

King County Democrats 2024 Endorsement Questionnaire

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| What type of position are you running for? |
| State Executive |
| What position are you running for? |
| Commissioner of Public Lands |
| Are you a Democrat? |
| Yes |
| Have you ever been a member of another political party? |
| No |

Does your campaign have a code of conduct for staff and volunteers?

No

What are your top three policy priorities?

Confronting the Climate Crisis: Communities across our state are already feeling the devastating effects of the climate crisis. We must act boldly and urgently to decarbonize industries, protect the health of our forests, invest in renewable alternatives and plant more trees to sequester carbon.

Creating and Sustaining Jobs: As a commercial fisherman, land manager, and Tribal leader, I understand how to use and sustain what nature provides us. This office has a unique opportunity through public lands trusts, wildfire prevention/response, and new funding from the Climate Commitment Act to create good paying, union jobs across our state and especially in rural or marginalized communities.

Ensuring Environmental Justice: For far too long, Native communities and other marginalized groups have been left out of the conversation, and we are the first to suffer from the consequences of bad public policy. If we are engaged it is at a superficial level, instead of recognizing the generational knowledge we have from caretaking this land since time immemorial. Communities of color must have decision making power, not just performative support.

Climate change has increased the portion of the year at high-risk for wildfires from three months to nearly six months. Outside of the requirements of HB1578, passed in 2023, how will you approach wildfire control and prevention?

Requirements and plans are only as good as the investments we make to implement them. Right now, the legislature has underfunded wildfire prevention and response and our office has been fighting tooth and nail to restore, expand funding so that our firefighters aren't relying on woefully outdated infrastructure, our forest health can be restored according to our 20-year strategic plan, and we have the full-time staff needed to meet this growing crisis. The question is not whether we are going to pay for this crisis, it's how— we are either going to allow hundreds of thousands of acres to be lost or we are going to make the necessary, smart investments that are needed to proactively respond to increasing wildfire risk.

Additionally, this is a working family and rural community resilience issue as well. Home insurance rates are skyrocketing, and many policies are being dropped because of the risk of wildfires in communities. Investing in wildfire response and proactive health management of our trees will protect our forests, lower insurance premiums, and help us slow down the impacts of climate change.

How will you build and strengthen relationships with other departments to ensure that Washington is taking a comprehensive, sustainable approach to preserving our natural resources?

Native leaders like Billy Frank Jr have been leading the work to sustainably manage and preserve our natural resources for decades without the credit, recognition, or systems of power supporting them. The progress we've seen today is because of that tireless advocacy rooted in building strong relationships across not just WA government departments and environmental groups but in partnership with tribal governments, industry groups, labor unions, and rural communities across the state. As an executive leadership team member at DNR I am already doing this work and have spent the last several years building the right relationships to hit the ground running, rather than starting from zero. Not only that, but the relationships with Tribal Nations that I have cultivated over my entire life and as a Tribal Council member are not something that can be recreated in elected office. Navigating the complexities of sustainable management takes relational capital that frankly none of the other candidates have in the same way I do.

How will you prioritize addressing pollution?

Whether it's improving forest management to help forest owners increase the carbon stored in their trees, reducing fertilizer use for fewer greenhouse gas emissions, or restoring coastal wetlands to sequester carbon in submerged soil, natural solutions are one of our strongest tools to fight climate change and reduce pollution.

Let's look at one example in particular which seems simple, but is incredibly important to get right. Just planting more trees both in urban and rural areas can play a significant role in fighting climate change. Tree coverage reduces temperatures, saving families on cooling costs and lowering the energy production. It lowers temperatures in our fish-bearing streams for salmon survival. It also captures more carbon and provides vital revenue for the DNR to prevent and fight wildfires which lower our air quality and ravage hundreds of thousands of acres a year.

Sometimes the best solutions aren't the sexiest and the real work of this office is just doing the basics right.

We value understanding of, respect for, and maintenance of Tribal rights and treaties. How will you coordinate with our state's Tribes and collaborate towards the restoration and preservation of our natural environment?

Integrating environmental justice, racial equity, and tribal sovereignty into our agency's work is literally my job right now. I'm the only person in this race that actually knows what that looks like on a day-to-day basis. Particularly with regard to respective tribal sovereignty, and fostering a government-to-government relationship with all of the tribes across our state, I see that as mission and job one for DNR. The reason is really simple: you cannot pursue the cause of environmental stewardship, tackling climate change, or protecting our state's natural resources without lifting up communities of color, dismantling systems of racial inequality, and supporting tribes. Full stop. Treating this work as secondary rather than essential completely undermines our goals and will not only result in losing but policy solutions that fail to create lasting progress. I've seen first hand that candidates will pay lip service to the importance of collaboration with Tribes while at the same time advocating for policies that will devastate our communities. Recognizing Tribal sovereignty cannot be symbolic. It's a disgrace that I would be the first and only Native elected to statewide office.

What opportunities do you see as the Commissioner of Public Lands to pursue environmental justice for communities harmed by historical practices?

As the first Chair of the Environmental Justice Council mandated under the passage of the HEAL ACT and now the current Director of Tribal Relations for DNR, I am deeply embedded in the work of environmental justice today.

The way I see it, protecting the land and environment is intertwined with uplifting communities and working families. The livelihoods of marginalized groups are not secondary to other concerns and we can't afford to sacrifice them because we haven't done the work to create a just transition or find alternative economic opportunities. This is particularly true as we discuss managing our sustainable harvest practices, which have unfortunately been historically weaponized to pit the needs of working people against the urgency of addressing climate change. Native folks know, and have always fought for, balance in our approach to these issues and we do not see the land and the people it sustains as separate—rather as integrated and interdependent. It is that experience and perspective that I believe separates me from my opponents and empowers me to be the strongest possible advocate for environmental justice.

CERTIFICATION: The candidate hereby certifies that, to the best of their knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.

Yes

Created on: April 29th, 2024