2016 Legislative Candidate Survey

Candidate name: ________________________________ Legislative district: ______________

You are a candidate for: House _____ Senate _____

If you are a House of Representatives candidate, which position are you running for? Position 1 _____ Position 2 _____

Local government background
Have you ever been elected to a local government position, or served on a local government board, committee, or as staff? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, in what capacity?

1. State-shared local revenues
When the state encounters budget problems, legislative budget leaders have taken revenues historically shared with cities to help balance the books. In recent years, cuts and diversions have been enacted, while unfunded mandates and other local government cost drivers have not been addressed. Examples include:

- Changes in liquor tax and profit distributions that have resulted in a loss of nearly $200 million in funds that supported essential local services, such as public safety;
- Sweeping and diverting over $1 billion in local utility taxes, real estate taxes, and project loan repayments from the nationally-acclaimed Public Works Trust Fund that helps keep local infrastructure operating; and
- Targeted reductions to historical state/city partnerships like the fireman’s pension insurance program and training fees to attend the basic law enforcement academy.

Do you support or oppose the State Legislature continuing to use locally-shared revenues or revenues intended for capital projects in order to balance the state’s operating budget? Support _____ Oppose _____

Briefly describe one or more actions that you would take to ensure your views on these issues are accounted for by your caucus and in a final budget.

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2. Basic infrastructure financing
Cities face many challenges when repairing and updating critical infrastructure such as drinking water and sewer systems. Historically, the revolving loan fund called the Public Works Trust Fund had been a significant source for financing infrastructure. As the state wrestled first with a recession and then with the McCleary education funding challenges, legislators have turned time and again to diverting these funds and leaving nothing in their place. In 2016, the Governor vetoed a provision showing intent to again divert resources in the 2017-19 biennium.

Would you support or oppose a budget that diverted more resources from the infrastructure account to address state general fund obligations? Support _____ Oppose _____
Do you believe that it is part of the state’s obligation to help fund critical local infrastructure, especially when taxes and fees raised to do so in 1985 continue to be levied? Yes _____ No _____

If you have any ideas regarding local infrastructure financing, please share them.

3. Homelessness, affordable housing, and mental health
Across the state, housing costs are rising and affordability issues are impacting homebuyers and renters, as well as exacerbating the already critical homelessness problems in many communities. Mental health services are stretched thin and cities, while not normally in the business of providing these particular social services, find themselves increasingly trying to help citizens and keep their communities safe and secure. Cities have a strong desire to work together with the state, counties, business, nonprofit, and faith communities to help address these challenges. We continue to seek financing, regulatory and funding tools to do so.

Which of the following are priorities for you? Choose all that apply.
_____ Helping to end homelessness
_____ Ensuring adequate mental health services for those in need
_____ Providing tools to help control the spiraling cost of housing

Please elaborate on what you suggest doing to address one or more of these issues.

4. Public records
The Public Records Act (PRA) is a cornerstone of our commitment to open and transparent government. Cities have invested significant resources in complying with the law. Now, 40+ years after its adoption, the PRA is being tested in ways never imagined by changes in technology and requestors who take advantage of the law. Cities have been seeking ways to protect the law from abusive requestors and update it for changing technology. However, there is strong opposition to any changes that may be perceived as lessening transparency.

Would you support a change to the PRA to address abusive requestors? Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____
Would you support a change to the PRA to allow a reasonable charge for providing electronic copies of records? Yes _____ No _____

Do you have other ideas on how to address the issues around public records and how to respond to the changing nature of public records requests?
5. Local control
Cities are struggling with a wide variety of challenges including but not limited to financing services and infrastructure for the public, an unprecedented expansion of homelessness, and reconciling a fundamental transparency responsibility with new and emerging technologies. Cities are best able to meet the challenges of today when they have the ability to be nimble and flexible as they determine the best way to respond to these pressures for their own individual communities.

Washington cities operate under the State Constitution and statutes that provide them all the powers they need to do what they want – unless expressly denied by actions of the Legislature. The relationship between the state and cities functions best as a partnership where major policy issues are approached by the state with careful consideration of the varied conditions among the state’s 281 cities, and an appreciation of the importance of retaining local flexibility to tailor policies to reflect local needs and circumstances. Still, at times, cities have to respond to state legislation they believe undermines the principle of “local control” over important issues such as land use, housing, finance, infrastructure, elections, labor relations, and other issues that directly affect cities.

Local control is a good thing that needs to be respected. Agree _______ Disagree _______

If you don’t agree that local control should be preserved in all situations, please describe one or more specific issue areas or situations in which the state should preempt local control. OR If you agree that local control should be respected, please describe how you would argue for the value of local discretion in the face of colleagues who want to see state preemption.

Please return your response by the end of the day on Friday, June 10 by email to candidatesurvey@awcnet.org, by fax to (360) 753-0149, or via U.S. mail to AWC Candidate survey, 1076 Franklin Street SE, Olympia WA 98501-1346.

If you have any questions, please contact Government Relations Director Dave Williams at davew@awcnet.org. Thank you for your participation.