

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: Liz Berry

Position Sought: State House of Representatives, LD 36, Pos. 2

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Do you request the endorsement of the Progressive Caucus? Yes- I would be honored!

I am so proud of our strong showing in the three-way primary: our people-powered campaign is leading by a margin of 9% and nearly 6,000 votes for a total of 50.8% (as of 8/14).

Labor

Do you support raising state and federal minimum wages? To what level?

Yes- I strongly support raising the state and federal minimum wage. We need to start by having a serious conversation about what a livable wage is here in Washington. Affordability issues are crushing our region and our future. It is one of the primary reasons that I am running. A quality life is just out of reach for too many in King County. Living wage calculators like MIT's place a living wage in King County at \$17/hour for a worker who has no children. If a worker has one child, this is almost doubled to \$31. However, living wage calculators account for the bare minimum. These livable wages do not account for long-term savings or emergency costs. As the COVID-19 crisis has shown us, many people are living just one paycheck away from disaster. I believe we need to seriously examine the high cost of living in King County and increase our standards of what a living wage truly is. According to a 2019 report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition 2019, workers need to make \$36.52/hour to afford a two-bedroom unit without being rent burdened. In my eyes, a living wage means that a worker is not rent-burdened and able to look ahead to the future with more financial freedom than living day by day. Therefore, I believe we should be considering more than \$35/hr to be a living wage in King County for a worker with one child.

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What legislation would you support to make organizing unions easier?

I believe that every worker should have the right to organize and bargain collectively to determine their pay, benefits, and working conditions. The right to form a union and engage in collective bargaining is enshrined in U.S. and international human rights laws, but for many U.S. workers it is a right that exists only on paper. I will always support the right of workers to form a union and freely bargain collectively.

At the federal level, I strongly support the “Protecting the Right to Organize” or PRO Act would allow more workers to conduct organizing campaigns and would add penalties for companies that violate workers’ rights. At a state level, I support all efforts to combat federal efforts to undermine the labor movement, like the devastating *Janus* decision, and will always stand up in support of legislation that makes it easy and fair for workers to organize their workplaces.

Education

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

I see high stakes testing as detrimental to both students and teachers. As the daughter of a former public school teacher and mother to two young children (George, 4 and Eleanor, 1) the issue of education is deeply personal to me. I know the pressures our educators face with the current rigid systems of evaluation. Currently, high stakes testing produces inequities in our public-school system, dampens the joy of learning and teaching, and uses disproportionate human and financial resources. I am in full support of giving greater freedom to educators to design their own evaluation systems. Why do we not trust educators-- as the professionals-- to design standards that fit their classrooms and districts? Our legislature took an important step in 2019 by passing House Bill 1599, and we should be continuing to remove the barriers posed by high stakes testing. As a legislator I am in support of alternatives to high stakes testing for all age levels, especially as we look ahead to an uncertain, and stressful, future of distance learning in the age of COVID-19.

What is your opinion of charter schools?

As a former public school student in Arizona, I know first-hand the devastating effects of charter schools in our communities. Arizona was one of the first states in the nation to adopt charters and we have seen them absolutely decimate its public school system. When my mom served on the school board, she was a vocal opponent of charter schools and was criticized for it. As Legislative Director for Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, I worked against voucher and privatization efforts on a federal level and am a longtime vocal opponent of the Trump/DeVos agenda.

I believe this is a legitimate policy issue where I stand out from my opponent who joined the board of the League of Education Voters in October 2012, the same year they sponsored Initiative 1240 to promote charter schools in our state. I have a history of standing up and out against charters, vouchers, education savings accounts and tuition tax credits and always will be an ally on this critical issue.

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Environment

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

In 2007, I took a job working for a little known newly elected Congresswoman from Southern Arizona named Gabby Giffords. I worked for Gabby throughout her tenure in Congress, lastly as her Legislative Director. I was proud to spearhead Gabby's work to combat climate change and protect our beautiful lands.

