

**SEIU Locals 6, 775, 925 and 1199NW  
King County Executive Candidate Questionnaire**

**SEIU Local 6** represents more than 4000 building service workers, including janitors and security guards throughout the Puget Sound area.

**SEIU Healthcare 775NW** represents 38,000 long-term care workers across Washington State and Montana, including in-home care, adult day health, and nursing home workers.

**SEIU Local 925** represents 23,000 men and women across Washington State in university, public school and pre-school education; child care; state and local government; and non-profit organizations. We represent about 500 King County employees (in Parks, Facilities Management, and Wastewater Treatment, as well as Involuntary Commitment Specialists). We also represent 150 employees of two non profit agencies (The Defender Association and the Northwest Defender Association) which contract with the City and County to provide public defense legal services.

**SEIU Healthcare 1199NW** represents 22,000 health care workers in Washington State including nurses and other hospital workers, mental health, and community clinic workers. In King County, SEIU 1199NW members include thousands of caregivers at community mental health agencies, Harborview Medical Center, Swedish Medical Center, Group Health Cooperative, Highline Medical Center, Valley Medical Center, Northwest Hospital, Evergreen Hospital Medical Center, Auburn Regional Medical Center, DSHS/DOH regional offices, and Lifelong AIDS Alliance.

Candidate Name:	Dow Constantine
Position Sought:	King County Executive
Official name of campaign:	Friends of Dow Constantine
Campaign Address:	PO Box 16285 Seattle, WA 98116
Campaign Phone:	206-484-7921
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Email:	info@dowconstantine.com
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Occupation:	Chair, King County Council
Employer:	King County
Elected Offices currently or previously held:	King County Councilmember Washington State Senator Washington State Representative
Other campaigns for elected office:	I have run for office for each position listed above and won each campaign.
Appointed offices currently or previously held:	I was appointed to the King County Council in 2002, but have won re-election in the past 4 elections.

Current/Prior union membership:	Alaska Fishermen's Union
Community and other organizational memberships:	2000-Present <b>West Seattle HS Foundation</b> <i>Founder, VP</i> 2000-Present <b>Stone Soup Foundation</b> <i>Board Member, Former President</i> 1998-2005 <b>Delridge Neighborhoods Dev. Assoc.</b> <i>Board Member</i> 2002-2004 <b>ArtsWest</b> <i>Board Member</i> 1996-2001 <b>West Seattle HS Alumni Assoc.</b> <i>President</i> 1995-1998 <b>West Seattle HelpLine</b> <i>Board Member</i> 1992-1998 <b>Allied Arts of Seattle</b> <i>Trustee</i>
Campaign Manager:	Dylan Ordonez
Campaign Consultant:	Christian Sinderman, Northwest Passage
Primary and General Election Budget:	\$550,000-\$800,000
Funds raised to date:	Over \$200,000

**1. Funding mental health and chemical dependency treatment services**

**Several hundred SEIU 1199NW members work at community mental health and chemical dependency treatment providers in King County.**

**In the 2009 legislative session, the Legislature cut funding to these providers for both Medicaid and non-Medicaid services. In addition, the Legislature gave counties the authority to “backfill,” or supplant lost state funding with revenues that counties can raise with a local 1/10 of 1% mental health/treatment tax. King County has been collecting this tax for the last year.**

**SEIU, along with other advocates, is interested having King County backfill state cuts with county revenues so as to maintain client access to services and to protect jobs and current compensation levels of frontline community mental health and chemical dependency treatment staff.**

**If elected as Executive, will you support backfilling state cuts with county revenues in order to maintain access to services and to protect jobs and staff compensation?**

This is a difficult question since the state—in pursuing irresponsible cuts to health care and other critical services, also cut local assistance for myriad services, leaving a budget problem local governments will have to address.

In general, however, I support—and will support in the upcoming budget process—securing and back filling funds to protect needed services, such as care for children, the elderly, mental health and chemical dependency, and protect services that serve other vulnerable populations.

I believe that we must make difficult choices, however, in order to realistically make this commitment. Cuts will be needed in other areas, and innovation and efficiencies must be embraced in order to free up resources—sound bites and promises won't pay the bills.

Part of the motivation for my 2% health care premium proposal is to protect front line service providers from layoffs, and front line services from cuts.

