

Candidate Questionnaire

WA State Legislative Representative District #24, Position 2

Candidate Information

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1. Cost of Living:

What are the top three state policy issues driving up the cost of living for working families and seniors in the 24th District?

There are several factors at the national level that are outside the scope of your question, including tariffs, the impact of the Iran war, and the cost of healthcare as driven by federal policy. But the question focuses on state policy issues so that is what I will address.

- a) We have high real estate and sales taxes. It is how our state finds itself, and ultimately some reform to that may be required, though I do not believe an income tax on top of regressive sales taxes is the solution. We do need to look at budgeting and spending at the state level. As recognized by former Democratic governors Gregoire and Locke, the state's budget has grown faster than inflation and population growth. This ballooning of state spending on areas beyond core obligations of education, infrastructure, and public health and safety, leads to counties and cities adopting added sales tax and property tax add-ons for things like school construction, school operations and maintenance, homelessness, housing, transit, and law enforcement.
- b) The Climate Commitment Act, while well-intentioned, has not resulted in significant reductions in carbon emissions but has resulted in what is effectively a regressive tax on fuel, groceries, building material and other goods.
- c) Certain state regulations, including the Growth Management Act and the most recent energy codes, have added to the costs of housing construction.

What specific legislation or budget action would you prioritize to address the most significant of these?

The state budget needs an overhaul to make sure that we are prioritizing sufficient funding for education (including the replacement or retrofitting of aged school buildings), infrastructure including highways, bridges, and the electrical grid, and public health and safety including healthcare and law enforcement. There will be tough choices on what can be funded beyond these and what is better left to non-profits to address rather than the state.

We need to be smart about balancing our approach to timber. We should not revert to the days that trees including old growth were routinely harvested by clear cutting without regard to

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environmental impact. But nor should we so restrict harvest such that we severely deprive schools, fire districts, hospitals and other junior taxing districts of needed funding and eliminate jobs while wildfire hazards are created. Balance is required. Don't touch the fire-resistant old growth and near old growth, or timber bordering riparian lands and don't plow into roadless areas. But keep stands that are in production in rotation, and manage this to reduce the incidence and intensity of wild fire. This is both safer and will generate needed revenue and employment.

The Climate Commitment Act should either be repealed or amended to cap carbon credit auction prices, instead focusing on the development of alternate clean energy sources to address climate change.

The Growth Management Act should be amended to permit smaller buildable lot sizes and multi-family housing units in our historic village centers outside of the designated urban growth areas, i.e., within LAMIRDS (Local Areas of More Intense Rural Development). Code such as the most recent energy code should be reviewed and revised to ensure the benefits do not outweigh the costs so as to not contribute to keeping people out of housing. Other codes, such as septic, need to be right-sized to recognize that requirements for structures built on the waterfront in a dense urban area may be too strict for structures built on acreage away from bodies of water.

2.Housing Affordability:

What specific legislative proposals do you plan to introduce or support to increase the supply of homes affordable to working households in the 24th District, while ensuring new development has adequate water, sewer, transportation, and public service capacity?

As noted above: The Growth Management Act should be amended to permit smaller buildable lot sizes and multi-family housing units in our historic village centers outside of the designated urban growth areas, i.e., within LAMIRDS (Local Areas of More Intense Rural Development). Code such as the most recent energy code should be reviewed and revised to ensure the benefits do not outweigh the costs so as to not contribute to keeping people out of housing. Other codes, such as septic, need to be right-sized to recognize that requirements for structures built on the waterfront in a dense urban area may be too strict for structures built on acreage away from bodies of water.

The GMA changes noted above pair well with legislation passed last year, which was a bipartisan bill sponsored by our own Representative Adam Bernbaum, that permits the use of community septic in our village centers.

Builders should be provided density bonuses for including lower priced housing units within developments.

Most importantly, we need to grow our living wage business base so that working people actually earn enough to have a chance of affording housing, including the purchase of a home and building of generational wealth.

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3. Climate and Energy:

What state climate policies would you support or oppose?

As noted above, I do not believe the CCA has yielded sufficient results to justify the cost. I support state investment, in the form of tax credits, to spur the development of alternate clean energy sources within the state. This includes solar (I have personally had three solar systems installed) and wind, but this is not sufficient given our weather patterns. I would like to see the state invest in small modular nuclear technology at seismically appropriate locations, geothermal, wave energy, and cogeneration technologies.

How would you balance emissions reduction and climate resilience with reliable energy, household affordability, rural livelihoods, and local economic needs?

