

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?

While there are many factors impacting the cost of living – especially with a federal administration that’s failing everyday people – the three state policy issues driving up the cost of living for working families and seniors in our district are housing, healthcare, and childcare. I have talked with thousands of people throughout the district at their doors and at community events, and I have consistently heard about issues the most. Housing costs have risen much faster than many people’s wages and we don’t have enough housing that working people or folks on fixed incomes can afford. Healthcare is also more expensive and harder to access here. Our rural hospitals and healthcare providers struggle financially due to the higher rates of Medicaid and Medicare and their too-low reimbursement rates. People also have to wait months sometimes for appointments or we have to travel long distances to get care. For working families with young children, childcare can cost as much as housing, and many folks have to get on a waitlist to get a spot for their child or children. Decreasing costs and increasing access to quality housing, healthcare, and childcare are my top issues.

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

We have the second most regressive tax code in the country. That means that the people who make the least amount of money pay a much larger share of their income in taxes than the wealthiest people do. We rely heavily on sales and other consumption taxes, which means working families and folks on fixed incomes feel those taxes every time they buy things. I think we need to continue shifting the burden away from those with low and middle incomes so our system here in WA is more fair and equitable. I would prioritize expanding the Working Families Tax Credit and looking for additional ways to reduce taxes on basic necessities (ex: the tax exemption for diapers that was worked into the Millionaire’s tax bill). I would also look for more ways to level the playing field in our tax system.

Candidate Questionnaire

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?

I would like to serve on the Capital Budget Committee because so much of what we need to solve our housing shortage is tied to the lack of infrastructure in the places that are best to build more densely. On that committee, I would advocate for much-needed investments in water and sewer infrastructure expansion, following in Rep. Tharinger's footsteps (ex: the Port Hadlock infrastructure extension project he worked on with other state and federal partners to allow for 138 more homes there).

I support continued investment in the Housing Trust Fund to provide more affordable housing for folks, but we also need more housing for people who make too much to qualify for traditional affordable housing and still can't afford to buy or rent where they work. I support allowing more middle housing and density in places where it makes sense, which ties back to the need for infrastructure expansion and taking a look at how we can update the Growth Management Act (GMA) to fit our needs. I also support preserving existing below-market rentals and expanding property tax relief for seniors and low- and middle-income homeowners.

3. Climate and Energy:

What state climate policies would you support or oppose?

I love that Washington State has been a leader in combating climate change and working toward lowering emissions. This is a hefty task with solutions that are not perfect, nor are they easy, but combating climate change is the biggest challenge we have as a society to ensure we have a healthy Earth to leave for future generations. That's why I support the goals of the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) and want to ensure we are actually seeing outcomes, especially for investments here in the 24th when it comes to salmon habitat restoration, wildfire prevention, renewable energy, public transportation, and so on.

One note is that I want labor and other affected stakeholders at the table when we write environmental policy, particularly when it affects industries that provide family-wage jobs. I worked with our pulp and paper workers union this past legislative session to advocate for language in a bill to protect rank-and-file workers when an environmental accident occurs. I also advocated to get a leakage analysis in an Emission-Intensive Trade-Exposed (EITE) bill so we know the impacts of changes to our permitting policies on our EITE industries. This analysis was ultimately vetoed by the Governor, so I want to work toward getting that analysis done ASAP. This is important to me because we have mills in our communities throughout the 24th that provide family-wage jobs and that are essential to our local economies. I want to ensure we have policies in place that protect both our environment and

Candidate Questionnaire

our workers and the broader community.

There are also a lot of practical environmental investments we should be making. We have aging water and wastewater systems that waste water and contribute to pollution, and the state can help communities replace that infrastructure. I am also interested in longer timber rotations and other forest management practices that improve habitat and soil health while maintaining a reliable timber supply for our local mills and support our independent taxing districts.

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

Reducing emissions is essential for our future, but we also have to keep energy reliable and affordable for us now. I want the state to work with our industrial employers to help them become cleaner and more energy efficient while avoiding regulating them out of business. These employers are incredibly important to our local economies and I think the state should be a partner in helping them adapt.

I'm also a strong supporter of public power. Our PUDs are incredibly important to rural Washington, and we need to invest in grid capacity and make sure they have the resources to meet growing demand.

