



# 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

Washington Housing Alliance Action Fund supports candidates who champion public policy that prevents and ends homelessness and that ensures that everyone in Washington has the opportunity to access safe, healthy, and affordable homes.

Washington Housing Alliance Action Fund will use the responses to this questionnaire to determine endorsements, potential donations, and potential volunteer turnout. The responses may also be used to educate voters. Thank you for your complete and thoughtful answers.

*Please respond by May 31, 2014 to Brianna Thomas at [briannat@housingactionfund.org](mailto:briannat@housingactionfund.org).*

*Responses returned after that date may not be able to be considered for endorsement.*

*We prefer you to enter your responses directly into the fields on this form. There are six pages.*

If we endorse your candidacy, we would like to give you a chance to speak to our members in your district.

## **Campaign Contact Information**

Committee Name: Committee to Elect Scott W

Campaign Phone: 425 563-3004

Campaign Website: [www.vote4scottw.org](http://www.vote4scottw.org)

## **Position You are Running For**

State Representative, Pos. 1 21<sup>st</sup> LD

If elected, what will you do ensure that everyone in Washington has the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, affordable home? *(Please limit your response to 100 words or less.)*

I am convinced that providing housing to all Washington residents is not just the moral thing to do, but the responsible thing to do. I am aware of multiple studies that show that providing housing reduces the costs of providing other human services, respects the needs of individuals, and builds a stronger community. The State needs to work with municipalities to provide housing and support existing efforts to fund capital requests for low-income housing.

## 1. Housing Trust Fund

The Housing Trust Fund is Washington's primary mechanism for building and preserving affordable homes. The State's investment is highly leveraged by federal, local, and philanthropic sources. Every 1,000 homes built create approximately 1,220 jobs. The majority of people living in homes supported by the Housing Trust Fund are extremely low-income, earning less than \$19,000 per year for a family of three. The Housing Trust Fund also supports first-time homeownership programs and provides homes for veterans, people with disabilities, seniors, farmworkers, and families leaving homelessness.

The level of the Housing Trust Fund has fluctuated since its creation in 1989, reaching a high of \$200 million in the 2007-08 biennium, steadily dropping to just \$70 million in the 2013-15 budget.

a. Will you support returning the State Housing Trust Fund to historic levels, 3-4% of the capital budget, during the 2015 – 2017 biennium?

**Yes**

**No**

Comments: Providing housing is a great way to reduce the need for other social services. In addition, it is easier for people to get a job if they have a stable address.

## 2. Document Recording Fee: Revenue for Programs that Prevent and End Homelessness

Document recording fees are the largest source of funding for homeless housing in every county in Washington State. The passage of ESSB 5875 in the 2014 legislative session delayed a significant portion of this funding from sunset, but only until 2019.

Will you vote in favor of permanently removing the sunset stipulation on these fees, thereby protecting one of the most important sources of funding for preventing and ending homelessness in Washington State?

**Yes**

**No**

Comments:

ESSB 5875 also included a new requirement that 45% of the state's share of these funds be set aside for private rental payments, explicitly excluding nonprofits. While strategies to end homelessness do include utilizing the private market when appropriate, this policy threatens to erode recent successes by damaging the local control and flexibility of communities to create innovative and responsive programs tailored to address local needs and realities.

a. Will you vote in favor of the requirement that homeless program funding be set aside for payments solely to private entities and corporations?

Yes

No

Comments: We need to carefully evaluate the effectiveness of the private market in providing housing. If the State is getting a good return, then it may be appropriate to continue or adjust the policy.

### 3. Tenant Protections

The current tenant screening process creates unfair and unnecessary barriers to housing for many tenants, including the high cost of repeated tenant screening reports. The current reporting system lists all attempted evictions as a negative mark, even in cases where the tenant has prevailed in court, to the detriment of the tenant.

a. Will you vote in favor of legislation that regulates how evictions in which a tenant has prevailed in court are reported in tenant screening reports?

Yes

No

Comments:

b. Will you vote in favor of legislation that addresses the high cost of those required reports – either through portability, limiting the cost of screening, or other similar mechanisms as found in SHB 2537, in the 2014 legislative session?

Yes

No

Comments:

Discrimination against tenants who use a subsidy (rental vouchers) or unearned income (SSI benefits) to pay their rent is often a proxy for illegal discrimination against low-income families, seniors, disabled people, and people of color. This is commonly referred to as “Source of Income Discrimination” (SOID). Tenants should be protected from this SOID, and there are several localities already operating under these protections.

c. Will you vote in favor of legislation that prohibits Source of Income Discrimination?

