



Sharlett Mena Urbanist Questionnaire 2024

State Representative, LD29, Position 2

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, I support a progressive income tax. We need more equitable revenue to fully fund transportation, affordable housing, and education.

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

I would be hesitant to support a transit-oriented development bill without an explicit affordability mandate. While promoting development around transit hubs is crucial for reducing traffic congestion and promoting sustainable urban growth, we must ensure that these developments remain accessible to all residents, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. Without affordability measures, there's a risk that such projects could exacerbate displacement and gentrification, ultimately harming the communities they aim to benefit. My vote would depend on whether the bill includes provisions to safeguard housing affordability and prevent displacement.

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?

Yes, I strongly support the rent stabilization and renter protection bill (HB 2114). This legislation is essential for providing much-needed relief to renters facing skyrocketing housing costs and ensuring they have stable, secure housing. To ensure its passage in both chambers, I would work



closely with my colleagues to build a coalition of support, emphasizing the bill's importance for economic stability and social equity. I would also engage with community organizations, tenant advocacy groups, and constituents to rally public support and pressure legislators who may be on the fence. Additionally, I would seek to address any concerns or opposition by proposing amendments or compromises that maintain the bill's core protections while gaining broader support.

What are the highest priority items on your housing agenda?

Increasing the supply of affordable housing through incentives for developers, public-private partnerships, and direct investment in affordable housing projects is one of the highest priorities in housing development. This includes implementing stronger rent control measures and tenant protections to prevent displacement and ensure housing stability for all residents. Another one of my priorities is homelessness prevention through expanding programs and services to prevent homelessness, including rental assistance, mental health support, and job training programs.

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?

My roadmap includes focusing on equitable funding, educator retention, and deficits to address educational inequities and ensure Washington State meets its constitutional duties regarding education. Advocating for a more equitable distribution of state funding ensures that all school districts, particularly those in underserved and low-income areas, have the resources they need to provide a high-quality education. Increasing support for educators through competitive salaries, professional development opportunities, and improved working conditions to attract and retain high-quality educators. Furthermore, working with school districts to find sustainable solutions to budget deficits, such as seeking additional state funding, optimizing resource allocation, and exploring partnerships with community organizations and businesses.



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

A significant portion of the state's transportation budget should be dedicated to alternatives to cars. I believe at least 50% of the transportation budget should be allocated to developing and maintaining public transit, biking, and pedestrian infrastructure. This investment is crucial for promoting sustainable transportation options, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving public health and safety. By prioritizing these alternatives, we can create a more equitable and accessible transportation system for all residents.

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

Yes, I support permitting jurisdictions to choose to hold elections in even years. This change can increase voter turnout, as more voters typically participate in even-year elections due to the higher profile of state and federal races. Other election reforms that excite me include automatic voter registration, voting rights restoration, and expanding vote-by-mail. Expanding automatic voter registration ensures that more eligible voters are registered and can participate in elections. Working to restore voting rights for formerly incarcerated individuals ensures that all citizens have a voice in our democracy. Lastly, making vote-by-mail universally accessible to increase voter participation and convenience.

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](#)?



The 1% cap on property tax increases should be reconsidered. While the intent was to limit the burden on taxpayers, this cap has severely constrained local government's ability to fund essential services. I propose either raising the cap to a more sustainable level or providing a mechanism for local governments to exceed the cap with voter approval. Additionally, I would advocate for increased state funding and efficiency measures. Increased funding provides more state funding to local governments to help bridge the gap created by the property tax cap. Thorough, supporting measures to improve the efficiency of local government operations and reduce costs without compromising the quality of services.