



## **Gerry Pollet Urbanist Questionnaire 2024**

State Representative, LD46, Position 1

**Do you think Washington state should have an income tax (yes/no)? If yes, what is the legislative path? If not, what forms of progressive revenue would you champion?**

Yes. To have a progressive tax system and not continue to make the poorest and working Washingtonians pay for health, housing and education, Washington should have a progressive income tax. That's why I was one of 21 House members who voted against Initiative 2111, which "prohibit(s) the state, counties, cities... from imposing or collecting income taxes."

Washington used to tax wealth. Then some of the world's largest corporations lobbied to exempt Wall Street investments. It's time to tax wealth again to fund education, housing and health care.

I prime sponsored prior versions of what is now called a "wealth tax," to end the massive exemption of investments (stocks, etc.) from property taxes; and exempt revenues from Wall Street investments from the B&O tax. I am discussing strategies for 2025. The wealth tax (HB 1473 / SB 5486 in 2024) would generate \$3 billion a year, with \$1.6 billion a biennium dedicated to education.

We have to defend the capital gains tax which is the most progressive tax that we do have, and which is essential for funding education. I prime sponsored a capital gains tax several years before we finally gained a majority of Democrats willing to vote for it.



**How would you vote on a transit-oriented development bill without an explicit affordability mandate and why?**

Transit oriented development needs to include affordable housing!

Taxpayers have spent billions to build our region's transit systems. Most of the taxes to fund transit are paid disproportionately by the least wealthy and working families under our regressive tax system. We didn't build light rail, commuter rail and fixed bus rapid transit so only the wealthiest people can afford to live near transit. We promised that we were building out transit so working people could live near transit for work, school, health care and shopping. If we do not include a mandate for affordable (and family) housing near transit, developers will continue to rake in windfalls building on properties near transit that only the wealthiest can afford.

I've advocated for many years to increase density near transit and worked to include affordable housing as part of those upzones. I successfully fought against forbidding Seattle and other cities from adopting affordability and anti-displacement programs in recent housing legislation (preemption). The stakes are much higher for transit oriented development. Without a mandate for affordable housing, developers owning properties near transit will have a massive windfall from building much higher, while we increase economic and racial segregation.

**Do you support the rent stabilization and renter protection bill (HB 2114) that made it through the State House last year? If so, how would you approach ensuring its passage in both chambers?**

I was a sponsor of HB 2114 for rent stabilization, and I am the prime sponsor of the House bill to allow cities to adopt their own rent stabilization programs (HB 1625) and end preemption of rent control by the state. I advocated for HB 2114 to come to the



House floor and voted to pass it to the Senate. I will be working hard to ensure we pass the House again in 2025 and for the Senate to join us.

Massive out of control rent increases are a major cause of people being forced into homelessness. Massive out of control rent increases are also a major contributor to children and seniors experiencing food insecurity or having to go without medicine or other health care. I will continue to share with fellow legislators, media and the public how uncontrolled rents are driving these problems and that a well developed stabilization program, as in HB 2114, will improve the lives of millions of Washington residents.

### **What are the highest priority items on your housing agenda?**

- Passing rent stabilization legislation
- Transit oriented development with inclusion of affordable housing
- Expanding the housing trust fund using revenues from adoption of the wealth tax (see answer above); and, ensuring that we include housing for people with disabilities and migrant and resident agricultural workers and their families, along with health and safety provisions for that housing
- Funding programs that provide emergency rent and utility bill payments to prevent eviction and funding for eviction legal representation
- Expanding funds for both rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing
- Ensuring that comprehensive plans include commitments to meet the housing needed for people at all income levels, particularly very low, low and median income levels.



These address different aspects of our housing crises and are not in a prioritized order.

**What's your roadmap to fixing educational inequities in Washington state? How can Washington state comply with its constitutional duties regarding education, especially in light of several school districts including Seattle's contemplating school closures to grapple with deficits?**

I am one of the Legislature's most proven and dedicated champions for fully funding public education, which is our "paramount duty" under the state constitution. We are not even close to fully funding basic education. It takes more than committing to voting for funding to be an effective advocate. It requires understanding the details and the challenges, which is why KING5 and others have called me "the Legislature's leading advocate for funding special education." The biggest chunk of Seattle Schools' and other districts' deficits is from the state failing to pay for the education of our children with disabilities (special education).

I spearheaded a \$417 million increase in special ed funding in the 2023 Session (HB 1436). My continuing work includes revising the funding formula and ending the unconscionable and unconstitutional cap on the percent of students with disabilities that the state provides special education funding for in each school district. I am working with Seattle School board and administrators, PTAs, WEA and other advocates to build support for a billion dollar a year adjustment in funding formulas in order to fund the basic costs of keeping schools open, paying educators and funding our students' educational needs.

What share of the state's transportation budget should be for alternatives to cars, such as transit, biking, and pedestrian infrastructure?



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I have been an advocate for many years that at least ten percent of our transportation budget should be dedicated to active transportation non-vehicle pedestrian and bicycling alternatives and for increasing support for transit infrastructure to exceed that along with operating subsidies. I believe in alternatives to reliance on the gas tax, which is constitutionally limited to roads.

The Climate Commitment Act needs to be defended so we can fund both transit and active transportation projects that reduce vehicle emissions and miles traveled and continue to fund free transit for youth and students.

**Do you support permitting jurisdictions to choose to hold elections in even years? What other election reforms excite you?**

I do support allowing jurisdictions to choose to hold elections in even years. We need to expand public funding for elections as Seattle has done. We need to expand public disclosure, particularly for so-called "independent expenditure" campaigns whose funding now swamps our electoral system. Public funding is undermined by limitless independent expenditures. The public and media need to be able to promptly see who is pouring funds to buy elections.

**Due to the interventions of ballot-initiative-monger Tim Eyman and a state legislature that caved to him even after a lawsuit overturned the measure in 2007, Washington State has a 1% cap on property tax increases, greatly tying the hands of local governments and forcing them to use ballot measures to fund basic services. Do you think this cap should remain? If so, what tools will you give local governments to deal with the [fiscal cliff they're facing](#)?**



I've been the prime sponsor of legislation to end Eyman's 1% property tax cap and will continue to lead on efforts to do so (e.g., HB 2145 for the 2019-20 biennium). We need to end the 1% cap on property tax revenue growth. Inflation is obviously much more than 1%, and our local governments need to pay much more than typical inflation to keep up with construction costs, living wages and high cost services such as corrections. As population grows in a city or county, the revenue from property taxes should grow as well. Our legislation would cap revenue growth at 3% based on a combination of inflation and population growth. It's important to discuss this in terms of it being a cap on revenue growth. We have state constitutional and other limits on property tax rates. Under the Eyman-based cap, even when the property tax rates might not change (or may even be reduced), local governments' revenues can't grow to keep up with the costs of funding essential public services.