

# Washington's Paramount Duty Candidate Questionnaire - 2018

Washington's Paramount Duty is a group of parents, teachers, and community members who fight to ensure our state's public schools are fully and equitably funded. We are asking all candidates for the state legislature in 2018, regardless of party, to respond to the following questionnaire. These responses will be made public and shared with our more than 7,000 members across the state.

There are 12 short questions below. You must give an answer for the questions themselves, and following each question is space for you to expand on your yes/no/maybe answers should you wish to do so. We will publish those additional comments along with your answers to the questions themselves.

Email address \*

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Candidate Name

Gerry Pollet

1) Do you believe our public schools are amply funded right now, as is required by the state constitution? \*

Yes

No

Maybe (explain below)

## (Additional comments for question 1)

NO! our school districts will be deep into the red in coming years. Here is why:

- The state failed to pay for special education, bilingual education and homeless student costs – which are basic rights under federal and state law. So, how can we say we have fully funded “basic education”? Special and bilingual education costs alone cost Seattle schools over \$40 million in local levy funds.
    - o Over 60% of instruction for special education students is provided by instructional aides / paraeducators, who also provide general classroom and other support in every grade in every school building. Yet, incredibly, the state pays for just one paraeducator per school in our basic ed funding formula (“prototypical school formula”). Even a small elementary school may have a dozen paraeducators / instructional aides.
  - Next year, the compromise legislation cuts school levies significantly and bars school levy funds from going to any “basic education” program. So, what in heck are school districts supposed to do – let students go without the educational services required by federal and state law?
  - \* Our State is failing to pay for the costs of mandating that every high school student take 24 credits to graduate
  - \* Our State is failing our students by not reducing class sizes beyond third grade.
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2) Will you vote for new, progressive revenues to sustainably fund our public schools? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

## (Additional comments for question 2)

See more below in 3. I believe we have to make our tax system much more fair in order to sustainably fund education: from early learning through high school and increasing access to higher education.

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### 3) Will you vote for these specific revenues? \*

- Capital gains tax
  - Closing corporate tax loopholes
  - Other: see below
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## (Additional comments for question 3)

The downward spiral in funding for education started when some of the wealthiest corporations in history lobbied to eliminate all business taxes on income from their Wall Street investments. We are one of the wealthiest states. Yet, we do not tax wealth. Instead we disproportionately tax the poor and middle class to pay for programs to help the poor and middle class. It is time to make our tax system much more fair by taxing wealth in Washington. The capital gains tax proposed by House Democrats would be less than paid in Idaho or Oregon, and not even make up for the windfall of the federal tax cuts.

Why should tax loopholes live forever, while we struggle every two years to find revenue to fund schools?

I am the prime sponsor of legislation to sunset all tax exemptions and preferences that have no end date if they are not readopted in the biennial budget. I am the prime sponsor of legislation to end the loophole exempting all Wall Street investment income from Washington's business tax, with the funds going to education.

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4) Will you vote to prevent \$1.1 billion in school cuts caused by the January 1, 2019 levy cliff? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

(Additional comments for question 4)

Many parent education advocates, school board members and educators are asking legislators if we will totally eliminate the local levy lids to allow districts to pay living wages and meet these needs. I will be supporting efforts to replace the 1% cap on school levy and state school property tax growth with a realistic inflation factor that reflects costs in central Puget Sound.

We can not allow the State Legislature to rely on local levies instead of the State increasing support to fund basic education now that McCleary is "over." I am not willing to give up on the state meeting our "paramount duty!" Do we want to go back to wealthier district being able to fund basic education out of levies, or should we unite in winning full funding of basic education? We need to adjust the levy caps, but it is the State's duty to pay for basic education.

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5) Will you vote to change the 2017 education funding deal (HB 2242) and add more funding to eliminate inequities between districts as well as ensure districts have the money they actually need to give every child a great education? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

### (Additional comments for question 5)

Again, I'm committed to working to have the State pay for the costs of basic education: from smaller class sizes through the full costs of special ed, bilingual ed, homeless student costs to providing the pay that allows educators to live reasonably close to the communities they teach in. We need to provide more funds to districts with higher costs due to higher costs of living, higher construction costs, etc.

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6) Will you vote to fully implement Initiative 1351, which creates smaller class sizes and increases in counselors, nurses, teaching assistants, librarians, and social workers, and in particular, with additional class-size reductions and staffing increases in high-poverty schools? More info: <http://leg.wa.gov/House/Committees/OPRGeneral/Documents/2014/I-1351Summary.pdf> \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

### (Additional comments for question 6)

I have been a longtime advocate for reducing class sizes. This also means providing the funds for school districts to have the physical capacity for lower class sizes, which Seattle doesn't due to overcrowding.

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7) An OSPI survey of school districts found state funding for special education remains more than \$100 million short after the 2018 legislative session. Will you vote to fully fund special education? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

(Additional comments for question 7)

I'm the prime sponsor of legislation to have the state pay for the full costs of special education. I've been working to move us to fully fund special education since I became a legislator. With a small group of dedicated legislators, we have secured commitments for action next year. KING TV has run a terrific investigative reporting series on how Washington fails to fund special education and the devastating consequences for individual students, which is worth watching. KING's investigative report refers to me as the "the Legislature's top special education advocate," not only for my work on funding, but also for my passage of legislation this year for our schools to assess every kindergartener through second grader for disabilities, dyslexia or other learning obstacles. We are also working for full funding of bilingual and homeless student costs. If we are successful on these three fronts, we will eliminate most school districts' deficits, including the costs of properly increasing compensation this year.

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8) Would you support financial incentives to reduce school segregation (racial and economic)? \*

- Yes (explain below what incentives you would support)
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

### (Additional comments for question 8)

Our teacher shortage includes a severe shortage of teachers from underrepresented minorities. Over a quarter of our students will be Latinx in a few years, but hardly any of our teachers are - or are bilingual. We should provide bonus funding for bilingual teachers as well as increasing conditional grants for college students and paraeducators to become teachers who will be bilingual certified.

Our State housing policies fail to recognize that low income and minority students who go to segregated schools do not break out of the cycle of long term poverty and lack of educational opportunities. We should ensure inclusive housing, not just charging fees to build segregated housing in lower income and lower property cost communities.

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9) Do you support a simple majority for school bonds and school levies? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

### (Additional comments for question 9)

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10) Do you support school vouchers or other programs that allow public funding to follow a student to a private and/or charter school? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

## (Additional comments for question 10)

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11) Will you vote against giving public money to charter schools or programs housed within charter schools? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

## (Additional comments for question 11)

I will follow court orders.

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12) Will you vote to raise the cap on allowable charter schools? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (explain below)

## (Additional comments for question 12)

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Anything else you want to add about fully funding public education in Washington State?

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Thank you for filling out this questionnaire! Washington's Paramount Duty will let you know when we will be publishing these responses. Questions? Please email us at [info@paramountduty.org](mailto:info@paramountduty.org).

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