



34th District Democrats State Representative Appointment Questionnaire

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Precinct	Maury	Web Page	http://sharonnelson.org

Present Occupation How Long?	Chief of Staff to King County Councilmember Dow Constantine Almost 6 years
Current Employer	King County Councilmember Dow Constantine
Union Affiliations	

**PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS
(YOU MAY USE A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER FOR ANSWERS)**

1. What are the main messages of your campaign?
 - a. Improve transportation to keep our region moving and ensure the 34th District has alternatives when the repair/replacement of the viaduct occurs.
 - b. We must improve health care – access to doctors, medications and general health care is critical to all citizens.
 - c. We must provide leadership to improve the ailing health of Puget Sound through regulatory changes, watershed habitat improvements, and other enhancement programs.
 - d. Education of our children is the paramount duty of the State. The legislature has made progress on educational funding, but I want to explore ways to improve the educational system from pre-school through college. Today teachers are having to teach to the WASL rather than being given the opportunity to teach to each child.
 - e. Public financing for campaigns is important to protecting our democracy and it can work.

2. What are the three most pressing issues facing our District? How do you propose to address these issues in Olympia?
 - a. Transportation – the Region’s leadership (including the Governor, Mayor, County Executive and legislative leadership) must address the viaduct. If Proposition 1 fails, the Legislature must immediately take action on a transit/transportation package. We are already 40 years behind.
 - b. Puget Sound and the environment – We no longer can destroy the environment one permit at a time. We must reevaluate the State Environmental Policy Act, the role of mitigation, and the control of local governments in permitting.
 - c. Education –We must evaluate each student at critical phases of development and provide tutoring, counseling and other resources, to ensure each child is successful. The State, due to the emphasis on the WASL, is moving away from learner based education. If I am honored with this appointment, I will be working to ensure our teachers are teaching to our children and not to a test.

3. How have you been involved in the local 34th District Democratic Party? Have you contributed financially to any Democratic Organization or Candidate? Have you been a Precinct Committee Officer? When/Where?
 - a. I have been and am a member of the 34th District Democratic Party.
 - b. I have contributed to numerous Democratic Organizations or Candidates, including Executive Ron Sims, Councilmember Larry Phillips, Councilmember Dow Constantine, State



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Representatives Joe McDermott and Pat Sullivan, State Senator Julia Patterson, Gubernatorial Candidates Ron Sims and Christine Gregoire and others.

- c. I have not been a precinct committee officer, having served the party and the democratic agenda through other leadership roles. I have worked on the campaigns, however, of Ron Sims (both gubernatorial and County Executive), Pat Sullivan (47th District), Dow Constantine (House, Senate and Council races), Julia Patterson (Senate campaign), and Joe McDermott and Eileen Cody's campaigns, as well. I supported Fred Canover who was a Democrat running against Norm Maleng and assisted him with phone banking.

4. Have you ever supported or given money to a candidate from another party in a partisan race? If so, to whom and why?

Yes, I gave \$100 to Jane Hague after Richard Pope filed for the County Council position. Pope is not a Democrat.

I do not recall any other donations to Republicans.

5. What is your involvement in the communities that make up the 34th District that shows you are the best candidate for appointment as our State Representative? What would you like us to know about your past experiences and achievements that make you the best candidate for appointment? What distinguishes you from your opponents?

All of the candidates seeking the 34th District State Representative seat are good, solid Democrats. What distinguishes me from my opponents is having worked the past six years on policy and constituent issues which affect the 34th District, as well as having a background in finance and having been a volunteer community organizer for five years battling a foreign multinational corporation, Glacier Northwest. I am dedicated, persistent and tough when it comes to issues in which I believe. I will use those strengths, if appointed to the State Representative position, to the benefit of the entire 34th District.

As Chief of Staff to Dow Constantine, I have been involved on a daily basis with 34th District issues. I receive ongoing updates/reports regarding meetings in the 34th District and concerns that citizens have. Whether it is a meeting of the North Highline UAC, the Statue of Liberty celebration on Alki, or a meeting regarding Seahurst Park in Burien, I monitor issues important to our 34th District communities. I have been immersed in 34th District issues and that experience provides me with a strong foundation for serving as the next State Representative.

Working on the County's budget (which is approximately \$4.8 billion) for the past six years, I have gained extensive experience in preparing budgets. I will use that experience in Olympia.

Finally, I have established relationships with other State legislators, County Councilmembers and the County Executive, and have a proven ability to work in collaboration with others to maximize results. I am pleased that due to my ability to work effectively in the political arena, I am endorsed by former State Senator Erik Poulsen, King County Executive Ron Sims, and King County Councilmember Dow Constantine.

