

King County Democrats

2018 Candidate Questionnaire

State Level – Legislature

Candidate Name	Sharon Tomiko Santos	
Position Sought	State Representative 37 th LD, Pos. 1	
Home Legislative District	37 th LD	
Are you a Democrat?	Yes	
Campaign Contact Information	Mailing address: P.O Box 78606, Seattle, WA 98178	Phone: (206) 326-9042 Fax:
	Website: Email: friendsofststs@aol.com Twitter: @ n/a Facebook: none	
Campaign manager or point of contact	Troy Chen	
Consultant(s)	none	

Part I – Candidate Background

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

State Representative, 37th LD, Pos. 1 (1999-present); Policy Assistant to King County Executive Gary Locke (1994-1995); Executive Assistant to former Congressman Mike Lowry (1989-1991); Nonprofit Executive Director (1992-1993) and fundraiser (1995- 1997); Banking industry (1979-1989).
M.A, Northeastern University (1988); B.A., The Evergreen State College (1985).
King County/METRO Citizens’ Advisory Committee, appointed member (1993-1994); King County Women’s Political Caucus, Chair (1992); Washington State Democratic Central Committee, Chair’s Advisory Committee, member (1994); Asian Pacific American Coalition for Equality, Legislative Chair (1998).

Describe your history of involvement in Washington state politics. What campaigns, if any, have you run or worked on?

From my youth, I walke picket lines with my mother to protest inadequate funding for schools in Seattle, which eventually paved the way to the Doran decision on state funding. I have worked on a variety of candidate campaigns including Norm Rice for Congress, Mike Lowry for Senate, Dolores Sibonga for Mayor, and Gary Locke for King County Executive before becoming a candidate myself. I am a former Chair of the King County Women’s Political Caucus, an organization dedicated to electing pro-choice women to service in public office. I was deeply engaged in the Initiative 120 campaign, to promote and protect a women’s right to choose, as well as in No 200 campaign, to oppose and defeat the statewide anti-affirmative action initiative championed by John Carlson.

What prompted you to run for this office? What priorities are you seeking to address with your campaign?

In 1998, I grew weary of the dismissive and discriminatory treatment that students, faculty, and community of Rainier Beach suffered under the Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Joseph Olchefske and the Seattle School Board. As a graduate of the Seattle Public Schools, I was dismayed that the inequities of the previous generations still had not been resolved. I recognized that, in addition to the elitist leadership of the School District, policies and practices required change at the state level. Thus began my long-standing effort to refocus the state on issues of equity in education. Equity and justice are the bedrock of my values, so my campaign will continue to focus on promoting community-based economic development, civil and human rights, and tax fairness.

List the notable endorsements you have received to date. Who are you planning to ask for an endorsement?

I am proud to have earned endorsements from NARAL Pro-Choice Washington. I have asked for the endorsement of the American Federation of Teachers-WA, the 37th Legislative District Democrats, the Washington Education Association, as well as women's organization, labor unions, and community-based civic groups.

Describe the progress of your campaign and campaign goals. For instance, what earned media has your campaign received? How much money have you raised, and from how many donors? How many doors have you knocked on?

I intend to raise approximately \$100,000.

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 – Local and State Issues

#	Question	Yes	No	Qualify your response
1	Do you support De-escalate WA I-940?	x		
2	Do you support the right of public workers, excluding military, to bargain and strike?	x		
3	Do you support the \$15 minimum wage?	x		
4	Do you support the Reproductive Health Act? Specifically the requirement of insurance companies to provide coverage for contraception.	x		
5	Do you support amending Washington's Constitution to require a two-thirds vote to raise taxes, as demanded by Tim Eyman?		x	

6	Did you support requiring Sound Transit to change their car valuation formula?	X		
7	Do you support legislation to fix Washington's "three strikes" law?	X		
8	Do you support allowing coal or oil to be exported from Washington State's ports?		x	
9	Do you support a statewide expanding of the plan to make two years of community college or technical school tuition-free?	x		
10	Do you support the privatization of our public worker's compensation system, which protects employees who are injured on the job?		x	
11	Do you support government funding for retraining workers who are displaced, unemployed, or underemployed?	x		
12	Do you support Tim Eyman's I-747, which artificially limits property tax collections?		x	
13	Do you support Washington adopting a truly nonpartisan, citizen-run redistricting process that would result in more competitive districts?			I neither support nor oppose this idea. I will reserve judgement about the merits of this proposal until I read the details.
14	Do you support Washington State prepaying postage on all ballots?	x		
15	Do you support automatic voter registration?	x		
16	Do you support the death penalty?		x	
17	Do you support barring employers from asking criminal history questions in job applications?	x		
18	Do you support the effort to develop a statewide single payer healthcare system?	x		
19	Will you allow your campaign staff, and/or independent contractors assigned by your consultant to work your campaign, to elect to join a labor union such as Campaign Workers Guild. Do you pay your interns?	x		I do not have interns.