A big part of this conversation now has to be AI and data centers. AI is developing faster than our policies are keeping up, so we need guardrails in place as soon as possible. Not only am I concerned about superintelligence, but I'm also concerned about the enormous amounts of electricity and water data centers use. AI growth cannot come at the expense of our people. If we're not going to have a statewide moratorium, then we need strong environmental restrictions and transparency around data centers' water and energy usage.

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?

A lot of our biggest environmental challenges cross jurisdictional lines, so we need local, state, tribal, and federal governments working together. I want to work with our congressional delegation to pursue federal funding to clean up contaminated sites throughout the district that have needed to be addressed for a long time. I also want to work with them to ensure companies are held accountable when they leave communities with the environmental consequences of their operations. I will advocate for ensuring any legislation that addresses this problem doesn't impact rank-and-file workers.

I also support partnerships between DNR and the U.S. Forest Service to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk, as well as continued state, federal, local, and tribal work on salmon recovery, culverts, habitat restoration, and watershed health. I was recently fortunate to see the incredible work being done by the Quinault Indian Nation to address the major dip

Candidate Questionnaire

in salmon numbers in Lake Quinault. Their efforts are showing results and are a great example of the success that can be seen when this type of coordination occurs.

If elected, I would prioritize working with experts, scientists, and all stakeholders when promoting cooperation between governments.

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?

Healthcare is one of my biggest priorities because many people are really struggling with the system we have. I am very supportive of universal healthcare and would love to be a part in working toward a healthcare system that actually works for everybody, not just those who can afford the best insurance. Most other industrialized nations figured that out already. Though not perfect, under those systems, people get the care they need and don't go into financial ruin for a health emergency.

Rural healthcare is particularly challenging because many of our hospitals and providers lose money on the services they provide. This is because we have a higher population of folks on Medicaid and Medicare, meaning the providers aren't fully reimbursed for their services. With the passage of Trump's Big Beautiful (Ugly) Bill, we are going to see major cuts to healthcare for the people who need it the most, and I worry about keeping our rural hospitals open. I support increasing reimbursement rates from the state when possible and advocating at the federal level for changing the definition of a Critical Access Hospital so it includes many more rural hospitals. This would mean that reimbursement rates would be higher without losing the number of beds or staff. I also support expanding rural healthcare workforce programs and clinical placements as well as investing in behavioral health and long-term care capacity.

We also have to recognize that our rural healthcare workforce shortages are connected to the cost and accessibility of housing and childcare. It is hard to recruit and keep nurses, doctors, and other healthcare workers if they cannot find somewhere affordable to live or childcare for their kids. I believe in looking at all of those pieces together rather than treating them as separate problems.

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

I will fight for reimbursement rates that keep our hospitals' budgets healthy. Ultimately, Washington should have a larger public option until a federal universal healthcare system can be achieved. I am supportive of safe staffing levels in our hospitals, clinics and care centers. Safe staffing is critical for the well-being of both patients and frontline workers. I

Candidate Questionnaire

will work together with our hospital administrators, healthcare policymakers, nurses, and other stakeholders to ensure we are making the proper investments in our rural hospitals to keep them open. I am honored to be endorsed by the Washington State Nurses Association.

5. Water:

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

I am concerned about rising water usage considering the recession of our glaciers in Washington. With climate change, population growth, and new industrial uses, we will see effects on our water supply over the long term. This is especially important for us on the Olympic Peninsula because we need reliable water for our communities, farms, fisheries, forests, and rivers. I will work with Rep. Bernbaum who serves on the Natural Resource Committee to monitor water usage in Washington. The state should have information about where our water is going and how demand is changing so we can make the best decisions possible based on actual data.

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

Agriculture and technology are both important parts of Washington's economy. I want the state to be a partner in helping farmers and agricultural producers stay competitive, especially as they face rising costs across the board (energy, water, equipment, labor). At the same time, we need stronger guardrails around rapidly growing industries like AI and data centers, as I've discussed already. I think we can welcome innovation and economic development while ensuring we protect our agricultural land and natural resources, as long as we are cautious about the decisions we make. I also think it's important to have public commentary and transparent practices when these decisions are made so we consider specific community needs.

