

King County Democrats 2023 Endorsement Questionnaire

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What type of position are you running for?

City - Seattle

What position are you running for?

Seattle City Council

Are you a Democrat?

Yes

Have you ever been a member of another political party?

Qualified

Have you ever been found in violation of a Public Disclosure Commission, Federal Election Commission, or Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission regulation?

No

Do you have a code of conduct for campaign staff and volunteers?

No

If you have campaign staff, do you support them joining a labor union?

Yes

Do you support employees of your jurisdiction (e.g. your city's employees, the Port's employees, etc.) exercising their collective bargaining rights without fear of retaliation, including the right to bargain and strike for better working conditions and pay?

Yes

Are you willing to have yourself, your staff, and your peers undergo training to understand and combat institutional racism, implicit bias, and sexual harassment?

Yes

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate fossil fuel PACs?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate pharmaceutical PACs or corporate health insurance PACs?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate building industry PACs, including the Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW) and the National Association of Home Builders?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from law enforcement or sheriffs' organizations?

No

Will you return contributions from companies or PACs who are aligned with the organizations listed above and others that conflict with Democratic Party values?

Yes

Have you made any donations to Republican candidates or Republican Party organizations in the last 5 years?

No

Have you previously participated, or will you be participating, in a candidate training program like Institute for a Democratic Future or Emerge?

Qualified

For any Yes/No questions you answered "qualified", please explain:

On "Have you ever been a member of another political party?" I don't remember if I was ever formally registered as a Republican, though I suspect I was, because when I turned 18 (1998) I was still living in a Republican household and thought of myself as an R. But a few minutes away from home + college fixed that in a hurry, and by my junior year in 2001, I identified as a progressive Democrat.

On "Have you previously participated, or will you be participating, in a candidate training program like Institute for a Democratic Future or Emerge?" None currently planned, but am open to it

Please describe your background (education, employment, community and civic activity, union affiliation, and political activity).

I was the first in my immediate family to get a bachelor's degree, and by my late twenties I ended up at Harvard Law School, where I graduated with honors. That transformed my life and it catapulted me into the comfortable professional class. Rather than practice law, I spun a company out of MIT that was focused on improving mental health for call center workers and tried to make the world better. Since I launched my startup, I've helped bring products and services to market that I believe serve the greater good. This includes everything from helping people age in place to getting underrepresented communities better access to clinical trials, helping progressive political campaigns with access to critical data, and reskilling workers as the job market turns lives upside down.

I'm serving on the boards of the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association; supporting kids, seniors and families through the University YMCA; in transit advocacy through Seattle Subway, and statewide environmental and land use activism through Futurewise.

What motivated you to run for this position and how would you evaluate your success?

I am running because after nearly a decade of community activism and advocacy for progressive policies, I still don't see the change I want. So I'm coming off the sidelines and hopefully into the council chamber so I can more directly contribute to making Seattle a city where everyone, regardless of background, gender, or race, can thrive, and where those that aren't so lucky are treated with dignity and compassion.

I grew up in a wage-earning family, and I've seen firsthand the anxiety that comes from subpar pay and challenges created by the insane work hours it took to make ends meet. I saw how much that changed when we got stable housing my parents could afford, and when my dad was able to earn a strong living wage with robust benefits. I benefited enormously from the opportunities this created. Millions have not been so lucky, and our system is failing them.

I want to make Seattle work for everyone by making housing affordable, preventing homelessness, protecting our climate, making it as easy to get around the city without a car as it is with one, ensuring robust labor protections, and that Seattle is a safe city for all.

What are the top three issues of urgency that you will address if elected?

First, housing—focused on supply, subsidies, and stability. Here in D4, we have amazing neighborhoods with great schools, parks, transit and access to jobs. But we haven't always shared them, and it's time to change that. We must remove the barriers to homebuilding, so the market can catch up on our enormous housing deficit. We need to invest aggressively in affordable and social housing, to meet needs the market cannot. And we have to implement anti-displacement legislation to prevent displacement or, even worse, people getting pushed onto the streets.

Second, I want to make it as quick, convenient, and safe to get around this city without a car as it is with one. This means transforming our public right of way, and it's the best way to reduce carbon emissions and one of the best for improving quality of life, especially for the young, old, disabled or those without much money.

Third, we've got to take public safety seriously. That means investing in prevention through structural policies that change people's prospects, funding community violence intervention programming, implementing a large scale behavioral health emergency response for appropriate 911 calls, requiring best-practice civilian oversight of policing, and supporting effective rehabilitative practices.

How will you involve all residents and engage all communities in the decision-making process?

The only way to do this effectively is proactively. That means not just responsiveness to constituents and interest groups, but outreach, particularly where residents and communities who typically go unheard gather together. That means events, joining events in progress, and direct outreach, especially focused on the communities that we tend to hear from the least—children, people with disabilities, communities of color, renters, people living in subsidized housing, and working class people, especially those that don't (yet!) benefit from a union.

I also plan to send out a regular newsletter and some sort of regular video content through either TikTok or Youtube or both, as email newsletters mostly reach people who already have a lot of access.