Yes

No

Comments:



#### 4. Revenue

In the last several years, more than \$10 billion has been cut from the state's General Fund and many of the cuts have come out of safety net programs. In order to restore the cuts that have been made, and to prevent more cuts to important programs – like Housing and Essential Needs program, the Aged, Blind, and Disabled program, and TANF – Washington must enact a fairer and more sustainable revenue system.

- a. Will you vote in favor of legislation that seeks to create new revenue either through new taxes and fees or by the closing of certain corporate tax exemptions? If so, which revenue options would you support? If not, why? *(Please address both questions in the Comments section below.)*

**Yes**

**No**

Comments: We need to move toward a more progressive tax system. That includes reviewing existing tax expenditures to ensure they provide a benefit to the State. However, eliminating unproductive tax expenditures will not be sufficient to provide enough revenue for the needs of the State.

#### 5. Housing & Basic Need Assistance for Low Income, Disabled Adults

The Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) program helps low-income adults who are temporarily unable to work due to a physical or behavioral health disability avoid homelessness by providing recipients with rental, utility, and basic need assistance while they are recovering. The Aged, Blind, and Disabled (ABD) program provides a \$197 monthly cash grant to low-income adults who have a permanent physical or mental health disability while they are applying to the federal SSI program. Once individuals are accepted onto SSI, the state is reimbursed for the cost of providing cash assistance. The ABD cash grant was cut from \$339 to \$197 per month during the Great Recession, even as the cost of rental housing has increased.

- a. Will you vote to protecting the Housing and Essential Needs and Aged, Blind, and Disabled programs from future budget cuts, and will you advocate for restoring reductions made during the Great Recession? *(Please address both questions in the Comments section below.)*

**Yes**

**No**

Comments: I will work to protect the HEN and ABD from future cuts. I will advocate and work with Representative Ruth Kagi and other champions for restoring cuts made to social service programs.

#### 6. Homeless Youth

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, state child welfare systems are key contributors to youth homelessness. A recent DSHS report found that 35% of youth exiting the

Washington foster care system experience homelessness within one year. The Washington State Legislature has embarked on a multi-year effort to fully fund Extended Foster Care, a program ensuring youth exiting foster care have access to a safe home until age 21. Washington has one remaining category of youth identified in the federal law to be eligible for the Extended Foster Care program: those with a medical condition. Youth currently eligible include those 1) in high school or pursuing a GED; 2) those in college or a voc-tech program; 3) those enrolled in a program to remove barriers to employment; and 4) those who are working over 80 hours per month.

a. Will you vote for legislation and the budget allocation to the final group of youth who have a medical condition?

**Yes**

**No**

Comments:

## **7. Supportive Housing Services for Chronically Homeless Persons with Significant Health Needs**

Permanent Supportive Housing combines affordable housing and supportive services for people who have experienced or are at risk of chronic homelessness and who have significant physical and/or behavioral health needs. Permanent Supportive Housing is a nationally recognized best practice to end chronic homelessness, while improving health outcomes and costs in health care and other related systems. A Medicaid supportive housing services benefit can be created in our state to pay for housing retention services in supportive housing that helps people access and remain in housing that links them to primary care, mental health and chemical dependency treatment, employment assistance, and life skills. The benefit does not pay for housing, or take away funding from existing Medicaid services. Instead, it would save Medicaid resources and better deliver comprehensive services by using stable, affordable housing as a platform for stability and service delivery for highly vulnerable populations.

a. Will you vote in favor of legislation to create a Medicaid Supportive Housing Services Benefit?

**Yes**

**No**

Comments:

## **8. Please take a moment to tell us a little more about your campaign:**

**Are You an Incumbent?**

Yes

No

**Who is Running Against You?** Strom Peterson, Justin McMahon, Dick McManus, Allen McPheeters

**Votes Needed For You to Win the Primary Election:** 8500

**Votes Needed For You to Win the General Election:** 15,000

**Estimated Campaign Budget**

Primary Budget: 50,000

General Budget: 80,000

Raised to Date: 22,000

**Voter Contact**

Do you have an articulated Field Plan? Yes

Do you have an articulated Mail Plan? Yes

Do you have an Earned Media/Media Response Plan? Yes

**Key Endorsements to Date:**

Representative Cindy Ryu, Judy Clibborn; Senator Steve Hobbs, Brian Hatfield; Pacific Northwest Council of Carpenters

*This is the end of the questionnaire.*



*Thank you for filling out this form.*

*Please return by May 31, 2014 to Brianna Thomas at [briannat@housingactionfund.org](mailto:briannat@housingactionfund.org).*