

King County Democrats

2022 Candidate Questionnaire: KC Prosecutor

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| Candidate Name: Leesa Manion |
| Position Sought: King County Prosecutor |
| Are you a Democrat?: Yes |
| Campaign Contact Information: email: info@leesamanion.com phone: (206) 817-1907 |

The following are the questions proposed to be asked in the 2022 King County Prosecutor Questionnaire. Questions in **gray** are common to questionnaires for all offices.

| Please answer the following questions. | | Yes | No | Qual ified |
|---|---|------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Have you ever been a member of another political party? | | No | |
| 2 | Have you ever failed to pay any taxes, court-ordered judgments, or former campaign staff salaries? | | No | |
| 3 | Have you or your staff ever been found in violation of a Federal Election Commission, Public Disclosure Commission, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, or Judicial Conduct Commission regulation? | | No | |
| 4 | Does your campaign have a code of conduct for staff and volunteers? If not, are you willing to implement one? | Yes | | |
| 5 | If you have paid campaign staff, would you support them joining a labor union? | Yes | | |
| 6 | Are you willing to have yourself, your staff, or your peers participate in cultural competency, implicit bias, and anti-racism training? | Yes | | |
| 7 | Are you willing to have yourself, your staff and your peers participate in training to understand and combat sexual harassment? | Yes | | |

8 Do you support the rights of all workers to organize, collectively bargain, and strike without fear of retaliation?

Yes, it is every worker's right to organize, collectively bargain, and strike

without fear of retaliation, and I will fully support that if elected.

9 Do you support the right of public workers – excluding military personnel – to bargain and strike?

Yes, as mentioned before, it is every worker’s right to organize, collectively bargain, and strike without fear of retaliation, and I will fully support that if elected.

Part I – Candidate Background (maximum of 200 words per question please)

Please briefly describe your education, employment, community and civic activity, union affiliation, and other relevant experience.

I was born in an army hospital near Seoul, South Korea, to a Korean mother and Caucasian father. I went on to graduate from college and Seattle University School of Law and began my career in public service, first as a Rule 9 Legal Intern (1995), then as a civil litigation Deputy Prosecuting Attorney (1996-2000). I later served as Prosecuting Attorney Norm Maleng’s Deputy Chief of Staff (2000-2007).

For the past 15 years, I have served as Chief of Staff of the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office (PAO), where I have implemented effective programs to improve public safety, reduce racial disproportionality, enhance victim services, and hold repeat perpetrators accountable. I also oversee a workforce of nearly 600 employees and an annual budget of \$80 million.

Please describe your history of involvement (if any), in local, regional, and/or state politics, with particular emphasis on the last five years.

I am honored to serve on the Boards of the Alliance for Gun Responsibility and the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, and as an award-winning member of the Korean Prosecutors Association. I have also served on the Boards of Pioneer Human Services (a nonprofit focused on facilitating the successful reentry for individuals leaving prison and/or dealing with substance use or behavioral health issues) and the Beecher’s Foundation (a nonprofit dedicated to promoting food equity in all communities and operating a food education program for kids across the nation).

As an advisor for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s (MIT) “Unbundle Policing” Solve Venture Lab Initiative, I support the initiative’s focus on improving public safety and policing in the United States. I was also a member of the Juvenile Prosecutor’s Leadership Network, (housed in Georgetown University’s Center For Juvenile Justice Reform) –a select group of experienced juvenile justice leaders, tasked with identifying emerging and innovative policies and practices to improve fairness and effectiveness within all realms of juvenile justice.

Describe the progress of your campaign and campaign goals. What is your plan to win? If you have received endorsements, please list them here.

In my role as Chief of Staff, I have built strong partnerships. On the campaign trail, I am committed to continuing to build partnerships, and to showing up and meeting with members of the community, meeting with small business owners, meeting with community-based nonprofits and service providers to hear their concerns, to partner and implement innovative solutions, to lead and hold myself and my team accountable.

I am committed to repairing frayed relationships that were strained and tested during the pandemic. I will lead and facilitate important conversations to identify shared values, honestly appraise the challenges we are facing, and build effective solutions together. I believe in circling back to communities and sharing data to demonstrate our success in a transparent manner. I am committed to listening to the feedback of the citizens of King County, believing their lived experience, and committing to building continuous improvements to our justice system.

I am honored to have been endorsed by many elected officials, judges, and business and community leaders. A complete list of my endorsements can be found at leesamanion.com/endorsements.

