

Candidate Questionnaire

WA State Legislative Representative District #24, Position 1

Candidate Information

Your Name: Adam Bernbaum

Campaign Website: electadambernbaum.com

Email Address: adam@electadambernbaum.com

Phone Number: 703-597-4884

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?

The biggest cost drivers for families in the 24th are housing, childcare, and health care. All three have been made worse by inflation over the last several years, and a lot of what's pushing prices now comes from outside Olympia. Federal tariffs raise what people pay for building materials and household goods, and federal cuts to Medicaid and food assistance shift costs onto states, hospitals, and families. The state can't undo those decisions, but it can avoid making them worse and focus on the costs it does control.

Washington's tax system also matters here. We rely heavily on sales and property taxes, which take a larger share of income from working families and seniors on fixed incomes than from wealthy households. However, Washington State policy has increased the cost of housing in various ways, while we've made progress on siting and permitting, we have consistently increased cost through the building code. In the state's response to budgetary pressures, we've also de-prioritized planned cost reductions for childcare by delaying the WCCC expansion and cutting Transition to Kindergarten slots.

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

Housing is where I'd put the most effort, because it drives cost for everyone. I passed HB 2269 to make it easier to build housing in rural areas. I want to keep going in that direction, with more state investment in the water and sewer capacity that small towns need before new homes can be built. My budgetary focus this session will be defending healthcare and childcare allocations in the budget. I'll continue to focus on finding small wins to expand access to childcare and will be focusing on finding policy reforms that can be accomplished with minimal budget impacts.

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?

Across most of the peninsula local jurisdictions have already implemented pro-housing zoning reform. The real need is infrastructure. To that end, I'll continue to advocate for expanding CHIP, which goes toward building infrastructure in support of affordable housing. I'll also push for budgetary reforms

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around the Public Works Board, which focuses on sewer and water systems. In the last session budgetary changes significantly damaged its long-term fiscal viability, and I'll work with other legislators from rural districts to undo those changes. Finally, I'll introduce legislation to address inefficiency in our building code. We should continue to pursue carbon-conscious policies, but not when the cost of those policies add significantly to the cost of housing and their benefit is marginal.

3. Climate and Energy:

What state climate policies would you support or oppose?

I'm leading a stakeholdering group that focuses on reforming our renewable energy siting and permitting process. I'll introduce two bills this session to make it easier to build renewable energy.

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

I don't think these goals are in tension in Washington State. I genuinely think that increasing renewable energy development will both decrease the cost of energy for households while reducing carbon emissions. Increasing energy availability will also incentivize more business development, which creates jobs and tax revenue for local government.

Washington State has ambitious climate goals

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?

As stated above, my primary focus in the upcoming session is working on renewable energy development. That will require resolving challenging discussions with local government about the ways that the local government permitting and appeals process impedes renewable energy development.

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?

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

Federal Medicaid cuts are the most serious threat to health care on the Peninsula right now. Our hospitals, including Forks Community Hospital, Olympic Medical Center, and Jefferson Healthcare, serve a lot of Medicaid patients, and when those payments drop, services get cut. The state needs to keep Medicaid rates at a level that covers the actual cost of care.

This coming session I'll be pursuing budget support for rural EMTs, who cover huge areas with thin staffing and often volunteer crews. I'll also be pursuing a B&O tax exemption for rural obstetric services. Labor and delivery units have been closing across rural Washington because they lose money, and every closure means longer drives for women in labor.

On staffing, I support loan repayment for providers who work in rural areas, more rural residency slots, and more support for rural hospitals to develop their own staff. For behavioral health, we need more

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crisis response capacity outside of emergency rooms and more support for telehealth, which has made a real difference for people who live far from a provider.

5. Water:

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

Yes. After the Foster and Hirst decisions, Washington's water law and the Growth Management Act are on a collision course. Counties are required to plan for growth and confirm water is legally available before permitting new homes, while the courts have made it much harder to show that it is. As summers get drier and snowpack shrinks, that conflict gets sharper. The conversation about the future of Washington's water policy is likely to pop up in the next session, but I don't anticipate we'll see any bills this year.

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

There are some technological adaptations that can help mitigate the water challenges our state faces, such as covering irrigation ditches and updating old water systems. This session, I expect we'll see legislation proposing model ordinances for data centers which will include requirements about water use and ecological impacts. Ultimately, while these policies and technological adaptations are important, the heart of this policy space requires resolving the broader tension between post-Foster water case law and the GMA.

6. Homelessness:

What strategies would you support to reduce homelessness in the 24th District? How would you balance prevention, treatment, shelter, and public safety in addressing homelessness?

Preventing people from losing housing is the cheapest and most effective thing we can do, so I support rental assistance and eviction prevention. For people who are already homeless, permanent supportive housing combined with behavioral health and addiction treatment has the best track record.

One gap I want to address is people who cycle between jails, hospitals, and the street without ever getting consistent care. Washington already allows mental health advance directives, where a person decides ahead of time how they want to be treated during a crisis. I want to expand them so people can opt in, while they're well, to a coordinated care model like LEAD, where behavioral health providers and law enforcement work together. Part of that would allow a temporary waiver of a medical power of attorney so their care team can coordinate across the systems they move through. The idea is to give people a say in their own care before a crisis, rather than leaving every institution to start from scratch each time.

7. Election Integrity:

What do you see as the biggest threats to election integrity in Washington State? What would you do to protect our elections?

The biggest threat to Washington's elections right now is federal interference, including demands for sensitive voter data and attempts to change election rules by executive order. Threats and harassment against election workers are also a serious problem, and disinformation makes both worse.

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Washington runs secure, well-audited elections, and I want to keep it that way. I'll support keeping voter data under state control and resisting federal requests that put voters' personal information at risk. I'll push for stable funding for county auditors, who run our elections with tight budgets and small staffs. And I'll defend vote-by-mail, which works well here and has broad support among Washington voters of both parties.

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?

Wildfire is the most immediate threat to our forests, and it's getting worse as fire seasons lengthen. Drought, loss of salmon habitat, and polluted stormwater, including the tire chemical 6PPD that kills coho salmon, are serious threats to our rivers and streams.

I passed HB 1563 to make insurance available for prescribed burns, which are one of the best tools we have for reducing wildfire risk but have been hard to carry out because of liability concerns. I'm now working with stakeholders on broader wildfire mitigation and prevention legislation. I also support stronger funding for forest health work at DNR, continued investment in replacing culverts that block salmon passage, and research and funding to keep stormwater pollution out of our waters.