

2016 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire for Developmental Disabilities

Name: **Kathy Gillespie**

District: **18, Position 2**

1. Do you have a personal connection or professional experience with someone who has a developmental disability?

No

2. What are your top three legislative priorities?

Fully fund basic education

Support transportation solutions for region and I-5 corridor

Address affordable housing issues and social safety net needs

3. What area of expertise, experience or personal interest will you bring to office?

Background as a reporter and editor so I know how to ask questions, gather information and analyze data before making decisions. I have served for 7 years as a school board director with Vancouver Public Schools and have a long record of serving as a mentor, tutor, volunteer and fundraiser in our schools. I have a deep commitment to justice and equity for all citizens and am a strong advocate for accountability of spending taxpayer dollars and producing outcomes that help people be successful.

4. Wages for contracted community residential support workers are set by the legislature and are about \$10 an hour, causing huge turnover and lack of workers. How will you address this issue?

I support increasing the minimum wage but I also think we've got to seriously talk about investing in what we want not just talking about what we don't want - higher taxes, new taxes, bigger government. I want to have those conversations with colleagues and constituents to build the case that we are now investing in failing citizens rather than investing in their success.

5. 16 states have closed all their institutions for people with developmental disabilities; most others are working to do so. Would you support the consolidation of our state institutions, providing the residents with community alternatives that meet their needs?

I would need to learn more about the pros and cons of such a move. My interest is to ensure quality care for vulnerable citizens - without exception. I am interested in approaches that will deliver on that goal.

6. With the Federal court decisions requiring our state to better fund education (McCleary) and reduce mental health competency backlogs and warehousing (Trueblood), how would you propose to fund these lawsuits and not cut human services (be specific please)?

In the past 20 years, the state has doubled the amount of corporate tax breaks from \$18B to \$36B and we are on track to hit \$40B in a few short years. At the same time, the state has

claimed “budget woes” for the cutbacks and under funding of basic ed and much, much more. This makes no sense to me. I will advocate to rollback all remaining unfunded mandates for public schools and rollback al corporate tax breaks awarded since 1976. Tax breaks must be examined to determine which policy the giveaways address and what return on investment taxpayers experience. The fact is, the state has little to no idea who benefits from these tax breaks but we know who is hurt. A careful examination of the 600+ tax breaks will reveal which ones benefit our state and need to be reinstated and which ones should expire.

Other information you’d like constituents to know:

I’m not satisfied with what I see in Olympia. There are big problems to solve that demand leadership, creative problem solving, the guts to tell the truth and the wisdom to work together to solve the big issues. Legislators should first do no harm but they should also demonstrate progress toward solving problems like easing gridlock, funding basic ed, investing in workforce development and supporting higher ed. What I see is that some of our legislators really accomplish very little and then blame the other guy. Some of our legislators walk away from deals, proposals and leave partners hanging out to dry. We can do much better. During my seven years as a policy maker on the school board, we worked together through lean budget years and pursued our strategic plan. We kept improving, innovating and trying to solve problems while safeguarding taxpayer dollars. It’s not perfect, but taxpayers should expect no less from all government agencies.