It's taking a bit of time and will not happen overnight. Through tax incentives we should facilitate the development and implementation of alternate clean energy sources, and this may also include state investment in improvements to our electrical grid. While developing these, we still need natural gas.

Timber needs careful management for local revenue for essential services, jobs, and reduction of wildfire risk, while maintaining and expanding old growth inventory and riparian areas.

How can local, state, and national governments best work together to mitigate the effects of climate change? What would you do to help promote this type of cooperation?

We do not live in a bubble so these governments plus tribes do need to cooperate and work together. Our elected state leaders including legislature should be lobbying the federal government to protect our national parks and wilderness areas and to put pressure on other nations (e.g., China) that are behind the curve on pollution control and clean energy to catch up.

4. Rural Health Care Access:

What state policies would you support to expand timely, affordable access to primary care, behavioral health, emergency services, and providers in the Olympic Peninsula and other underserved parts of the 24th District?

The state needs to fund in-patient mental health and addiction treatment centers. Closing Western and Eastern state without replacing them with better run facilities was a mistake.

We need to grow our economy to provide more living wage jobs with private payer insurance to balance out insufficient Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement, and lobby the federal government to revise the definition of Critical Access Hospitals to include all of our rural hospitals, including OMC. They are in fact all critical. This is until the time, if ever, that we

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completely revamp our healthcare system at the national level. I for one would like to eliminate the profit-making insurance industry from our basic healthcare system. I would prefer we have a UK-style system in which healthcare providers are employed by the government, everyone has basic healthcare through that government system paid for by our taxes, with no insurance in the mix. A hybrid system could then provide a level of insurance for faster/specialized care on top of the basic for those who chose it to address some of the shortcomings of the UK system. But until that time, working within the confines of our current system, we need to focus on increasing private payer participation in our local economy and address the Critical Access definition.

We also need to not turn our back so extensively on DNR timber revenue as of late, using the balanced approach discussed above, to better support our local fire and EMS services.

What would you do to ensure clinics and hospitals have the staffing and funding to stay open?

See above re economic development and critical access. Additionally, addressing the housing issues as noted above is important so that recruited personnel can find an affordable place to live. And reimbursement and tuition rates for our local community colleges needs improvement so that we can train technicians and nursing staff that are committed to staying local. And finally, well managed forests that generate DNR timber revenue also supports our hospitals.

5. Water:

Do you foresee major changes in how water is distributed and used in Washington?

That is already underway as we improve habitat for fish. We will likely need to adopt permissive local and regional catchment policies in view of our warming climate and loss of winter snow pack.

How would you ensure that the needs of agricultural and technology sectors are balanced with the needs of our communities?

Residences and agriculture should be prioritized over data center and golf course use.

6. Homelessness:

What strategies would you support to reduce homelessness in the 24th District?

I see five steps as necessary:

- A) Acknowledge that a significant majority of those living on the streets struggle with mental illness and addiction. Others are there due to short term economic or life issues (job loss, domestic violence, etc.). Such individuals seem well positioned to be caught and lifted by safety nets. But those struggling with addiction and/or mental illness need something more.

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- B) Open and fund sufficient addiction and mental health treatment services.
- C) Restore a felony penalty for public use of hard drugs so that there is an incentive for individuals to choose drug court and treatment instead of prison, which is what our sheriffs and police chiefs tell me is needed.
- D) Get people stable with treatment.
- E) Once stable and sober for a period of time, such as one year, expunge their records of any drug convictions (as opposed to conviction for other crimes such as assaults, etc.) so that individuals can move forward in life including gaining meaningful employment.

How would you balance prevention, treatment, shelter, and public safety in addressing homelessness?

See above. Housing first does not seem to be working. Locking up and throwing away the key is also not the answer. It must be housing plus recovery and treatment.

7. Election Integrity:

What do you see as the biggest threats to election integrity in Washington State?

I am confident in our state's and counties' election systems. Recent changes in USPS mail processing has left some voters disenfranchised due to use of USPS mail to return their ballots as late as the day of the election, which end up not being timely postmarked. I would like to see additional official ballot drop boxes installed in rural areas and invest in a state education campaign that they drop boxes be used for those who return their ballots close to the election date. The one other change I would like to see is a revision to our motor voter statute such that more than a check box is required to register to vote. My fear there is that individuals, particularly for whom English is a second language, may inadvertently check I box despite being unqualified to vote.

What would you do to protect our elections?

See above.

8. Forests, Water and Watersheds

What do you see as the biggest threats to Washington's forests and waters? What actions would you take to mitigate these threats?

See above.