

King County Democrats 2026 Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate name
Leesa Manion
Candidate name pronunciation
Lee-sa Man-yun
Candidate pronouns
she/her
PDC Filer_name
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Consultant name

Raven Tyler (NWP Consulting)

Consultant email

raven@nwpc consulting.com

Jurisdiction of office sought

County

Specific office

Prosecuting Attorney

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

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

Employment History:

King County Prosecuting Attorney 2023-Present

Chief of Staff, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office 2007-2022

Deputy Chief of Staff, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office 2000-2007

Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office 1996-2000

Rule 9 Legal Intern, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office 1995-1996

Professional, Community, and Civic Involvement (past and present):

Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (WAPA), Member 2023-Present; Board member 2025-present

American Prosecutors Association (APA), Member, 2023-Present; Board member 2025-present

Fair and Just Prosecution, Member, 2023-present

Korean Prosecutors' Association (KPA), Member, 2017-present
National Asian Pacific Islander Prosecutors' Association, Member 2023-present
Korean American Bar Association of Washington, Member, 2020-present
Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, Boardmember, 2013-2024
Alliance for Gun Responsibility, C-4 Boardmember, 2012-present
Beecher's Foundation, Boardmember, 2018-2020
Pioneer Human Services, Boardmember, 2015-2018
Communities in Action, Community Boardmember, 2014-2019
Juvenile Prosecutors Leadership Network, 2013-2017

Given the broad range of challenges facing the King County Prosecuting Attorney's office, what are your priorities for the next four years?

Continue to reduce gun violence by increasing the solve rate for non-fatal shootings and expanding the use of civil Extreme Risk Protection Orders to safely remove firearms from juveniles. Gun violence is down in King County for two years in a row, but we still have work to do.

Address human trafficking, not just on Highway 99, where the exploitation of children and women is so clearly visible, but also the trafficking that happens in illicit massage parlors and hidden brothels by using new civil legal approaches.

Improve Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) Court by convincing lawmakers to build a new therapeutic approach to ITA, where mental health providers, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys work together to get people in crisis the help they need, in the least restrictive means possible, as quickly as possible, before they become victims or perpetrators of harm.

Protect King County residents from unlawful federal overreach by enforcing the rule of law, pushing back against Trump's efforts to intimidate us, and fighting against unlawful immigration enforcement.

Prosecutors must adhere to the principle of fairness when handling cases, ensuring equal treatment for all parties. How will you ensure that conflicts of interest, evidence tampering or other misconduct will not impact your office operations?

My office implements the following practices to build confidence in our justice system:

- Publish case filing and disposition standards to demonstrate neutrality and fairness in decision-making;
- Maintain conservative filing practices to not overcharge cases;
- Offer fair and appropriate case dispositions, and promptly share evidence and discovery with defense and the accused;
- Protect against bias in decisions by requiring regular training for DPAs and staff on implicit bias;

-Identify non-violent crimes that are more effectively addressed with diversion to community-based resources and increase access to the services that address root causes of crime and offer opportunities to lift individuals out of crisis and poor decision-making.

Under my leadership, the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office proactively screens for prosecutorial error and completes an annual internal audit.

My office also maintains a list of officers and informants whose credibility may have been compromised (this is known as "the Brady" list). My office created the model Brady policy adopted by the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys and is used by prosecutor's offices throughout our state.

Between 2021 and 2025, King County funded the work of Restorative Community Pathways to divert youth offenders away from courts and detention centers. In 2025, the prosecutor's office halted this practice, citing a youth recidivism rate of 50%. What long-term approach do you support to address youth offenders?

My long-term approach to addressing juvenile behavior is to encourage school engagement, divert misdemeanor and non-violent felony cases, support robust services for youth and families, support effective community-based reentry services for youth exiting JR or detention, and support increased educational and employment opportunities for youth.

I was a co-founder of Choose 180, the first juvenile diversion program to incorporate a community-based response to addressing youth behavior and launched Family Intervention and Restorative Services-FIRS, an evidence-based diversion program that offers immediate services to 350 families a year.

