green New Deal for Washington State, it is recommended that 1.2 % of Washington's GDP be put towards clean energy investments. I favor wind and solar power.

Finance/Taxation

What would you do to facilitate implementation of public banking and monetary reform? I would follow the lead of the Public Banking Coalition and Sen. Bob Hawegawa in moving the existing legislation forward.

What solutions do you propose to fix WA State's highly regressive tax system? I am in support of equitable financing in the form of a state income tax, a capital gains tax and a working Family Tax credit. I know there is question of the legality of passing a state income tax, but I am in support.

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 am for Medicare for all (as outlined in Jayapal or Sanders plan) and the elimination of private insurance for a single payer universal health care for all.

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

As a state legislature, I am not able to make direct votes on Social Security or Medicare, but I am in support of strengthening programs that invest in public good.

Security/Public Safety

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

I would like to know more about how the Washington State Legislature could impact use of 1033 to obtain military grade. I do support the creation of a state wide, civilian led investigatory body that oversees law enforcement agencies.

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

I do not think this is a binary choice, and that any calls for security that require sacrificing our basic human rights should be rejected. I do not think that true security requires us to abandon privacy or other human rights.

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General

- Do you consider yourself a Democrat? Do you consider yourself a progressive? Why?
Yes, I consider myself both a Democrat and a Democratic Socialist
- What parts, if any, of the [Washington State Democratic Party Platform](#) (← click link to view) do you disagree with? Why?
This link does not work, but in reviewing the 2018 party platform, there is nothing 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 campaign, although I have been actively involved in the DSA while campaigning for both Bernie Sanders and Medicare for All through the DSA and National Nurses United. Through this work, I have learned to be bold in building a government that ensures Universal Human Rights.
- Have you ever been a precinct committee officer or held other Democratic organization offices?
Yes, I am a PCO in Thurston County.
- What single issue is the most important motivator for your run for office? What proposals do you have for dealing with it?
As a nurse practitioner, I have spent the past ten years working with underserved populations and seeing that only 20% of their health and well being relies on the care I can provide, where as 80% is due to the social determinants of health. I am running to change policy that will make a difference on this 80%. I promote Universal Health care for all, including mental and dental health coverage and strengthening our public health systems. This covers a broad number of topics and policy, but I want to focus all of my work on the building equity and guaranteeing human right.
- Are there also important secondary issues? Describe your approach to implementing solutions?
There are many, although I am aware that I cannot address all of them; criminal justice reform including eliminating private prisons and decriminalization of substance use disorder, strengthening workers rights, providing universal child care, equitable financing, and environmental justice. My approach in implementing solutions is to first spend a lot of time listening to others who are experiencing the problem or who may already have existing solutions and being very collaborative. This work needs to be done by building coalitions. I also think it is essential that I will not take financing from corporations and we need to reduce their influence in our government at all levels.
- 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?

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- I am running in a very progressive district, but as the first DSA candidate to run for State house in my district, I intend to work to build coalitions throughout the community outside of a core group of active members, especially among the working class.