6. What are your views on spending taxpayer money and fiscal responsibility?

Taxpayers deserve accountability as to how the State spends their tax dollars. The State's paramount duty is to educate our children and provide sufficient funding so that our schools are among the best in the nation. Having a highly regarded educational system is important for the State's future. Every budget deliberation involves weighing what tax dollars are available, the duties of the State, and



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district needs. At the County Council I have been very involved in preparation of the budget and will utilize that experience in Olympia.

Democrats have core values which include funding education and healthcare, promoting family wage jobs, protecting the environment, improving transportation, and helping our most fragile citizens. The State budget must reflect those values and also recognize that fiscal responsibility is important to our future.

7. How would you balance continued growth with the quality of the environment? What is your strategy for accomplishing this balance as a State Representative?

The Growth Management Act (GMA) provides strong controls for balancing growth and the environment. However, the success of the GMA depends upon local governments protecting agricultural and rural lands while providing zoning which increases density in our urban areas. The State legislature has discussed revising requirements for critical areas designations by counties under the GMA. I do not support that change, as I think it would create an imbalance between growth and environmental protections.

As our cities accept density, however, the State must help local governments address the transportation and transit needs that are created. If we are to control sprawl, investments in transit and repair of existing roads is critical.

8. What role should State government play in providing adequate healthcare to all residents of the State of Washington?

The State made real progress this past year by expanding children's healthcare and I am pleased that Governor Gregoire is taking the Federal Administration to court over their failure to fund SCHIP. The legislature has also made strides toward assisting those impacted by Medicare Part D. If I am sent to Olympia I will work to continue to expand coverage to ensure all citizens have access not just to medical care, but dental and vision care.

We have older citizens who cannot afford their medications and young adults who no longer are covered under their parent(s)' plans that are at risk when they need medical, dental or vision care. The State should consider a single payer system, as should the federal government.

9. What is your position on equal rights for same-sex couples when it comes to benefits, civil unions, marriage and parental rights?

I support equal rights for same-sex couples whether it is for benefits, civil unions, marriage or parental rights. As I have campaigned for the State Representative position, it has been brought to my attention that same-sex couples are being penalized in the manner they are paying for benefits and that is an issue the Legislature needs to consider in the 2008 session.



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10. What creative solutions within State government can you offer to address the problems of the economically disadvantaged? How do you propose to create quality family-wage jobs within our District?

The State has established the Housing Trust Fund to assist with funding for low-income rental and homeownership opportunities. This past session the Governor and House budgets proposed a 40% increase in the biennial funding for this fund. With the escalating cost of property, the State legislature needs to increase funding in order to allow organizations/agencies to purchase land now for future development of low to moderate income housing. For the economically disadvantaged, having housing available now and in the future which they can afford, either through rental assistance or other means, is critical. I will work to increase appropriations to this fund and to bring federal dollars to the State as well.

The State must play a major role in career training as part of their efforts to address the problems of the economically disadvantaged. The South Seattle Community College's apprenticeship program is a model for the State and the college is seeking to expand the training opportunities they provide. I will work to provide state funding for that effort. Education, teaching English as a second language, and working with our local business communities to create new opportunities are all part of creating quality family-wage jobs within our District.

11. Given the issues that arose in the 2004 Washington State Gubernatorial election, what changes would you seek in statewide voting and/or election processes? What changes would you make, if any, to State laws regarding restoration of voting rights for ex-felons?

Today it is becoming more and more challenging for the largest county in the State, King County, to get poll workers hired and trained. Having King County go to all mail voting would be a major step forward toward removing many of the 2004 election issues. The State needs to work with King County to facilitate the process. Additionally, we know that having a paper ballot which can be tracked throughout the election process is essential to having elections that are fair and democratic.

I would restore voting rights to an ex-felon at the end of their imprisonment. This is the system used by Montana and Oregon. Washington's system today is complex, confusing and unfair. Felony disenfranchisement disproportionately affects racial minorities and the State legislature needs to change the law.

12. What have you done to support workers' rights to collectively bargain? Would you co-sponsor a card check neutrality bill as State Representative?

As union contracts have been reviewed at the King County Council, I have been supportive of the collective bargaining process. In working on the County Ferry District, my goal has been to ensure that the new district's employees are represented by a union.

I recognize that a card check neutrality bill is important in order to prevent management from attempting to influence workers to not unionize. The imbalance between management and labor is increasing as union membership declines. A card check neutrality bill should help reverse that trend and I would co-sponsor that legislation.

13. What is your position on the Alaskan Way Viaduct? What are the fundamental transportation challenges facing the 34th District and what solutions would you propose or support in Olympia?