Gabby was a staunch environmentalist. She proudly served on the Science & Technology Committee from 2007-2011 and as Vice Chair of the Subcommittee on Energy and Environment. One of her top priorities in Congress was to expand funding and research for solar energy technologies. I directed much of her committee work including efforts to expand solar energy; invest in STEM education; preserve and protect beautiful public lands including the Saguaro National park, San Pedro River, and Sierra Vista Watershed Basin; and conserve our previous water resources against private exploitation.

Working on these important issues at the federal level taught me many lessons: the power of building coalitions to pass important policy priorities, the intricacies of the legislative process, and that economic downturns do not mean we sacrifice our progressive values and momentum to push important legislative goals forward. Given my history, I am committed to standing up against privatization of our natural resources and will push for increased development of alternative energy like wind and solar energy technologies.

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

Our state took an important step in 2019 passing the Clean Energy Transformation Act and now there needs to be willpower in Olympia to push for increased revenue for energy production. I recognize that these investments—smart, critical investments in our carbon-free energy future—demand new progressive revenue streams. I am in support of a tax on polluters, in addition to progressive taxation as will be discussed further, in order to adequately invest in renewable forms of energy production.

In Washington, we rely strongly on our hydroelectric power capabilities. I am in favor of increasing investments in our state's wind and solar systems, especially as we learn about the Snake River dams' detrimental impacts on our salmon, and orca whale, populations. I believe in creating a Green New Deal for all Washingtonians and will be a critical partner on these efforts in the legislature.

Finance/Taxation

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

I see public banking as an important and viable step for keeping Washingtonian's money in Washington. It also increases our state's capacity to invest in infrastructure projects which will be essential for stimulating our economy. I know Senators Hasegawa and Kuderer have been leaders on this in the Senate and I look forward to learning more and supporting this issue in Olympia next year. I see public banking and monetary reform as dovetailing with my priority to invest in public transit infrastructure to curb carbon emissions. I want to be a progressive voice for this issue in the House and articulate it as a way to mitigate our current economic crisis. By increasing Washington's own ability to invest in infrastructure-- without the steep loans and bonds of for-profit banks—we can speed up our state's recovery.

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

Fixing Washington state's upside-down tax code has always been one of my top priorities in the legislature, and with this present crisis, the urgency has never been greater. Our state budget is facing a \$7 billion+ shortfall, and now is NOT the time for austerity measures. We cannot be cutting services for the poor and middle-class while wealthy individuals and corporations do not pay an income tax. The time to fix this is now.

I believe all progressive revenue options should be on the table: personal income tax, corporate income tax, capital gains tax, wealth tax, higher rate for estate tax, and closing tax loopholes, among other progressive taxes.

We must use the momentum that this pandemic has created as a way to finally bring about real tax reform. I support the work of my seatmate Rep. Noel Frame who is leading the charge on tax reform in the legislature, and I support efforts to move this timeline up to 2021. I have experience building coalitions to pass meaningful legislation and that's how I intend to lead in Olympia. Similar to Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal's work as co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, I want to build a coalition of progressive legislators in Olympia who will come together to pass progressive policy. I am very proud that my campaign has been endorsed by Congresswoman Jayapal because she knows that I am a proven progressive leader who knows how to get things done.

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 strongly support Medicare for All and have been a vocal advocate for it. This issue is personal to me. My son suffered a stroke in utero and had to spend 10 days in the NICU after he was born. We had health insurance and it covered the \$250,000+ hospital bill. However, out of pocket expenses and deductibles were higher than we budgeted. But we were the lucky ones. We had health insurance and the savings to pay for unexpected bills. Many Americans are not so lucky and that's why so many bankruptcies are due to health care costs for *insured* Americans. After my son's health scare, my doctor ordered tests for me to figure out what happened and to see if any preventive measures should be taken for my next pregnancy as I planned to have more children. My insurance company refused to pay for the tests. I fought with them for months. They had a medical person at the insurance company determine that they were not necessary even though my doctor wanted them. How could this be? We should not have insurance companies telling patients how to manage their own health care. Period.

As the daughter of a trial lawyer, I grew up hearing the stories of my dad fighting insurance companies on behalf of his clients every day. To put it bluntly, I have no love for the insurance industry and look forward to the day that private health insurance becomes obsolete.

