

King County Democrats 2025 Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate name
Claudia Balducci
Candidate name pronunciation
Bal-DU-chi
Candidate pronouns
she/her/hers
Campaign Filer_Name
Claudia Balducci for King County
Campaign email
info@claudiabalducci.com
Campaign phone

Number we can text or call if we have questions about this form

Campaign website
https://www.claudiabalducci.com/
Facebook page
https://www.facebook.com/ElectClaudiaBalducci
Instagram
https://www.instagram.com/electclaudiabalducci/
X/Twitter/BlueSky/Threads/etc.
https://bsky.app/profile/claudiaforkcexec.bsky.social
Campaign manager name
Rebecca Rego
Campaign manager email
rebecca@claudiabalducci.com
Campaign manager phone
(203) 915-5396
Consultant name
Christian Sinderman
Consultant email
christian@nwpconsulting.com
What type of position are you running for?
King County
Which position are you running for?
Executive
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?

Yes (updated 4/9/2025)

What motivated you to run for this position and how will you evaluate your success?

I ran for Bellevue City Council after fighting for more housing and density in my neighborhood— overcoming serious opposition. I served three terms on the city council (one term as Mayor) where I successfully fought for light rail, affordable housing, and emergency shelters for people in need – over stiff opposition funded by some of our major business interests. Later, I defeated a long-term Republican incumbent for County Council, where I am the leading voice for regional housing affordability, transit investments, and climate action.

Throughout my career, I've been standing up to special interests and leading transformational change on what matters most for people: safe and healthy communities, housing affordability, economic opportunity for all, reliable transit options, and urgent climate action.

Now more than ever, we need proven and effective leaders who can deliver on their promises for working people and vulnerable communities.

As our next Executive, I'll bring an unmatched ability to envision and create a brighter future for every King County neighbor. I'm excited to put my experience, perseverance, and proven record to work and would be honored to have your support.

King County is in the top 15 counties in the country for area and population with amazing diversity across cultures, ethnicities, languages, and other factors. Please share with us how you've prepared yourself to represent this diverse population. For instance, what experience or training have you had in preparation for this role?

Since 2004, I've represented some of the most diverse communities in our County and have learned that community organizations and leaders understand their community's unique challenges, are trusted, and will remain invested in the work to get results.

That's why on the County Council, I have, among other things:

Invested record amounts in programs and organizations dedicated to capacity-building in historically disadvantaged communities through Best Starts; Vets, Seniors and Human Services; and the PSTAA education program.

Implemented PSRC's first equity cabinet, which directs major funding to transportation projects addressing historical patterns of projects being implemented in ways that ignored and actively harmed communities of color.

Hired and empowered managers at Sound Transit focused on more equitable contracting, including signing on to the national "Equity in Infrastructure" initiative.

Advocated to include racial equity analysis across our work and implemented our first DEI effort in the legislative branch.

As Executive, I'll continue to expand this work and fight for equity, especially in the face of forces that would prefer we roll back these initiatives.

Knowing that the County Strategic Climate Action Plan will be updated in 2025, what priorities do you bring to that important plan?

Healthy communities require taking action every day to mitigate the effects of climate change. That's why in the previous SCAP update, I ensured that we established more measurable outcomes to achieve our ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals. I also directed the development of a Climate Action Toolkit that all jurisdictions can use to create locally-tailored climate action plans, fought to make PSRC more transparent and accountable to climate goals, and updated King County's green building code for county-owned buildings and infrastructure.

More recently, I fought hard to ensure that the KC Climate Office includes direct and measurable outcome-based metrics so that we can better track county investments and partner work to reduce climate emissions and improve our efforts to adapt to a changing climate.

I'm proud of what we have accomplished, but in the coming update, I'll continue advocating for stronger goals and investments so we can make real progress, including implementing safer, walkable, inclusive communities, focusing on sustainability along with access to opportunity.

We understand the tension between the Growth Management Act, achieving climate goals via mass transit, and supporting rural areas with roadway maintenance and development. How do you propose to balance these priorities?

No one has done more than I have in the last decade to fund climate-friendly transit, focus growth in transit oriented centers, and connect our communities. The GMA is an essential tool to focus that work, and protect open spaces, forests, and farmlands. I'm committed to continuing that work by providing more sustainable forms of transit and investing in the safe and dependable infrastructure rural communities depend on.

King County serves as the local government for over 250,000 people in unincorporated King County, and these roads are essential for their daily lives. They're also critical for people living within our growth management boundaries who access them for recreation, commuting and more. Yet these roads have been dramatically underfunded.

