

Gary Alexander - District 2, Representative Position 1

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

Yes, on both accounts. My wife's uncle is developmentally disabled and previously lived with us. He now lives in a house adjacent to my father-in-law and sister-in-law in Tacoma. He is a great person and a big Tacoma Rainier fan. I also use to work for Behavioral Health Resources. And hopefully as you know, I have been one of the biggest supporters for fully funding our developmental disability community in every budget I prepared or voted for.

2. What are your top three legislative priorities?

Developing sustainable budgets that are transparent, protect our most vulnerable populations (that includes our DD populations) and is accountable to the voters and taxpayers in Washington.

Creating and retaining family wage jobs by reducing or eliminating regulatory burdens and lack of confidence.

Fully funding our education system in compliance with the McCleary decision and funding it first.

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

I have a strong background in both government and private finance, including 25 years in state government management, 11 years in local government management, and 10 years in private industry financial management. I am currently the ranking Republican on the House Ways and Means Committee and have also served on both the House Health Care Committee and the State Government Committee. I am also a past Legislator of the Year for my work with long term care and our mental health/developmental disability populations.

4. We have faced continual budget deficits for the last few years. What solutions do you have for ensuring that people with disabilities are able to get the services they need?

I believe I answered this question in my initial response by the fact that I have prioritized our developmental disability community as one of my most vulnerable populations and protected them in every one of my budget releases and in the negotiations, including support employment. In fact, the protection of cuts to our DD populations was one of the last successful items I negotiated with the Governor and the other caucuses in resolving our \$2 billion shortfall last session.

5. If you were to reduce spending or face a revenue shortfall, what specifically would you seek to cut from state government?

I have constantly utilized the Priorities of Government standards developed under the Governor Locke administration. In doing so, my proposed cuts have come in general government, natural resources, programs for the temporarily unemployed that do not qualify for social security (i.e. disability lifeline) and in one-time expenses.

6. If you were to increase spending in any area of the budget, what would you increase and how would these increases be funded?

There is no doubt we will need to invest more in our public education system if we are to meet the policies previously approved by the legislature and the rulings from our Supreme Court. It is also my goal to support increased spending for the caregivers, counselors, and medical professionals that provide services to our vulnerable populations. This has to be funded in a systematic fashion by growing our economy and associated revenues, hopefully without the need for new taxes.

7. Would you support the consolidation and/or closure of state institutions that house people with developmental disabilities and instead provide those residents with community alternatives that would still meet their needs, but at less government expense?

I know this a controversial issue, but currently I am not in favor of closing Rainier School or Yakima School. I serve on the executive committee of the Joint Legislative and Review Committee (JLARC) and we have addressed this issue in several previous studies. But when it comes to closures, unfortunately the choices are more based on politics and less on empirical information.

8. What would you recommend to begin serving the 16,852 individuals who have been waiting (some for years) for community services?

I would suggest we do the same thing that we are doing with the K-12 education budget. That is form a bi-partisan task force to develop a plan for meeting the needs of this population that is in waiting. I am currently serving on the education task force, but would be very interested in doing the same for our DD populations.