How have you promoted an enduring environment of inclusivity, diversity, and equity?

As a white, cisgendered male, I acknowledge that I likely have serious blindspots regarding my attempts to be an ally. But I do have experiences that have helped me get better, and I'm always working on it. Two areas I've promoted equity are business practices and political advocacy.

In business, it's the products I've built (mental health for call center workers) and many I've chosen to work on (worker upskilling, better access to clinical trials for POC, technologies for aging in place). It's my choice of mentors (often women), business partners (co-founder was a female Nigerian immigrant), and employees (majority immigrants + people of color + people without formal degrees). When in larger companies, I've recruited, mentored, and promoted women and

people of color at higher rates than white men, and at higher rates than my peers did. And I've successfully identified bias in interview loops and called it out.

In advocacy, it shows up in my behavior (e.g., I've recruited many of our first renters to the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association) and the causes I choose (peace activism when younger, now housing, environment, environmental justice, transit and a preventative, rehabilitative approach to public safety. All promote equity.

If elected, how will you address inequalities experienced among BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, or other marginalized communities and advance an agenda of equality?

First, our history of bigotry toward marginalized communities means they experience most of our social harms. So the core pillars of my agenda - reducing the cost of housing, the rate of homelessness and reliance on cars, keeping all people safe, and ensuring fair wages and benefits for all - will overwhelmingly benefit these communities.

Second, we need targeted legislation and implementation. That means focusing social housing and affordable housing and anti-displacement legislation on communities that face the highest risk of displacement and enabling those that have been displaced to return. It means ensuring that robust civilian oversight and accountability in policing prevents the kinds of racialized policing we see today, and that attempts to narrow policing (e.g., photo radar) don't just recreate the same unequal enforcement pattern. It means explicitly driving benefits like direct cash support to communities that struggle the most, and building infrastructure for the disabled. It means funding environmental justice investments like street trees and parks and waterway cleanup, and road safety engineering, in communities we have disinvested in.

Third, it means having a spine and holding the line when powerful interest groups try to hijack these investments at implementation.

Will you commit to change zoning, permitting, and other obstacles in your city to increase housing availability for mid and lower income levels?

Yes

Will you commit to an increased percent of funding towards community and behavioral health services?

Yes

Will you actively support increased non-auto dependent transportation?

Yes

Do you support alternatives to the forced removal of unhoused people?

Yes

Do you support regulations to restrict police practices historically applied unfairly or abusively?

Yes

Do you support offering broadband internet access as a public utility?

Yes

Will you support allocating public safety budget dollars to the LEAD and CoLEAD programs of community-based intervention and diversion?

Yes

All municipalities are facing housing issues in their region. What changes will you make and how will you fund those changes?

While the state took a good first step this legislative session in enabling a small increase of permitted units across cities, that first step is admittedly quite tepid in Seattle's case. The Comprehensive Plan update for Seattle is coming up - I'm strongly in favor of the proposed Alternative 6. Multifamily housing options shouldn't just be constrained to small areas of the city known as urban villages - they should be spread all across the city, enabling working class people and families to live closer to where they work, run their errands, and go to school. We simply need way more housing supply to achieve our broader goals and to make a dent in the housing affordability challenge. We also need to bolster the subsidy and stability sides of the housing cost formula by putting more funding into affordable housing programs, supporting the voter-approved social housing developer with start-up funding needs, expanding rental assistance programs, implementation of stronger tenant protections, and ensuring a right to return for those displaced by development. For all expenditure needs, I'll be an advocate and vote for more progressive revenue streams. I detailed my progressive revenue plans in the Stranger in an oped titled "Seattle Needs Money."

All municipalities are facing behavioral health issues in their region. How is your community specifically affected, what changes will you make, and how will you fund them?

King County has taken the lead with a large investment that was recently approved by voters to reduce the precipitous loss of crisis care beds and build up the behavioral health care workforce pipeline. I believe we have a tremendous opportunity and need to supplement this to ensure a full continuum of care for people facing behavioral health challenges right here in Seattle – from preventative and post-acute outpatient treatment, to longer term beds for folks with more serious challenges (the levy will only build back residential treatment beds to 2018 levels). Only once we fill in all the gaps will we begin to heal the immense damage that Reaganite policies have wrought on our city.

We must also complement this with a robust and scaled fourth response to 911 calls, so that we can send the right professional to the right crisis, and ensure that our behavioral health crisis are handled in the most effective, humane way.

Ongoing inequity is an issue in King County. Other than housing, what are your immediate plans for addressing this injustice?

As mentioned in the question above about marginalized communities, my plans for addressing injustice include: making it as easy to get around without a car as it is with so we have mobility equality, and that includes re-engineering our roads for safety and with a tree canopy, making all areas of the city accessible to people with every level of ability, preventing crime through the structural investments mentioned throughout this questionnaire and, specifically, community violence intervention programming, sending a behavioral health professional to acute behavioral crises, ensuring that policing is responsive and genuinely accountable to civilian oversight, focusing and prioritizing our public investments through an environmental justice lens, and directly sending financial assistance to those who need it most.

