

King County Democrats

2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Judicial Level

Candidate Name	Daron Morris		
Position Sought	King County Prosecutor		
Home County and Legislative District	King, 36th LD		
Campaign Contact Information	PO Box 22169, Seattle, WA 98122	Phone: 206 202 2977	Fax:
	Website: www.electdaronmorris.org Email: info@electdaronmorris.org Twitter: @daronmorris2018 Facebook: www.facebook.com/daronmorris2018		
Campaign manager or point of contact	Riall Johnson, riall@electdaronmorris.org		
Consultant(s)			

Part I – Candidate Background

Please briefly describe your qualifications, education, employment, community and civic activity, past union affiliation, and other relevant experience. Attach a resume with more complete history.

Over the last twenty years I've served my community as a public defender. This experience has ideally prepared me to be King County Prosecutor. As a lawyer, I do my best work when I empathize with people and the challenges they have experienced. I've served my community one individual at a time, face to face, to enforce their constitutional rights and demand justice. I was a front line attorney, mostly for felony cases, from 1998 - 2007. When my first child was born, I left for three years in private practice, but still mostly did public defense cases, local and federal. In 2010, I returned to the public defender's office to supervise the felony practice. I also became one of two deputy directors in 2012. I remained in those positions until 2015 when I was promoted to Assistant Training Director. In 2016, I became my office's Investigation Supervisor. I recently resigned from that position on May 15th to run for this office. Teamsters 117 was my local and I took a lead role in negotiating our last collective bargaining agreement. I also volunteer at Crisis Clinic on the suicide and crisis hotline. I've devoted a lot of my off time to legislative advocacy on criminal justice issues through the Washington Defender Association and the Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. I've also been very substantially involved in justice reform work on several issues: mental health, immigration rights, gun safety and jury diversity.

Describe your history of involvement in Washington state politics. What offices have you previously sought election or appointment to? What campaigns have you worked on?

I'm a first time candidate. I've never been involved in other campaigns. I am a lifelong democrat. I vote and I have caucused.

What prompted you to run for this office?

Witnessing first hand the injustice and racism in our criminal justice system for far too long. Very little has changed over the last twenty years since I became an attorney. The criminal justice system remains massive, cruel and unfair, especially to poor people and communities of color. While Mr. Satterberg has diverted a small number of people out of the system, the prosecutor's office continues to use failed approaches and aggressively leverage plea deals through coercion. As a result, our prison population remains much too large and it is harming people everyday and making us less safe. I could no longer sit by and let this office go unchallenged as the Republican incumbent maintains draconian policies while occupying space that demands real progressive leadership and reform.

Describe the progress of your campaign so far. What kind of reception is your campaign getting? Are you running unopposed, or do you have an opponent? How will your campaign appeal to the voters?

We have just launched our campaign. Ours was a recent decision that came in response to persistent but mounting frustrations in communities around the County. Because this is an ostensibly non-partisan race between two candidates, we are not on the ballot in the primary. We are already receiving very positive reception from the key communities most affected by the justice system. Our opponent is the Republican incumbent Dan Satterberg who has gone unchallenged for 11 years. To appeal to voters, we plan on continuing to meet with all communities as we evolve our platform so that we can be a true voice for them.

Please answer the following questions.

		Yes*	No
1	Have you ever failed to pay any taxes or court ordered judgments?		X
2	Have you ever been found in violation of a Public Disclosure Commission, Federal Election Commission or Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission regulation?		X

* If you answered "Yes" to either of the above, please explain your answer:

Part II – Ratings and endorsements

What endorsements and ratings from bar associations have you received to date?

Bar Association ratings:

N/A

Endorsements:

TBD

If you have previously sought elected office, what notable endorsements did you receive?

N/A

What other organizations are you planning to ask for an endorsement?

We plan to reach out to many organizations that prioritize helping their communities so we can truly incorporate their voice into our campaign. This will include: all Legislative District Democrats in King County, Real Justice Pac, Washington State Democrats, Washington State Progressive Caucus, The Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Our Revolution, educators, multiple labor unions, elected officials, and many more.

Part III – Legal experience, technology, and court costs

Please describe your pro bono activities over the last five years.

Work with members of the Minority and Justice Commission (WA Supreme Court) on jury diversity issues. Reformed mental health laws in coordination with various stakeholders in the courts and in the disability rights communities. That work also included legislative advocacy. Five or six years ago, Justice Mary Yu (then a Superior Court judge at the time) and I worked with the immigrant rights community to prepare a judicial bench card to ensure that non-citizens receive meaningful advice on the collateral consequences of criminal convictions.