Part II – Free Response Questions (maximum of 200 words per question please

Are there any changes you would make to the King County Prosecuting Attorney's (KCPAO) office? (please provide examples of current practices and specific changes, if any).

After serving in the PAO for 27 years, I have the experience to understand what changes need to be implemented. I care deeply about the work of the office and its impact in our communities. I am running to ensure the safety and well-being of the residents of King County who need to feel safe in their neighborhoods and communities.

I am committed to reducing crime and recidivism through strengthening crime prevention strategies and offering effective diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration. If elected, I will be committed to creating long term solutions to end the revolving door of repeated offenses. This looks like providing resources for those struggling to put food on the table or those struggling with substance use disorder or mental illness.

Ending the revolving door also means giving our youth the proper support they need. This is why I helped create Choose 180 — a nonprofit dedicated to connecting youth to community members and resources to keep them out of the criminal legal system.

I want to serve as Prosecuting Attorney to build a fair and transparent justice system by crafting innovative solutions through broad coalitions and creating positive change to keep every community across King County safe.

The KCPAO has helped implement a number of alternatives to traditional prosecution and incarceration in recent years. List those changes and how would you build on this work?

I believe in the power of community-based programs as our best upstream solution to provide individuals with the support and resources needed to succeed. Community and prosecutors can work together to divert non-violent cases out of the justice system and to prevent crime and improve public safety by strengthening pro-social norms and protective factors and decreasing risk factors for individuals encountering our legal systems. These efforts are data-driven. Research shows that connecting individuals to structure and opportunities, such as employment, job mentorship and training, educational supports, and behavioral interventions can improve individual and community well-being and reduce violence.

Over the past 15 years, I have had a direct role in implementing the following alternatives to traditional prosecution:

- I was a co-founding partner in establishing Choose 180, which was first launched in 2011 as “The 180 Program,” a pilot project designed to keep misdemeanor youth out of the traditional court system. I secured the funding necessary to launch Choose 180 as a permanent alternative to traditional prosecution, worked to expand the program to certain non-violent felonies, and secured pro bono legal counsel to establish Choose 180 as a 501(c)(3).
- I was the chief strategist behind the PAO’s truancy/dropout prevention and education reengagement program. Youth who drop out of high school are eight times more likely to enter the criminal justice system and be incarcerated than high school graduates. Keeping kids in school by offering effective educational supports is a proven and effective crime prevention strategy.
- I was a key stakeholder in launching “FIRS” (Family Intervention and Restorative Services), an evidence-based program that keeps juveniles out of the court system by offering families in crisis immediate services to address conflict and promote healing.
- I am a strong supporter of Restorative Community Pathways (RCP) a pre-filing juvenile diversion program (for non-violent felony crimes) that offers the harmed party and the youth access to community based services to help address the root causes of crime and to promote healing.
- I have been a strong supporter of Mental Health Court, Drug Court, Veterans’ Court, Familiar Faces and Vital – all therapeutic alternatives designed to offer individuals effective treatment and other services to address the root causes of crime and to promote healing. Over the years, I have worked to increase the capacity and eligibility criteria for these important alternatives.

Here are some things I am currently doing to build on this work and to expand the use of effective interventions and alternatives:

- I am partnering with prosecutors, public health professionals, and Executive Branch leaders to design a pre-filing adult felony diversion program for adults facing their first non-violent felony that would offer these individuals and harmed parties access to community-based services to address the root cause of crime and to promote healing. This program is designed to help adults avoid their first time felony, which data shows increases an individual’s likelihood to commit subsequent crimes and suffer collateral consequences which create barriers to housing, jobs, and education.
- I also believe that prosecutors should not prosecute juveniles as adults except in a minority of cases of exceptional violence and extreme harm. I was a key force in the creation of the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office’s Juvenile Division, staffed with experienced prosecutors committed to the specific areas of law designed to rehabilitate and improve outcomes for youth, protect public safety, and more

effectively serve victims of crime. Under my leadership, I would ensure that the Juvenile Division (not adult prosecution units) handle all cases involving individuals under the age of 18, even if charged as adults.

- For many victims, justice does not always mean having their day in court. Some victims, families, and communities experience greater satisfaction and healing by achieving justice through the use of culturally responsive, victim-centered, and restorative justice practices. Under my leadership, I would support the expansion of restorative justice practices to promote healing and community wellness.
- I also believe that we can increase the reach and level of victim services through the use of technology and virtual platforms. I would continue to empower advocates and IT to work together to bring these innovations to the Prosecuting Attorney's Office.
- I am committed to building new partnerships and innovations to connect individuals at risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of violence to social resources to shift behavior and to address trauma and other underlying health issues and to reduce substance abuse by working to increase access to treatment, both in the community and in our prisons and jail.