The viaduct has to be repaired or replaced. In the next severe earthquake many of us will know someone who was on the viaduct when it collapsed. The time to determine what the solution will be is



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now and our State and local leaders must come together and make that decision, seek funding for the repair or replacement, and determine how they are going to provide alternatives for those impacted during construction. Two options appear to be viable – replace the elevated structure or develop a surface street option that has the capacity needed. Our State leaders need to come together in a “viaduct summit” and determine what option we will proceed with and take action now. Part of that conversation should include how waterborne transit can be used to mitigate construction and what role it can play to relieve traffic congestion in the region. The Elliott Bay Water Taxi has been a tremendous success and that service will be critical during the replacement of the viaduct.

The fundamental transportation challenges facing the 34th District include:

Extending 509 so it connects to I-5, thus providing an alternative north/south route. If Proposition 1 passes that will occur.

Replacing the South Park Bridge, as it is a critical bridge and needs attention now. If Proposition 1 passes that will occur.

Reducing congestion on the West Seattle Bridge. The Spokane Street off ramp, which is part of Proposition 1, will help as will running the Elliott Bay Water Taxi year round and expanding passenger only service to Vashon. We must also look at having Washington State Ferries run more Southworth ferries to downtown Seattle. The traffic coming from the peninsula is severely impacting West Seattle.

14. Do you have any ideas on how State government can advance civil rights and expand opportunity for all people regardless of race, gender, age, or religious views?

With the federal government raising issues regarding immigration and immigrant rights, the State legislature must be ready to take action to protect civil rights. I support the REAL ID moratorium which the legislature passed to counter a federal mandate. The Washington State Human Rights Commission has laid out a plan to reach out to communities in which the primary language is not English to ensure citizens know their rights and how they can obtain legal assistance. The State legislature needs to fund that work program. It is anticipated that the Hispanic and Asian communities in our State will triple in size during the next half century and providing education and information regarding their civil rights is a major step toward protecting those rights.

The domestic partnership bill which finally was approved this past session is a first step towards expanding opportunity and civil rights for all citizens. In 2008 I want the legislature to reconsider restoring civil rights -- voting rights --to ex-felons. Further discussion also needs to occur regarding how state databases are being used and whether that data is being used to hinder civil rights or opportunities for citizens.

15. By most measures, our children are way behind other industrialized countries in academic test scores and generating high-quality graduates that are ready for the workforce. How should the legislature best address this?

In the next biennium the State will invest over 40 percent of its operating budget in K-12 programs and 11% into higher education. However, the State still is ranked in the bottom 20% of states in the nation for quality of education. One study indicated that we need an additional \$3.4 billion annually to reverse this trend. Therefore, the legislature needs to discuss the State’s regressive tax system and the options available to close this gap. The State must continue to increase its investment, as it did this past year, in early childhood programs so that children can thrive by five and be ready to enter kindergarten if we are to improve the quality of our education.



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As far as using the funding that is available, we need to work with our teachers and provide resources for learner based education. Providing our schools with counselors, bilingual aides, while reducing class sizes and increasing teachers' salaries would be a better investment of our funds than funding the WASL. Additionally, we need to increase funding for adult education, recognizing the diversity of our citizens and the importance of vocational, as well as academic education.

16. Where do you stand on public financing of campaigns in Washington?

Today, as we all know, an elected official has two jobs – to legislate and then raise money. The role that special interests play in a candidate's election can be important in determining whether that official will again be in a position to legislate or serve as a judge. Certainly that raises serious questions about the role of those special interests when public policy is being debated by any elected official. Certainly, the most recent Supreme Court race, where special interests attempted to buy a position on the court, proved that we must change the manner in which we fund elections.

I support public financing of campaigns. We know that such reform has worked in Maine and in Arizona and, if appointed, I will work to bring that reform to Washington State.

17. What specific proposals do you have to improve our criminal justice system in this State? What can the legislature do to address domestic violence? More generally, what policy initiatives would you support to reduce gun violence?

Investments in prevention and intervention have proven effective in reducing our jail population. The State should increase its investments in mental health treatment, drug treatment, and working with youth to provide them with programs that keep them from entering the criminal justice system.

In addressing domestic violence, the State needs to provide additional resources for transitional housing for domestic violence victims. Providing safe, secure locations with social services to assist victims and their children is essential. No one should have to return to a dangerous partner because they cannot find a safe haven or adequate resources.

If I serve in Olympia I will sponsor legislation to close the gun show loophole. Allowing anyone to be able to acquire a gun without a background check is irresponsible. The Brady Campaign to Control Gun Violence rates Washington State with a D+ rating regarding our gun laws. Regulating handguns, as well as assault weapons, needs to occur now and we need to close the loophole for the gun show industry.

Signature		Date 10/22/07	
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Please attach your resume.