



Shaun Scott Urbanist Questionnaire 2024

State Representative, LD43, 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 think Washington State should have an income tax. I'm a proud member of the Balance Our Tax Code Coalition, where for the last 3 years we've elevated the issue of progressive revenue, won a capital gains tax, and have continued to push for a tax on wealth in Washington State. I'm proud to be endorsed in this race by Senator Noel Frame - who has become synonymous in the state legislature with progressive revenue because of her extensive work on the issue - and by Representative April Berg, Chair of the House Finance Committee, who is a champion of revenue as well.

Though Democrats enjoy a trifecta in State Government, the path to an income tax is tenuous because too many in our party are corporatists. I believe we will succeed in this fight by highlighting not just the revenue options, but by talking about what we can fund with them: public schools, affordable housing, and mass transit. Because I would represent one of the most progressive districts in the state, I believe I can play a role in helping to set the pace for what it means to be a Democrat in the Legislature: without taxing the rich, we will never make good on our legislative trifecta.



Where a wealth tax may be difficult to achieve because of certain legal limitations in our state constitution, we must be ready with tactical alternatives. I look forward to helping Rep. Berg's Real Estate Excise Tax proposal to fund affordable housing pass the finish line. I think there is a path forward for a statewide, Seattle-style "JumpStart" tax. And in this campaign, I have offered several other possibilities: raising the ceiling on the State Oil Spill Tax, closing corporate loopholes on agricultural and aerospace big businesses, as well as taxing munitions and defense production.

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

It would be difficult for me to vote on a T.O.D. bill that does not contain an explicit affordability mandate. I believe that housing is a social good that must be as accessible as good schools and grocery stores.

My home neighborhood - the University District - illustrates the pitfalls of not enforcing affordability requirements. When the Campus Master Plan was brokered by the City of Seattle in 2018, it contained a requirement of only 400 affordable units for all the new housing units that would be built here. In the last 6 years, a new light-rail station and resplendent residential towers have made the University District a more cosmopolitan and better place to live. It has been wonderful to have this many new neighbors and visitors to the District. At the same time, an October 18, 2023 article in the U.W. Daily ("U-District High-Rises Strain Student Budgets") has indicated that many students and renters can't afford to live here. Their struggle is representative of a broader need for development that can benefit vulnerable communities, and policies that can build power for low- and middle-income renters.



I do not think we will have to forego affordability requirements on the road to greater residential production. I've been endorsed in this race by Representative Jessica Bateman; perhaps the most pro-housing elected official in the State Legislature, we have strong alignment on the need for truly affordable housing, giving developers the tools they need to eclipse restrictive zoning laws, and dramatically increasing the supply of housing of all kinds in the Evergreen State.

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 support the rent stabilization and renter protection bills that made it through the State House last year. One of the main reasons I am running for the State Legislature is because I believe I can play a role in elevating the urgency of this issue to my Senatorial seat mate, who will likely very soon be in a position of leadership in the Senate. Our district is over 70% renter, and I am one of them - if more could be made to understand the stakes for passing rent stabilization with a mass movement that would make that impression, we can apply the pressure needed to win.

What are the highest priority items on your housing agenda?

Our answer to what Friedrich Engels called "The Housing Question" in 1872 must approach the problem in its legal, fiscal, and political dimensions.

Legally, we must turn the page from exclusive zoning laws that were created a century ago as an attempt to segregated our cities. Where we cannot repeal these laws outright, we pass 'Builders' Remedy' policies that allow developers to supersede them.



Fiscally, we must increase investments public, social, not-for-profit, and private housing. We must pass the Real Estate Excise Tax to fund affordable housing in Washington State. We must identify revenue tools to fund supportive housing and housing for people with intellectual, physical, and developmental disabilities.

Politically, we must build power for and with renters. We can do this by giving localities the ability to move their elections to high-information/high-turnout even year cycles. We must pass rent stabilization laws to allow renters to grow the same roots in our communities that people with property can. And we must allow political canvassers into apartment buildings so that they can be part of the political conversation that homeowners in canvasser-friendly walkable-neighborhoods have.

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?

Revenue - the answer is revenue. The original sin of school closures in the City of Seattle was a 2017 funding mechanism known as the "Levy Swap" that remains the last vestige of the last Republican-controlled State Senate in Washington. This measure capped the amount that local districts could raise, and did so in a period where overall state funding of schools decreased. Though the State Legislature authorized some new revenue to fund public education in 2021, inflation eroded the value of that investment at a time that pandemic federal funds also ended.



Politically, too many Democrats in powerful positions are proponents of charter and private schools. They've allowed major corporations via the Washington Roundtable to set the agenda with respect to public schools, and the agenda has been divestment.

The Workforce Education Act - championed by my predecessor and mentor Frank Chopp - provides a legislative roadmap to fixing educational inequities in Washington State. That Act was a business tax that has funded free college for thousands of college students in Washington State. It was popular when it passed and is even more popular in the present as people have seen the results. With a progressive revenue proposal that funds our public schools, we can turn a negative into a positive: Washington can go from a state marred by schools closures and an imbalanced tax code to one that shows the rest of the country what nice things states can have if they tax the rich.

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

The state must increase investments in alternatives to cars, and a first step towards doing so would be protecting the Climate Commitment Act from Republican repeal.

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

I wholeheartedly support permitting jurisdictions to choose to hold elections in even years. I would also like to see a statewide system of publicly-funded elections modeled after Seattle's "Democracy Vouchers."



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 endorsed in this race by King County Councilmembers Teresa Mosqueda and Girmay Zahilay - support that was predicated on my conviction that local governments need the 1% cap lifted in order to meet the overlapping crises of mental and behavioral health, substance dependency, and houselessness that even conservatives say they care about. I look forward to building alliances with city councilmembers and county councilmembers across our state to identify and elevate helpful revenue tools to meet our collective challenged.