As Executive, I will continue to bring an unwavering commitment to growth management, focusing growth inside centers and the urban growth boundary, while expanding access to transit, trails, and open space to improve quality of life in our urban centers. I will also support significant funding to maintain our rural roads as essential transportation for our unincorporated areas, while ensuring we do not go back to the days of sprawl.

Harborview is an important level 1 trauma center and healthcare safety net for the region. Please share with us how you propose augmenting current funding sources to ensure its viability and prepare it for future needs.

I served in a leadership role on Council on Harborview issues in recent years. In 2023, I was part of the working group that took on the hard work of advancing voter-approved construction projects for HMC to serve more patients in a modern, rehabilitative setting. When I learned that HMC needed more resources to continue providing trauma and safety net services, I led on finding additional revenue, reaching out to state legislators to elevate and discuss this need. I partnered with CMs Baron and Mosqueda to explore, develop and negotiate a proposal for the hospital maintenance tax during the council's budget deliberation process. That resulted in a successful council vote for the tax to provide additional operating support to Harborview and make up some of the shortfall in the capital bond project.

As Executive, I will always support the renewal of the King County hospital maintenance tax and state funding so that HMC is able to provide vital services to those needing trauma care and the mission population. I will stay in contact and meet regularly with UWMC and HMC leadership to stay apprised of issues and needs, and will ensure that this vital community resource is available.

Behavioral healthcare remains a top priority and a growing problem. Knowing that Medicaid falls short of funding the cost of behavioral health care services, how do you propose meeting this need?

In addition to Medicaid funding gaps, our revenue forecasts predict a significant budget shortfall. I just got back from Olympia where I continued my years-long advocacy for more flexibility with our basic revenue source and lifting the artificial 1% cap on property taxes. I also support diversifying our county revenue streams, replacing regressive taxes with a more progressive tax system that doesn't continue to unduly burden taxpayers with the least ability to pay. This work is essential to investing in our critical behavioral health needs, including:

Implementing and accelerating Crisis Care Center Levy work, opening centers, adding back mental health beds, expanding mobile care, and increasing the workforce;

Addressing cost escalation and delays in the Harborview bond implementation and seeking state funding to build the full planned program;

Working with DPD and the state to fill the mental health beds we do have;

Expanding programs and staffing levels for crisis response officers and personnel;

Expanding access to treatment and services, which requires expanded workforce development;

Investing in the preventative, protective end of the behavioral health spectrum.

King County has committed to pro-equity contracting with minority- and women-owned businesses (MWBs) and reported that 7% of total 2021 contracting dollars went to MWBs. What actions will you take to reduce systemic discrimination against MWBs and expand the participation of MWBs in county contracts of all sizes and across our communities?

I have always supported King County's pro-equity contracting efforts, which includes automatic inclusion of state certified MWBE's in our Small Contractors and Suppliers certification program.

During my tenure as Council Chair, I earned a track record of hiring MWBE contractors and I will continue to advocate for pro-equity contracting.

As the chair of Sound Transit's system expansion committee, I have pushed for us to meet our contracting goals for MWBE's. One such initiative is to pursue more equitable contracting through participation in the "Equity in Infrastructure Project". This nation-wide initiative supports BIPOC-led smaller contractors and subcontractors to become prime contractors, dramatically increasing their economic viability and opportunity, building generational wealth, and reducing the racial wealth gap, while making effective use of taxpayer dollars.

As Executive, I will continue and expand on these efforts. As a leader who has fought to create billions of dollars in public works investments, it is imperative that we ensure that the benefits of our projects lift up communities that have historically been left out of these contracting opportunities.

King County has many open job positions. Staffing targets reflect the county's expected level of service. Please tell us your plan for the open job positions and the factors that drive it.

In the wake of the pandemic we've seen high levels of vacancies, from shortages of bus operators to defense attorneys. In my view, a number of factors drive this: an aging workforce, shifts in employment from the pandemic, and real and perceived challenges with working conditions that cause applicants to seek work elsewhere.

We need new recruitment strategies and a focus on employee retention. As Council Chair, I supported hiring incentives, partnerships with unions, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships and more. Expanded efforts should include programs for students (like those supported by Metro through WTS, recruiting young women into typically male-dominated transportation jobs), "returnships" for those seeking to re-engage in the workforce, partnerships with community colleges on "re-skilling," and more.

As a labor attorney and former King County labor negotiator, I have worked directly with employees and unions, bargaining for better working conditions, improved wages, and stronger benefits. I am proud to have earned the support of unions representing many of those employees and I will continue to champion working families and worker protections as Executive.

Certification

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

Created on: April 5th, 2025