I firmly believe healthcare is a right and not a privilege and that is why I strongly support Medicare for All. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought stark contrast how inequitable our healthcare system is-- to providers and patients alike. Our service providers deserve hazard pay and access to PPE without fear of inadequate equipment. I was a proud signer of the Whole Washington pledge and see Washington as poised to push the envelope with the development of a state single-payer system. I am ready to be a champion for this in the Legislature.

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

It is unacceptable to me that Social Security and Medicare face decreases in revenue streams and cuts during crises such as this. We must be better funding Social Security and Medicare through progressive revenue streams. We should be funding these programs by stable streams-- and saving for them in the future-- by introducing more revenue streams via a combination of progressive taxes including corporate income tax, wealth tax, a state income tax among others. We must be pushing for Medicare for All—and in the meantime—we should be decreasing Medicare premiums. I will do all that I can do to be a champion for protecting Social Security, and expanding Medicare for All, in the State House.

Security/Public Safety

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

As Executive Director of the Washington State Association for Justice, I am proud to lead an organization that has worked for decades to hold powerful police departments and state and local governments accountable for police misconduct and systemic racism. As the largest civil justice advocacy organization in the Pacific Northwest, we worked with stakeholders to pass Initiative 940 which makes it easier to prosecute police officers for negligent deadly shootings and requires de-escalation and mental health intervention training for law enforcement officers. But it is not enough.

In the legislature, I will support demilitarizing the police; further restricting the use of excessive or deadly force by police; prohibiting the use of chokeholds; requiring state collection of data on police use of force; requiring the use of body cameras statewide; strengthening de-escalation and anti-bias training for officers; reforming police discipline; reducing funding to law enforcement and putting that money toward social and intervention programs; and other measures that will provide meaningful change for our historically underrepresented communities. We must also address “qualified immunity” for law enforcement officers, which shields them from justice and public accountability when they violate the civil rights of the people they are sworn to protect. I am ready to hit the ground running on this issue in the Legislature given my experience with WSAJ.

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

When I worked for Gabby Giffords she served on the Armed Services Committee under the leadership of Chairman Adam Smith. Our office fought to spotlight the urgency for energy independence for the United States as a matter of national security. This experience was formative for me and my values around security.

Americans—and all in our country irrespective of citizenship status—should not live in fear of our government surveilling them at the expense of their privacy. Already, we have heard of the racist tendencies of facial-recognition software, the overreach of ICE, and other instances of Americans’ privacy being infringed upon inequitably by the government. I believe remaining grounded in what truly qualifies a national security threat is the first step to ensuring all within our country retain their privacy without fear of retribution by our government.

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General

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

I am a progressive labor Democrat and I have spent my life and career fighting for the capital-D Democratic principles that define our party's values.

From a young age, my parents drove home the importance of fairness, justice, and standing up for those who have no voice. I grew up in Arizona, where my father fought insurance companies as a trial lawyer and my mother fought for public education as a schoolteacher. I got my first introduction to politics when my mom ran and won a seat on the local school board in 1988.

I knew I wanted to learn more about politics, so I went to Washington, DC to study at American University. My junior year, I went abroad to Namibia, South Africa and Belgium. I interned for the first woman Mayor of Cape Town and worked the political desk at the U.S. Embassy in Brussels. After college I started at the Women's Campaign Fund, helping to elect women to public office – a passion that sticks with me to this day.

In 2007, I took a job working for a little known newly elected Congresswoman from Southern Arizona named Gabby Giffords. She was a Democrat representing a Republican district. I worked for Gabby throughout her tenure in Congress, lastly as her Legislative Director.

And then it happened. On Jan. 8, 2011, the nation watched in horror as a gunman shot Gabby, our staff and constituents. My friend and colleague Gabe Zimmerman, Gabby's outreach director, was 30. We share the same birthday and started on the same day in Gabby's office in January 2007. He was the first Congressional staffer killed in the line of duty. Five other people died. Christina-Taylor Green was just nine years old when she was killed.

This experience touched my life in a profound way. Watching Gabby fight for her recovery over the last nine years and continue to fight to prevent the escalation of gun violence taught me about resilience, hard work and grit.