Many have questioned the effectiveness of Restorative Community Pathways (RCP) since its 2021 inception. To reduce misconceptions, I shared information about RCP cases and engaged an academic researcher to evaluate RCP recidivism rates. His study revealed a 50% recidivism rate for felony referrals and noted further study was needed to determine RCP's recidivism rate compared to traditional prosecution. This study is underway. I paused felony referrals into RCP, but continued to divert eligible felony referrals to court-run diversion programs.

One of the things that make the prosecuting attorney a powerful position is prosecutorial discretion. What kind of cases would be your top priority and why?

I believe in a two-prong approach to address crime and improve public safety. We must bring appropriate accountability to those causing harm in our community and address the root causes of harm with effective diversion programs and therapeutic approaches, which includes Drug Court, Mental Health Court, and Veterans' Court.

My priorities include addressing violent crime/gun violence, human trafficking, and repeat property and retail offenses that cause serious physical or economic harm. I support pre and post-filing diversion for appropriate cases to keep people out of the criminal legal system and to address the root causes of crime, including societal, behavioral health, and mental health challenges. We must address juvenile behavior by strengthening pro-social norms and protective factors while decreasing risk factors. These efforts are data-driven; connecting youth to structure and opportunities, such as employment, job mentorship and training, educational supports, and behavioral interventions can improve youth well-being and reduce violence.

Please also see answers to questions 2, 3, and 4.

A substantial number of felony cases in King County involve substance abuse and mental health issues. What proven sentencing solutions are most effective for offenders with these challenges?

I am a strong proponent and advocate for our therapeutic alternatives – Regional Mental Health Court, Drug Court, and Veterans’ Court. These sentencing solutions effectively help people from repeating harmful mistakes by addressing root causes and providing resources. Research shows that treatment courts reduce recidivism and have a high return on investment. Every \$1 invested in treatment courts produces \$2-\$4 in direct cost savings to the criminal legal system and up to \$27 in savings when considering broader societal benefits such as reduced victimization, fewer emergency room visits, reduced foster care placements, reduced incarceration rates, etc. . . Treatment courts can be exceptionally effective in addressing high-risk, high-need individuals.

I am also a proponent of pre-filing diversion and treatment alternatives to address behavior on the front end, with the goals of helping individuals avoid causing or becoming victims of harm and helping individuals avoid contact with the criminal legal system. Programs and initiatives such as LEAD and King County’s Crisis Care Center in Kirkland help in these efforts.

In alignment with our Democratic values, we advocate for a diverse and inclusive workplace. How would you work to improve the office’s ability to attract and retain a more diverse staff?

When we have a diverse and inclusive workforce, we serve our community better. I am proud to have built the most diverse leadership team in the history of the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office. My Department Directors and their teams, Chiefs of Staff, and Division Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs totals 36 individuals. Of the 36, 22 are women, 22 identify as BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+.

We have improved our hiring practices and promoted a culture that openly talks about race, disparities and disproportionality – not just within the criminal justice

system, but within the office. We have built pipelines with consistent and intentional outreach to BIPOC students and organizations. Our Rule 9 Legal Interns cohorts are commonly majority BIPOC.

In 2024, we adjusted the salaries of 33 DPAs, all women who were being underpaid. Many had worked part-time for some portion of their careers, but did not catch up economically. We now conduct a salary review every two years to ensure that no one gets left behind. We also regularly examine our promotions processes with an eye toward racial equity. I am committed to this ongoing and important work.

Civil litigation is an important practice area for the prosecuting attorney. Which civil case areas should take precedence?

As chief legal counsel for King County elected officials and departments, the Civil Division does not determine our clients' priorities, but instead works to ensure that race, equity and social justice considerations are taken into account in our clients' development of policies, risk assessment, outcome determination, and decision-making.

Presently, some of the work of the Civil Division's most critical work is protecting against unlawful federal overreach. The Civil Division successfully defeated the illegal anti-DEI, anti-immigrant, anti-abortion, and anti-LGBTQ+ directives the Trump Administration tried to place on Congressional appropriations, protecting \$160 million in grant funds for King County.

The Civil Division's work was essential in the development of a new ordinance and Executive Order limiting the actions of federal agents on county property and will play a critical role in the enforcement of both.

The Civil Division will also play a key role in combating human trafficking by using civil remedies that have proven effective in other jurisdictions. This work is under development, and I will share our results with our community.

Attestation

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