



Emily Alvarado Urbanist Questionnaire 2024

State Representative, LD34, 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. I support a graduated income tax that has the wealthiest individuals in our state contribute a fair share. Washington has the second most regressive state tax system where low- and moderate-income people pay a disproportionately greater share of their earnings than the wealthiest individuals and corporations. Tax reform is crucial so that we have the revenue needed to invest in thriving communities and in our future: high quality public education, childcare, health care, housing and transit. I believe advancing capital gains was an important first step, and defeating the initiative to repeal capital gains in November is essential. I support and would champion other progressive revenue approaches that we could implement more quickly and that make our tax system fairer by having the wealthiest people and corporations contribute.

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

We need over a million homes in 20 years in Washington. To get there, we need to reform our zoning and land use laws to make it possible to build significantly more housing, including dense housing by transit infrastructure. That's why I support a transit-oriented development bill that allows more, larger buildings by light rail, commuter rail, BRT and frequent buses to help unlock housing supply, create more connected, walkable communities, support transit ridership, and reduce greenhouse



gas emissions. As the State takes action on zoning reform, we must ensure that development near transit includes housing that is affordable to low-income people—people who are disproportionately transit dependent. Over half of the million homes that we need in Washington must be affordable to people with low incomes. It will take intentional policy to produce those homes. I am sensitive to regulations that may add cost to development. But I believe that it is possible to calibrate a thoughtful TOD policy to achieve multiple public benefits: allowing more market rate housing while ensuring affordable homes get built. Without requiring affordability alongside zoning reform, we may miss a generational opportunity to create the abundant housing and inclusive communities we need.

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 proud to sponsor HB 2114; I'm committed to passing this legislation in 2025. Across Washington—in urban, suburban and rural communities—rents continue to rise faster than wages and social security. The data is clear: rapidly rising rents, especially excessive rent increases, are a driving factor of evictions (disproportionately impacting young children), homelessness (increasingly impacting seniors), and displacement (particularly for communities of color). Our housing market is out of whack; we need immediate action for renters. HB 2114—which capped annual rent increases at 7%— is a reasonable policy that is calibrated to let landlords raise the rent and make a return while providing immediate predictability and stability for renters and manufactured homeowners. It will help working families better afford the basics and save, prevent homelessness of renters who are already severely cost-burdened, and strengthen communities. This is a racial equity issue: BIPOC households are disproportionately represented among renters and among households that receive excessive rent increases. Rent stabilization works as part of



a broader housing strategy that includes building more housing, of all types, in all communities. We need more supply and protections for renters; it is a both and, not an either or.

What are the highest priority items on your housing agenda?

Everyone deserves a stable, affordable home. I support a comprehensive housing agenda that: 1) increases housing supply through financing, zoning and regulatory reform; 2) invests in permanently affordable rental and ownership housing to support people not served by the market; 3) protects renters, homeowners and homebuyers. Passing rent stabilization is a 2025 priority. Also, a record number of Washingtonians are experiencing homelessness; more housing affordable to extremely low-income people is urgently needed. I support the creation of dedicated resources to finance and operate deeply affordable housing, especially supportive housing that can bring people inside, address chronic homelessness and serve seniors on a fixed income. Access to financing remains a primary reason why housing is stalled, isn't feasible or isn't built. I support financing tools that help kickstart housing development across the state. I strongly support legislation to hold local communities accountable to meeting GMA housing targets across the income spectrum. We must reduce permitting timelines to help make housing development more financially feasible and build housing faster. I support reform that provides incentives for local governments to improve their permitting processes and measures to hold communities accountable to cutting permit timelines. I support efforts to reduce barriers for first-time homebuyers.

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?



Washington should have a world class public education system that supports all children and youth, especially those farthest from opportunity. I believe that public education is foundational to a thriving democracy. It's also the paramount duty of the state. But our schools have been underfunded and significant challenges persist. I support eliminating the special education cap so that schools are better prepared to meet the needs of all children. We need to invest in educators and support staff with fair wages and intentional professional development and training and to attract and retain quality, well-trained teachers and staff and support improvement in student outcomes, especially literacy and graduation rates. We need to attract diverse educators, reflective of the student body, and ensure that curriculum is inclusive and engaging. I support raising the revenue necessary to make essential educational investments, including in operating, capital and flexible funds to cover increased costs. Investments must be sustainable so districts can plan and weather variations in enrollment without disrupting learning. In addition, I believe we must ensure that all children and youth have their basic needs—housing, health care, nutritious food—met so that they are ready to learn.

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

I support continuing efforts to focus a greater share of investment in transit, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure so that public transit options are frequent and reliable for people who can't drive or can't afford to drive, and as an alternative to driving. With Move Ahead Washington, the legislature made historic investments in multimodal transit, high-speed rail, and ferries and we continued investments in the 2023-25 budget. We need to significantly reduce vehicle trips to meet Washington's climate goals by 2035. To get there we must have real alternatives, including a public transportation system that provides reliable, safe, and affordable options. The Climate Commitment Act is a critical climate policy and a key funding source for



multimodal transportation; defeating the initiative to repeal the CCA in November is essential.

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

Yes. I was proud to cosponsor and vote for HB 1932, which would have given jurisdictions the option to conduct elections in even-numbered years instead of odd-numbered years. We had a new record low for voter turnout in the 2023 election; presidential election years attract higher voter turnout. The data suggests that even with some down-ballot drop off in even years, turnout still outnumbers odd-year elections. I believe that voter participation is good for our democracy; I support efforts to empower voter turnout and foster equitable representation across communities.

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 support lifting the 1% cap on property tax increases to help provide local governments with revenue to fund basic services. I also support expanding property tax relief to our neighbors who need it most, shifting the disproportionate share of the property tax burden off of those with homes of lesser assessed value. I believe we must focus on new progressive revenue options so that our tax code is fairer, and we can make needed investments in our communities.