The KCPAO publishes its filing and disposition standards for the public to see how the office exercises its prosecutorial discretion in criminal cases. How will you ensure that the charging decisions and case resolutions are equitable for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, marginalized, and vulnerable communities?

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The PAO plays a key role in ensuring equal treatment and inclusion within the law for all. I am committed to a fair and transparent justice system that builds and maintains public trust. I am a firm believer in representation, which is why I have dedicated my time as the PAO's Chief of Staff to building a diverse team, representative of the communities in which we serve. With every contact with the public, the accused, law enforcement, and victims and their families, our prosecutors and staff have an opportunity to build confidence in our justice system. Having the voices of our BIPOC, marginalized, and vulnerable communities helps to ensure that we are reflecting the values of the communities we serve and also helps keep us accountable for our decisions and actions.

And as a BIPOC woman who grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood in Kentucky, my work is shaped by my lived experience. My brother and I experienced discrimination, and my brother experienced the disproportionate school discipline and police contact that so many young men of color experience. I grew up worrying about his safety. Those experiences shaped my commitment to fairness.

I am committed to promoting the fair and impartial pursuit of justice with:

- The consistent application of criminal law – this includes continuing to update and share our case filing criteria (FADS) to demonstrate neutrality and fairness in our decision-making.
- The ongoing and continuous review of our FADS with a specific eye toward improving and promoting equity, which, in some cases, means diversion to or increased access to culturally responsive, victim-centered, and restorative justice practices.

- Fairness in plea bargaining – this includes maintaining our conservative filing practices, offering fair and appropriate case dispositions, and promptly sharing evidence and discovery with defense and the accused.
- Protecting against bias - this includes requiring regular training for deputies and staff on implicit bias and using checklists and other equity screening tools to ensure neutrality and fairness in our decision-making.
- Avoiding wrongful convictions and unjust punishment – this includes regular conviction reviews to guard against prosecutorial error or misconduct, routinely reviewing non-homicide cases with exceptionally long sentences to ensure that the sentence is still proportionate to the crime..
- Acknowledging and confronting racial disparities - this includes continuing to understand and dismantle racism, using data to reveal racial disparities, and eliminating bias from our charging decisions.

As the PAO’s Chief of Staff, I have long supported the ongoing (over time) expansion of the eligibility criteria for therapeutic alternatives, such as Drug Court, Mental Health Court, and Veterans’ Court and the decision to stop filing DWLS III cases and drug possession cases under 1 gram (pre-Blake). I also initiated mandatory implicit bias training and mandatory cultural competency training for all DPAs and staff. I launched our office’s Equity Social Justice (ESJ) Committee in 2017 and have supported the ongoing evolution and expansion of the PAO’s ESJ practices by sponsoring conversations, trainings, and events to understand and dismantle structural racism.

Under your leadership, how would the KCPAO’s pretrial detention and/or bail policies and practices change, if at all?

Judges in King County must follow Court Rule 3.2 in determining whether an individual accused of crime should be held or released. The rule provides a presumption of release in noncapital cases. The elimination of cash bail effectively serves to limit the discretion of judges to a binary choice of either release or detention. Given an “either or” approach, many judges may elect to hold an individual in jail in an abundance of safety and caution in order to protect public safety. I support and would continue to support effective alternatives to detention that serve to protect public safety, offer services to address the root causes of crime, and ensure the individual’s return to court if released. I also support the use of technology to remind individuals of court dates and the continued use of video hearings as a way to ensure compliance with court dates and to avoid the issuance of bench warrants. I also support the continued practice of reasonable bail standards/guidance within the PAO.

Under your leadership, what role would the KCPAO play in addressing the housing, homelessness and mental health crisis in King County?

The PAO and other justice system stakeholders lack many of the appropriate tools to support those who are experiencing homelessness or to address the contributing mental health crisis. As a coalition builder, I will also support law and policymakers in every way I can to increase services and capacity to ensure increased levels of shelter, affordable housing, and access to treatment and medical services.

Within the criminal justice system, I am a strong proponent of using therapeutic alternatives such as LEAD, Drug Court, Mental Health Court, and Veterans' Court to connect individuals who find themselves entangled in the justice system to important services that help prevent homelessness by addressing root causes. As Prosecuting Attorney, I will also work to protect and enhance victim services. Data reveals that individuals experiencing homelessness are more likely to become victims of crime. Protecting public safety includes protecting those who are vulnerable.