Years before working for Gabby, I had fallen in love with my husband, Michael Hill, a third-generation Washingtonian. He wouldn't stop talking about how the Pacific Northwest was the greatest place on earth. So in June 2011, we moved to Seattle and I quickly fell in love with the people and Washington's stunning landscape. I knew we would raise our family here and build a life together. I also knew I wanted to keep fighting for the issues I care so deeply about.

I worked as a campaign manager to elect progressives and women to public office. I also became the president of the National Women's Political Caucus of Washington, the state's oldest organization dedicated solely to recruiting and electing pro-choice women to public office. I also proudly served on the board of NARAL Pro-Choice Washington, where I advocated for candidates who would fight for reproductive justice.

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In 2013, I was afforded an opportunity to work alongside one of the most respected government affairs teams in our state: the Washington State Association for Justice. As the daughter of a trial lawyer, I knew what the right to trial by jury meant for working people who are trying to fight back against Big Pharma, Big Insurance, and unscrupulous corporations. I was later selected after a national search to become executive director, a position I now proudly hold. Last year, our organization, alongside a committed coalition of brave families, corrected a longstanding injustice and reformed the state's wrongful death law. Washington parents of adult children killed by preventable negligence now have equal rights under the law.

Throughout my life, I have always been moved to stand up for what I believe. In January 2017, I was spurred to action by attending the Women's March after I became a mother with the birth of my son George. When I became a parent, I instantly understood the stakes of our future at a personal level. And last year, Michael and I welcomed our daughter Eleanor into the world. And last year, Michael and I welcomed our daughter Eleanor into the world.

I've spent much of my adult life supporting and recruiting women to run for public office. Now I'm taking my own advice. I am running to fight for fairness, lift up working families and children, and bring affordability back to our region. I will stand up for the progressive values that have guided me my whole life as a working mom, nonprofit leader, and champion for creating pathways for women to have a seat at the table.

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

N/A

- **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 for public office. However I have dedicated my career to electing progressives to office, both as a campaign manager and as president of the National Women's Political Caucus of Washington. I tripled our fundraising and built a mission to recruit more women of color to run for office. I raised money for women so we can recruit more women to run. As a board member of NARAL Pro-Choice Washington, I advocated to elect candidates who would be reproductive champions in the Washington Legislature.

- **Have you ever been a precinct committee officer or held other Democratic organization offices?**
Yes. Elected Democratic Precinct Committee Officer, 2014-present

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

If the devastating effects of COVID-19 have taught us anything, it is time to prioritize people: workers, working moms like me, families, students, kids, retirees. We need to be uplifting the people who have uplifted us during this crisis like our health care workers, grocery workers, sanitation workers, transit workers, farmers, child care workers, teachers. Receiving the sole-endorsement of the Washington State Labor Council and 12 labor unions that represent more than 550,000 of our state's bravest frontline workers is the proudest moment of the campaign. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my priorities have shifted to thinking about what needs to be done to rebuild healthy communities, shore up our broken economy, and get people back to work.

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We must immediately expand paid sick leave, protect medical benefits, provide further emergency cash assistance, expand unemployment benefits, and provide rental relief and a temporary moratorium on evictions. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to create an economy that works for all of us. This will be my top priority in the State House.

We also must recognize the role systemic racism plays across all institutions, including government. As we make decisions to recover from the pandemic, I believe we should be making intentional, sustainable changes to our tax code, healthcare system and funding to undo this institutional racism-- and this includes demilitarizing our police and reallocating funding toward other community-based interventions.

I am the only candidate in this race who has promised to hold the line against austerity measures and budget cuts. This is why I have been sole-endorsed by *The Stranger*. Democrats cannot propose cutting people's employment in the middle of a pandemic as a solution to our budget shortfall. My top priority is to use our state's rainy day fund and to finally push for progressive taxation as a means to address this economic crisis.

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

While the present crisis demands our attention, there are many priorities that impelled me to run for office. Two of these issues include preventing gun violence in our communities and addressing climate change.

As former Legislative Director to Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, I know firsthand the destruction caused by deadly weapons in dangerous hands.