6. Homelessness:

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

This is a multifaceted problem without quick, easy fixes, as we know. I have spent time serving unhoused folks when I lived in Portland and I learned a lot about what some people go through in their lives that lead them into these situations. Many of us are only a few tragedies away from being unhoused. That's why I support strong social safety nets and wraparound services for people, as well as following the data as to what programs and practices produce the best outcomes.

Prevention has to be part of the work we do. That means building more affordable housing and helping people stay housed before they reach a crisis, especially when it comes to our

Candidate Questionnaire

Veterans. We also need to do more for young people who are at risk of homelessness, including supporting relatives and kinship caregivers who step in when parents cannot safely care for their children. I am proud to be endorsed by the Children's Campaign Fund, which advocates for policies that improve child welfare, early learning, and family support.

We also desperately need more emergency beds, behavioral health, and long-term treatment capacity. There are people with serious mental illness who can't navigate our complicated social service system on their own. We don't have enough treatment beds, supportive housing, or group-home capacity, and that leaves families, police, emergency rooms, and the individuals themselves to deal with the consequences.

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

When it comes to helping our chronically unhoused also experiencing addiction, I believe in a housing first approach. We know that if someone doesn't have their basic needs met (food, water, shelter), they have a much harder time doing anything else, especially getting off drugs, getting a job, qualifying for a home, etc. I think we have to be compassionate and realistic at the same time.

Prevention should always be the goal, but there are people who need intensive, long-term behavioral health treatment, including in limited cases, involuntary treatment when someone poses a serious danger to themselves or others and meets the legal standard. If we are going to use that system, though, there need to be actual treatment beds and dignified services available, and I will help work on securing those services as a legislator.

I also like programs that give people a low-barrier way back into employment, including conservation and environmental restoration work. Ultimately, I want us focused less on ideological arguments about homelessness and more on whether what we're doing is actually helping people become healthier and more stable.

7. Election Integrity:

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

I think one of the biggest threats to election integrity right now is the Trump Administration's propaganda about our election system. Trump has been spreading lies and misinformation for years to convince people that our election system is fundamentally fraudulent without evidence. He tried to overturn the 2020 election, inciting an insurrection on our nation's Capital and later pardoning those involved. We have also recently seen that he is using his narrative to try to nationalize elections, which goes against the U.S. Constitution (Article 1, Section 4, Clause 1). I believe these actions are abhorrent and anti-democratic.

I have serious concerns about how these federal efforts to discredit our voting system are

Candidate Questionnaire

affecting us in Washington. The loss of trust in our vote-by-mail system is extremely concerning, especially knowing that we already have an effective and transparent system. I am proud that our state leaders have fought back against attacks to our voting system. I will also defend our state's ability to administer our own secure, accessible elections.

Election integrity means making sure every legal vote is counted and that voters can trust the process. We need more education about our transparent system and how it really works.

What would you do to protect our elections?

I will defend Washington's vote-by-mail system and support the state taking legal action when federal policies unlawfully interfere with our ability to administer elections. I also support strong security for ballot boxes and election facilities, protections for election workers, transparent election observation, and continued investments in systems that allow voters to verify that their ballots were received and counted.

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?

I see climate change, increasing development, wildfires, and poor forest and watershed health as the biggest threats to Washington's forests and waters. On the Olympic Peninsula, we need to ensure CCA investments are made here to protect our salmon habitat, address soil erosion in forests, update water and sewer infrastructure, and better maintain our forests to avoid catastrophic wildfires. We also need to build smartly by concentrating growth where we have infrastructure and updating the GMA to allow for building in better areas in rural communities like ours. This means we can concentrate our growth to avoid cutting down large areas of forest. We also need to work with DNR to have longer timber rotations (preferably 80 years) and sustainable forestry practices that keep people working in good-paying timber industry jobs.

Water is becoming an increasingly important issue. We need to prepare for drought, flooding, and changing snowpack. I will work with local governments, state agencies, tribes, foresters, and private landowners on protecting and restoring our watershed.

I'll work with all stakeholders and experts to ensure we have proper planning in place to mitigate these threats. The stakes are very high for me, as I'm raising my daughter here and want her and her generation, as well as future generations, to inherit a beautiful, safe, livable place.