Part III – Free Response Questions

Have you read the most current King County Democratic Platform, approved by the delegates to the King County Convention and available from KCDCC's website. List which planks, if any, you disagree with, and why.

I have long opposed the proposal to institute the national popular vote as the method by which to elect the President of the United States. My philosophical position is based on the fact that the United States is organized as a **federal** system, not a **national** system, of governance. This structure is one that was intended to diffuse authority and reinforce local control, rather than to centralize authority and control. I believe in these principles (i.e., diffuse authority and local control) and think that the method of electing the

President of the United States should reflect and respect this balance of authority shared between the states and the federal government. The electoral college system does this, in my opinion.

I do not believe that rent control is a solution to the systemic problems associated with housing affordability and homelessness. In fact, in markets that have instituted rent control such as San Francisco and New York, this mechanism has clearly not ameliorated let alone solved these issues. Rather, rent control has created a highly competitive market for rent-controlled units and has done little to nothing to improve the root cause of astronomical housing costs and homeless: expanding the supply of housing across the income spectrum. I am a fervent supporter of this latter approach as a systemic solution to the problems of affordable housing and homelessness. In particular, I advocate for increased investments in the Housing Trust Fund and for expanded capacity for the Housing Finance Commission to leverage and braid funding. I developed the idea to "bank" surplus government property with the plan to lease these properties to non-profit developers so that these organizations can build – and rent - housing less expensively without purchasing the land.

Do you believe the legislature has complied with the Supreme Court's McCleary decision? What does full compliance look like? Please be as specific as possible.

The legislature's response to McCleary is a good first step toward fully addressing the needs of our state's education system. Full compliance with the McCleary obligation means that the cost of providing the legislatively mandated program of basic education is completely paid by the State of Washington, without reliance on local levy support. This must include adoption of an adequate and meaningful compensation framework that is commensurate with the professional expectations placed upon our educators. In addition, educators must receive full support in their work through job-embedded professional development and collaboration. Compliance also requires that educational equity is fully realized throughout the system and in each of the 295 school districts so that every student is provided with ample opportunity to attain a meaningful high school diploma. This means that schools and districts must provide a more engaging curriculum, that students must exercise greater oversight and responsibility for their educational experiences, and that families and communities must be more involved in supporting educational endeavors in the homes and in workplaces. All of this requires an overhaul of our current 19th century factory model of education. Instead, I advocate for 21st Century applied competency-based learning which does not necessarily mean more funding as much as it requires a different deployment of resources.

What policies would you promote to address the climate change crisis? What ways would you propose combating the climate crisis by implementing control of carbon emission?

I believe that transforming our public transportation system is vital necessary to control carbon emissions. Both the federal and state governments need to prioritize significant financial investments in the public transportation grid to make this system more complete, convenient, reliable, economical, and user-friendly. I support policies that influence consumer behavior to achieve lowered emissions through incentives and deterrents. I also support policies that leverage the economies of scale available to certain entities – including government – to model the type of consumer behavior we seek.

Describe your vision for tax reform and fairness. How do we fully fund our public schools while making our tax code more progressive? Would you support sun setting all tax exemptions, and voting to renew only those that demonstrably benefit the public interest?

I believe that a fair tax system is universal in scope, broad in application, and limited in individual impact. In other words, I believe that every person and every business or organization should bear a portion of the tax burden. I believe that taxes should be levied on income (including business income and investment income), on sales, and on property (both tangible and intangible), but levied at low rates. I think that tax expenditures should be subject to the I-601 limit in order to contain the impact of these tax preferences on the budget. I would support sunsetting all tax exemptions and voting to renew only those that demonstrably benefit the public interest.

Please describe your position on charter schools. Should public funds be given to these private institutions?

I oppose charter schools. I do not believe that public funds should be used to support private institutions.

