



Devin Rydel Kelly Urbanist Questionnaire 2024

State Representative, LD27, 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 am fundamentally in favor of overturning Washington's rigged, regressive, racialized tax code, which burdens workers and the poor with sales and property tax. We're home to some of the richest people in the whole world, and it's disturbing to me that politicians still lack the political will to make them pay their fair share in income, capital gains and wealth taxes.

If politicians won't change their tone or fight for progressive taxation legislation, then I support building the working class will to win using the initiative process. We almost won in 2010 and we can win now if we bring workers along with us. If the billionaire-backed "Let's Go Washington" initiatives can get signatures through huge spending, deceit and manipulation, then we certainly should be able to with a transformative message, massively mobilized people power and truth.

To that end, I am actively campaigning against the rollback of the capital gains and climate tax. I believe we need more solutions to tax income and wealth, not less, and I'm disappointed in the legislature's handling of all six right-wing, astroturf "Let's Go Washington" initiatives. This is particularly true for the income tax ban. They should have pushed it to voters to decide, then spent all year campaigning against it, rather than cynically passing it and campaigning to keep their own jobs.

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

I would likely oppose such a bill until affordability was built in. Working class and low income people are the primary users of transit, particularly in the post-COVID environment, and any



transit that gets created must inherently be made equitable and accessible to the folks who most depend on it. I also think equity has to connect with geographic access and expanded access into "non-traditional" hours, particularly given long and often multi-county commutes for working people in our region.

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. In fact, housing is my core campaign platform. I am on the Steering Committee of Tacoma For All, the folks behind the recently successful "Tenant Bill of Rights" initiative in Tacoma, and I hope to expand our recent victory throughout the state. I am a massive advocate of not only rent stabilization, but also creating a department of housing and a social housing developer.

I supported Senator Trudeau's rent stabilization legislation in the last two sessions. I was excited to see the complimentary bill in the house this year. but disgusted by the corporate wing of the Democratic party killing it. If elected, I promise to treat this like an organizing campaign. I'll bring tenants to committee meetings. I'll confront the cozy relationships between landlord lobbyists and elected officials, regardless of their party. We beat the landlords here in Tacoma, even after they outspent us three to one trying to undermine Initiative 1! We can beat them in Olympia, too!

What are the highest priority items on your housing agenda?

1) Rent stabilization

2) Social Housing

3) A department of housing to take on speculators and bring more regulatory resources to counties



4) Developing a public bank, in part to provide zero or low interest loans both to working class first time home buyers, and to older single family owners who want to age in place, in order to convert to duplexes and triplexes on the condition they provide stabilized rent.

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?

We are facing an unprecedented and growing crisis in K-12 enrollment, which is down across the country, but most pronounced in lower income schools and districts. Because Washington's funding model is based on per pupil enrollment, these decreases in enrollment are leading to horrific cuts in staffing, particularly in the positions most important to student well being (such as advisors, counselors, and para educators). This is a dangerous spiral for all.

I side with the Washington Supreme Court's McLeary decision that education is our "Paramount Duty." We must not only double down on basic education, but also expand our horizons. We must move beyond a per pupil funding model and take into account inequities such as racism, redlining, and low property tax bases in rural and urban communities alike. We must decrease student to staff ratios for those most in need, along with expanding advising, counseling and nursing everywhere. This is one of my top priorities.

Finally, we need to revisit our curriculum model and turn towards preparing students to thrive as adults, fulfill their right fit pathway and earn good earning wage jobs. This means honoring student requests for courses in areas like Financial Literacy, Civics, Home Economics and even Driver's Ed. It means collaborating with trade unions to create more meaningful connections between Career and Technical Education, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships, ensuring credits are transferable. It means support for students and families as they exit the home and enter their future



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

The transportation budget is currently far too caught up in road expansion and maintenance and almost exclusively with an orientation towards either single occupancy vehicles or business transit. We need to dramatically expand investment in alternatives, and in particular in bus rapid transit and various types of rail. I also support the state incentivizing municipalities to provide greater pedestrian and bike infrastructure. Finally, I believe in practical, near-future solutions such as funding Amtrak now, over waiting until 2050 for ultra high speed rail (although, of course, I would support a "both and" option).

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

Absolutely! In my Legislative District, we see upwards of 70% turnout in Presidential election years, 40-50% in even numbered legislative years, and much lower in odd municipal years. Parts of Tacoma saw around 20% turnout last year, during a pivotal local election. Moving years could help this dramatically.

I also support ranked choice voting both in the state and federally, along with multiple positions and proportional representation, such as what's being proposed by the Congressional progressive caucus.

Finally, if we're getting really visionary, I think election day should be a paid federal holiday.

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 believe we need to lift the levy lid in order to circumvent some of the worst fiscal cliff issues facing our counties and cities. That said, I also think Washingtonians have agreed to vote themselves higher regressive sales and property taxes to fund services and infrastructure for far too long, while the rich get away with paying over nothing. We need to fundamentally transform our tax structure, and we need politicians willing to fight like hell for that transformation. I will do this.