Gun violence is a public health epidemic that we need to continue to tackle head-on. In Olympia, I will fight to strengthen our laws, and to protect our communities and families from extraordinarily dangerous weapons by banning assault weapons; restricting access to high-capacity magazines; requiring background checks for ammunition sales; requiring reporting for lost and stolen firearms; and allowing for seized guns to be destroyed rather than sold at auction. I will also push for solutions that create and support holistic, community-based programs that interrupt and prevent gun violence. I am proud to be endorsed by the Alliance for Gun Responsibility and be a Candidate of Distinction by Moms Demand Action.

I also believe we cannot let up our fight against climate change. COVID-19 has taught us that sweeping societal changes are possible. It has also shown us what happens when we ignore science and research. If we react to climate change with the same intensity and urgency, we can create a Green New Deal for all Washingtonians.

As an environmental advocate, I have worked to fight climate change at a federal level as Legislative Director to Congresswoman Gabby Giffords and at a local level as a citizen activist. I believe our actions must be big, bold and transformative if we are going to curb climate pollution. I am committed to fighting for real action to fund clean energy technologies that will decarbonize our economy, and build a green infrastructure that will create good union jobs. This includes enacting a Clean Fuel Standard and imposing a tax or fee on polluters. We must clean our air and water, restore and protect the health of our beloved Puget Sound, electrify our energy needs as quickly as possible, and preserve our beautiful landscapes, while ensuring racial and economic equity throughout the process. This is what climate justice means to me: children who live in Georgetown have a right to breathe the same quality air as children who live just a few miles away in Magnolia.

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It is our responsibility to preserve and protect our environment so that all citizens have access to healthy air, water, communities and lands. This is about equity and fairness as much as it is about saving our planet.

Transportation is Washington state's largest source of pollution. Access to reliable transportation is one of the biggest barriers to accessing opportunity. Smart investments in our transportation system are critical for our environment, increase access to opportunity, and can help our economy thrive. I am committed to increasing state investments to public transit, improving bike and walk routes, and making bold investments in our infrastructure. We must do all that we can to ease traffic congestion in our region and make commutes shorter and easier. This also means increased housing options, including affordable housing, along transit corridors, and developing neighborhoods to be more walkable and liveable.

It's beyond time that the state prioritizes fixing our crumbling transportation infrastructure. I will fight for investments into clean transportation solutions that work: speeding up light rail to Ballard, increasing service and reliability for your Metro bus routes, transitioning our gas guzzling bus fleets to all electric batteries, and making electric vehicle ownership the norm not the exception by increasing electric vehicle charging stations and tools to make electric vehicles affordable for everyone. We must also replace the crumbling Magnolia and Ballard bridges so that they are safe and accessible for all users — especially by foot, bike, and wheel. The state legislature plays a huge role in investing in our transportation future, and I will be your transportation champion.

● **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?**

We are running in the heart of the 36th in an 85%+ Democratic voting district. Nonetheless, there remain pockets of the 36th who are less than pleased to hear my proposals for universal childcare and taxes on the rich and corporations. However, we are very proud of our three-way primary performance: we currently have 50.8% of the vote and are leading by a margin of 9% and nearly 6,000 votes. I am proud that the precincts who majority voted for me are those that majority-supported Sanders/Warren and typically align with *The Stranger*. Our win speaks to the fact that the people of Seattle are hungry for a true progressive champion to represent them in Olympia.

We are proud of the breadth and depth of the support our campaign has received. We have support from hundreds of grassroots supporters in the 36th Legislative District and committed ourselves to a strong field plan (making over 45,000 phone calls) in order to hear the concerns of our constituents. Our campaign has been sole-endorsed by FUSE Washington's Progressive Voters Guide, *The Stranger*, NARAL, Seattle 350, The Urbanist, Seattle Subway, and the Young Democrats of Washington. I have also earned the endorsements of many notable elected leaders: Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, Lieutenant Governor Cyrus Habib, King County Executive Dow Constantine, King County Councilmembers Claudia Balducci and Joe McDermott, Seattle School Board President Zachary DeWolf, State Senators Mona Das and Rebecca Saldaña, State Rep. Nicole Macri, Seattle City Councilmembers Teresa Mosqueda, Lorena González, Tammy Morales, Debora Juarez, and many more. I would be honored to earn the support of the Washington State Progressive Caucus.