I did have a gap in my pro bono work in 2013-2016 due to my wife's struggle against cancer, her death, and grieving with my children.

What law firms or public law offices (i.e. King County Prosecutor's Office) have you worked for? Have you served as a prosecutor or a public defender? Please include dates, and title for each position that you have held, as well as areas of law practiced.

Legal Aid Society New York (1998-2000), The Defender Association (2001-2007; 2010-2016; 2016-present); Sole practitioner (2007-2009); Morris and Hart, PLLC (2009-2010).

Have you ever served as a mediator or arbitrator? (If so, please describe your experiences.)

No

What do you believe are the most important qualifications for a Prosecuting Attorney?

Commitment to accountability, integrity and the community; cultural and historical acknowledgement of institutional racism; leadership based in emotional intelligence, listening and human connection.

Have you been a judge pro-tem? If so, what was that experience like? What did you learn from it? Have you completed the pro-tem training in King County? For which judges do you regularly pro-tem?

No

Do you support making it easier for Washingtonians who are not members of the bar to access public records, particularly at the Superior/District court levels, where per-page fees are charged?

Yes. Access to public records should not be constructively denied on account of poverty.

Do you have any thoughts on how our courts should address the growing use of smartphones during court proceedings, particularly by jurors?

I assume this question is more directed at judges, but obviously it's a problem we should be paying attention to.

Is Washington relying too much on court fees to cover the cost of operating our judicial system? How do you believe our courts should be funded?

Yes. Our courts need non-regressive funding sources. It's especially important that judicial costs not be paid through financial costs that prevent re-entry. A particularly egregious example of this right now is our court system (clerk's offices) sell non-conviction data to criminal history search companies to fund operations. There are many other examples of fines and costs burdening vulnerable populations. Our courts should be funded adequately at the legislative level, and we should also reduce inefficiency and waste. The King County Prosecutor can do this by immediately stopping costly, failed incarceration-based approaches that we know do not work, and re-orient toward protecting community safety in partnership with communities. The Prosecutor can also employ better staffing practices to move cases forward more quickly and reduce waste.

Part IV – Access to justice

If elected, how will you work to improve access to justice, particularly for communities and constituencies that do not understand the American legal system?

As prosecutor, I would prioritize speedy trial, bail reform, transparency, and ensure that plea bargaining is not coercive. We cannot expect people to trust in a court system that is threatening, opaque, discriminatory, or delayed. We must ensure that law enforcement is truly community-oriented at all levels (police and prosecution). Access to justice cannot exist without community support for our institutions. Our courts should be physically centered in communities, to reduce barriers to access. We must remove implicit bias from our courts so that people are not traumatized. We must eliminate financial barriers, cultural barriers, language barriers, and all unfair barriers to justice.

What does the phrase *Black Lives Matter* mean to you as a Prosecutorial candidate?

That black lives matter. Our institutions systemically treat them like they don't and it is our responsibility to fix this.

What do you see are the legal issues in the #timesup and #metoo movements?

The statute of limitations does not recognize the many reasons why women are not safe to come forward when they are abused. We also need better laws to protect women in the workplace against harassment and abuse, empower them to speak up, and protect them when they do.

What ideas can you offer to make our judicial system more open, transparent, and responsive?

Most fundamentally, to be responsive, our justice system needs to re-orient itself toward communities. The King County Prosecutor's current policy on disclosing misconduct of police officers and professional witnesses is highly restrictive and does not comport with the law. We need to stop coercing plea bargains. Obtaining convictions by duress is the opposite of open, transparent and responsive justice. Currently, only 4% of cases go to trial. Our drug and mental health courts impose unjust restrictions against the poor and mentally ill. Juror diversity must be promoted through an increase in the pay rate. Also, the courts are currently far behind when it comes to communicating with prospective jurors. Poor communication approaches impact poor jurors disproportionately. When minority jurors do appear, they are often discriminated against by the use of peremptory challenges. The Prosecutor must do more to end discrimination in our justice system.

I affirm that all the information provided in response to this questionnaire is true, complete and correct, to the best of my ability, and that no relevant matter has been omitted.

Signature



Printed Name

Daron Morris

Date: 5/19/2018