Do you agree parents should have the right to opt their kids out of state standardized tests like the SBAC?

The federal government has created a conundrum on standardized tests. Under the terms of the newly reauthorized elementary and secondary education act, the state may allow students to "opt out" of the federally mandated tests. At the same time, the federal law requires the state to ensure 95% participation in these tests. I think much of the underlying frustrations that fuel the "opt out" movement deal with a lack of disclosure about which tests are federally required and what purpose these tests serve. I think that public would agree that the state and federal governments have a responsibility to ensure that equitable availability of quality educational programs as a basic civil right of every child, regardless of his or her race, ethnicity, national origin, physical or sensory disability, or gender. Indeed, this was the primary reason for the ESEA. And this is why civil rights organizations advocated vociferously to maintain a strong accountability measure through common assessments under the new act. Without these assessments, advocates would argue, too many "harder to teach" students would lack quality educational opportunities. When students "opt out" of the test, the equity data is lost.

Washington has historically been a nationwide leader in encouraging teachers to become National Board certified. Do you support continuing to pay bonuses to teachers who undergo the certification process?

I have long opposed merit pay as a method for incentivizing certain actions or in lieu of full and adequate compensation. The initial argument for providing NBCT bonuses was to increase the quality of teaching and to incentivize teachers to teach in high-poverty, low-performing schools. Yet, few NBCT teach in these high-impact schools and the bonus is not awarded on the basis of teacher effectiveness. Instead, I am a fervent proponent of significantly raising the compensation levels for all teachers and ensuring that the most effective teachers – as determined by their peers and their performance- are assigned to teach in our struggling schools.

Are you cognizant of -- and how do you plan on addressing -- the inequitable incarceration of minorities? What is your plan on how to address the school to prison pipeline?

As someone who represents- and who was raised in - the most diverse legislative district in Washington state, I am well familiar with the inequitable incarceration of people of color. This travesty of justice occurs through multiple cascading failures of systems and institutions, beginning with the inequitable allocation of resources in the public education system and continuing through the inequitable distribution of economic opportunities. There is no one simple way to "address" this injustice. Rather, especially as a legislator of color, my role is to challenge implicit and explicit biases in policy and practice in all issue areas.

As the Chair of the House Education Committee, I have prioritized and will continue to prioritize the role of public education in ensuring the civil rights of each and every student. This is evident in my long-time sponsorship of legislation to arrest and reverse the educational opportunity gap in our public schools. I continue to monitor the implementation of the provisions of this omnibus legislation which, I am proud to note, is serving as a model for the nation on how to address education inequities. I am also leading efforts to re-imagine and re-structure our educational system into a student-centered competency-based system. These types of systems are typically characterized by high-performing, highly-personalized programs that engage students to be agents of their education. When student are given opportunities to experience the relevance of and to direct their educational program, they become active learners who choose to stay in school and who have a post-secondary plan.

What important state and local issues have you worked on (or taken an interest in) that you feel aren't getting enough attention from elected leaders and the media?

While many well-meaning individuals and organizations articulate a commitment to addressing the issue of institutional racism, the fact is that decisionmakers and opinionmakers largely represent the dominant majority culture and, as a result, usually acquire only a shallow understanding of these complex matters. Yet, these very same decision makers and opinionmakers claim to know the best solutions to reduce bias and eliminate racism without **meaningful** and **authentic** involvement from people and communities of color who must live through the experiences of racism and racial bias every day. Then, when a person of color proposes a remedy intended to address institutional racism, well-meaning individuals cannot see past their own implicit biases to recognize this necessitates the breaking down of existing structures and processes in order to establish new structures and processes. This is why, as an example, it took more than a decade for the Legislature and the Seattle Times and countless others to finally support proposals that authentically represent the voices and visions of grassroots communities of color in addressing the educational opportunity gap.

What are your views about a statewide implementation of the Democracy Voucher Program that Seattle has started using?

Based on a similar program that Seattle offered many years ago, the Democracy Voucher program provides an interesting model for eliminating the influence of big money in elections. The critical question is whether the Democracy Voucher program, as currently designed and deployed, is the most effective method for accomplishing this goal. I think further review about the actual user experiences of the campaigns and the voters in Seattle is necessary before considering this system for statewide deployment.

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		Date: May 10, 2018
Printed Name	Sharon Tomiko Santos	