Many cities have claimed a commitment to reducing carbon emissions. What specific actions will you take to ensure that your city drastically lowers net carbon emissions by 2030 and achieves carbon neutrality by 2050?

Over 60% of our emissions come from personal transportation, with more than a third of that from building vehicles, and the rest from operating them. Since Seattle cannot reduce manufacturing emissions, we have to change how people get around.

That means redesigning our right of way to prioritize accessible walking, biking, and transit. It means our pedestrian, biking, and transit networks must be complete (as in, continuous, and easily connected to everywhere people want to go), and for pedestrians and bicyclists, genuinely separate and protected. We must eliminate all parking minimums and should tax parking lots, especially new ones. We need to fund frequent mass transit and hand right of way to buses so they can move more people, quickly and reliably. We need to electrify everything that isn't human propelled.

Another 20% of our emissions come from constructing and operating residential and commercial buildings. We need significant density bonuses for zero or near zero carbon construction and to immediately allow for single stair, mass timber construction up to 8 stories. We should weatherize and electrify existing buildings. And we should remember that emissions are much lower for folks living in denser, complete neighborhoods.

Will you support allocating ongoing operational and future capital funding, as well as prioritizing public lands to ensure the Seattle Social Housing Developer (as enacted by I-135) is successful?

Yes

Will you support re-funding JustCARE or a similar program to provide community-based public safety resources?

Yes

Do you support safe consumption sites in every city council district?

Yes

Will you introduce or support legislation to fund affordable childcare facilities, with workers paid a living wage?

Yes

Will you support moving Seattle elections to even years to increase voter turnout?

Yes

What specific legislation would you introduce to reform the Seattle Police Department?

The most important thing we should start with is a scaled behavioral health crisis response. A large percentage of 911 calls are behavioral health-related and do not require an officer. We can also avoid a great deal of inequitable policing by getting police out of all traffic stops that don't involve an imminent risk of harm (e.g. reckless driving) and moving to automated enforcement, with strong civil liberty protections to ensure that BIPOC communities don't continue to be overpoliced. There is also no reason why SPD should be involved in parking enforcement or game-day traffic

management. The city should instead require flaggers and have them paid for by those profiting from the events. This would save approximately \$50M a year.

Second, the policing we do offer needs to be accountable, and Seattle voters have been clear about this in past initiatives, as have King County residents with the charter amendment. The SPOG contract needs serious modernization. Real accountability requires full civilian oversight, and full transparency, which means subpoena power. Oversight means the ability to take disciplinary action based on objective criteria, and to make referrals to prosecutors when appropriate.

What are your policy priorities to ensure that Seattle residents are able to earn living wages?

Unions play an enormous role in ensuring that workers are paid living wages and have good working conditions. Because of decades of union busting and trickle down tax policy, workers have been left behind. My first focus will as a result be on ensuring that we're strongly supporting the rights of workers to collectively bargain and by using the resources of the city government to back up workers in the public sector. For instance, I'd like the city to require project labor agreements on all city-funded projects. We can also condition hotel permitting on certain public benefits, including unionization support. Wherever possible, we need to make it easier for labor to build long term power, not just get one-off wins. That said, we need to be delivering those wins too - specific policies like those we've delivered in the past - higher minimum wages, hotel workers labor rights, or sick days for gig workers. We need to do more, like extend those sick days to all gig workers, expand the availability of 0-5 childcare, ensure that minimum wage is 40% of the median wage or higher, and make sure all city employees and contractors' cost of living increases are protected.

Do you support the taxes recommended in the 2018 Report of the Progressive Revenue Task Force? Please share your thoughts.

Yes I do. Broadly, I think we need to be raising more progressive revenue in all shapes and sizes. I've publicly announced my support for some of these options in my own Stranger piece in January, including increasing the JumpStart tax (slightly more than was entertained by the council during the latest round of budget negotiations), creation of a vacant homes tax as Vancouver, BC has, levying an open parking lots tax, and enacting a citywide 1% income tax with a flat fee deduction that would make it de-facto progressive but still likely to be allowed by the courts. The city is facing down several years of uncertainty in its economic and budgetary forecasts, but that must not mean austerity measures. We must seek out a more diversified and progressive tax structure so that we avoid any cuts and can make the investments we need.

Will you support a Comprehensive Plan that includes upzones that allow for multifamily housing, light industrial, and commercial uses in all residential areas, as well as allowing for high rises near all light rail stations, as described in the proposed Alternative 6 plan?

Yes, yes, yes! I also support the proposed Alternative 6 plan, as previously discussed. I've discussed some of my ideas about the comp plan at length in an article "Unserious in Seattle" at the Urbanist, as well as on their podcast. I also detailed some of my ideas at length last summer in the online engagement hub at the following comment:

<https://engage.oneSeattleplan.com/en/ideas/end-country-club-zoning> - a comment Cary Moon retweeted and said (on twitter, it's still there): "And for inspiration, here is a comment calling for big bold inclusive affordable green future for our city, thanks to @ronpdavis"

CERTIFICATION: I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.

Yes

Created on: May 1st, 2023

Changed on: May 1st, 2023