

Seattle Democratic Socialists of America - Local Candidates Questionnaire
2017 Election Cycle: Seattle City Council Position 8
Candidate: James Passey

1. Why did you decide to run for city council?

I've lived in Seattle for most of my adult life (since 1997). Things have changed over time: some bad, some good. I'm concerned with what's happening in our city, and I look forward to working with others on our big issues.

2. Seattle city employees will soon have the right to 12 weeks of paid parental leave and four weeks of paid family leave, following an 8-0 city council decision 1. How will you extend these benefits to all workers in the city?

We should leave that decision up to workers and business owners to discuss for themselves.

3. How do you plan to use the city's regulatory capacity to enforce recent minimum wage gains and prevent wage theft by employers? What do you think the minimum wage should be?

There are enforcement tools already in place for the \$15/hr. minimum wage. That's the wage that seems to be supported by most people of the City. It also seems like this is a closed issue; the City and others worked on this for years.

4. In response to Trump's threats to cut federal funding for cities that oppose his policies, Seattle activists, led by the Transit Riders Union, are advocating for wealth taxation to "Trump-proof" the Seattle budget 2. Do you support this effort? Will you support further progressive reforms to our regressive tax system?

I think it's a great idea for us to rely less on the federal government, but I don't know if a tax is the right way to do it. I'd like to look at other options with residents and City leaders. Tax should be the last option, and if it came down to taxes, my preference would likely be a progressive tax instead of regressive.

5. The new youth jail planned for the Central District (also referred to as the "Children and Family Justice Center") is now running over budget at \$225 million prior to its construction 3. Do you support this facility? What is your plan for disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline and using common resources to produce better outcomes for marginalized youth?

I don't support imprisonment of youth with the exception of serious, violent crime. Some youth issues are social and/or health related, not criminal, and should be handled differently. We should look to improve education by using existing resources.

6. What is your plan for addressing the city's ongoing housing crisis and the criminalization of our homeless population? Do you support the city's sweeps of homeless encampments?

We must listen to the suggestions of experts who say that we don't necessarily need more money, but rather better effectiveness with existing resources. I don't support sweeps of encampments because I believe it is inhumane and simply shifts people around the city. "Housing first" methodologies are proven at being effective, which can bring our neighbors in the most danger back into society—often becoming the next line of volunteers to help homeless people.

7. Do you oppose state laws preventing Seattle from enacting rent control legislation and other forms of rent stabilization?

I don't think new legislation is the way to stabilize rent. At the same time, I don't appreciate that the State is telling the City what to do. The City should decide for itself. We should also lift zoning restrictions, which would create more housing availability. I also believe we need to stop raising property taxes. This would allow the cost of housing stabilize as builders move ahead of demand instead of reacting or hesitantly lagging behind it.

8. Soaring rents are forcing people of color out of their historic communities in neighborhoods like the Central District and South Seattle. How do you plan to address the needs of communities being displaced by gentrification?

The constant increase in taxes and zoning regulations are forcing people out of their communities by increasing the cost of living and not making enough housing available. We should look at less taxation and less regulation.

9. Seattle plans to open a safe-consumption site, implementing a harm-reduction strategy for drug users. Do you support this initiative? If so, how will you handle possible objections from neighborhood associations and other groups opposed to having safe-consumption sites in their "backyards"?

Addiction should be treated as a health issue, not a criminal issue. I support harm reduction strategies and safe consumption sites. However, we should look at ways to support harm reduction without raising taxes, and by using existing resources. The City and County (both are involved in the proposed safe injection sites) need to work with neighbors in the proposed areas for these sites to lower concerns and come to agreement on what to do.

10. In 2011, the the Department of Justice found that the Seattle Police Department engaged in patterns of excessive force, violating both the Constitution and federal law 5. How will you address SPD's ongoing pattern of violence, particularly in communities of color? Do you support the use of independent prosecutors in cases of alleged police misconduct? What steps will you take to strengthen civilian oversight of SPD?

The SPD has been under federal oversight for quite some time. I'm hopeful that this has made SPD more accountable. I support the use of body cameras for police, and an increased amount of community involvement by citizens to address alleged police misconduct.

11. Do you support the construction of the proposed police precinct in North Seattle?

I question whether citizens of Seattle need to pay for and replace an existing government structure. If there's a clear need to fix the structure because of safety concerns, it could be necessary. I'd rather have SPD and the City evaluate all existing resources instead of building a very expensive new facility.

12.) In the wake of the city council's vote to divest from Wells Fargo in support of climate justice and indigenous rights, do you support divestment of Seattle's pension funds from companies that invest in fossil fuels?

Workers should have the ability to make individual decisions on how their pensions are invested.

13.) The recent arrest and detention of Seattle resident Daniel Ramirez Medina, a DACA recipient, shows that the Trump administration is willing to harass and deport even legal immigrants. Without a plan for enforcement, Seattle's status as a sanctuary city is merely a title. What is your proposed protocol for upholding the rights of DACA recipients and other immigrants (including those who are undocumented), and enforcing Seattle's status as a sanctuary city?

The federal government should have less involvement in our City. Local and federal authorities shouldn't actively patrol to seek out DACA recipients and undocumented neighbors. The City should use existing resources to be more self-reliant.