We have to have an honest dialogue, and I look forward to working with you to accomplish mutual goals.

## **2. Budget priorities**

**King County estimates that the budget deficit for 2010 is on track to be \$43 million. A “cut” approach to this looming budget crisis will only further devastate the healthcare safety net and threaten our most vulnerable citizens.**

- **Going into the 2010 budget process, what are the principles that you will apply in order to determine budget priorities and options?**
- **What do you consider core County functions and services that *must* be maintained in a tight budget year?**
- **Will you support new revenues as part of the budget solution, and if so, what type of new revenues?**

To paraphrase our new president, as Executive I will put an end to programs that no longer work, reform those in need of improvement, and invest finite resources in agencies and programs proven to deliver maximum value and reflect our core mission of providing services to the vulnerable, protecting public health and safety, and moving providing transit mobility to our citizens.

These are the programs that must be protected—the basic services where King County is a sole provider and needed safety net, and these services will form the basis of any budget I write.. .

During my time as budget chair, I acted according to a simple principle: Save more and spend less while remaining true to the service mission of county government. Within days of becoming council chair I moved to dramatically restructure the council's committees and staffing, to streamline operations and improve efficiency.

To meet the challenges we face King County must make difficult decisions that will require strong, new leadership, a true regional focus, and an emphasis on lasting solutions—not on gimmicks and quick fixes that saddle taxpayers and future generations with even greater problems.

I support new revenues to help address the problems, but I am wary of regressive taxes that simply shift more of the burden to those who can least afford it—forcing the poor to essentially buy back the cuts they suffered at the hands of a regressive system.

The state has failed to provide the county with the kind of flexible taxing authority on MVET, tourists, or outright wealth, that will allow us to backfill budget cuts and protect critical services without looking at these difficult choices.

### **3. Workers rights and organizing**

**Many healthcare employers in our city are already unionized, but others – including community clinics, nursing homes, home care agencies, and hospitals like Virginia Mason Medical Center – are not. In the past, when workers at these workplaces have tried to organize into our union, they have faced strong anti-union campaigns from their employers. These employer campaigns have included anti-union literature, mandatory anti-union meetings, and intimidation of workers by supervisors.**

- **If elected as Executive, what would you do to defend the rights of workers to organize?**
- **What steps would you consider taking to get employers to respect the rights of their employees?**

In the legislature I built a 100% labor voting record. I believe in, and have stood for, for the rights of workers, including workplace neutrality, and other protections for organizing and organizers.

I have publicly supported organizing drives, walked the picket line and invaded a board meeting for striking nurses at the former West Seattle Mental Health. At the request of a UFCW local I have recently urged the board of a local nonprofit (to which I have in the past been a donor) to come to the table and reach an agreement.

From my days as a salmon cold storage plant worker, when we organized for the Alaska Fishermen's Union, to the days of the teachers strikes that sent my parents to the picket lines, I have always been with the workers, and will continue to stand up for workers' rights as King County Executive.

### **4. Tax reform**

**There is broad consensus that the tax system in our state is broken. There are insufficient revenues to meet basic human needs such as health care, education, transportation, public safety. The tax burden disproportionately falls on those least able to pay. And there are hundreds of tax loopholes on the books, many of which benefit only big businesses or a very narrow interest group.**

**SEIU is committed to winning fundamental tax reform that results in a sufficient and stable revenue base to provide vital healthcare and educational services to the people of Washington state.**

**In order to build a movement for fundamental tax reform, leaders at all levels of government will need to speak up.**

- **If elected as Executive, what will you do to support fundamental tax reform in our state?**
- **What are your thoughts and ideas about meaningful tax reform?**

The state's tax system, and by extension the county's, is horribly unfair to lower income and working people, and folks struggling to build new, small businesses and create jobs. Both initiatives and expert lobbying by well-heeled interests over the course of decades that has left us with perhaps the worst tax system in the nation.

Especially in this economy, we cannot ask the struggling worker, in danger of losing both job and home, for more property and sales tax money without seeking to make the best, most efficient use of what we have.

What should our state tax system look like? It should ask that people contribute, roughly, based on their ability to pay. That means less sales tax on basic goods, consideration that a house is more than an investment and must be protected, and that business taxes should be shifted toward profits made or value added, not necessarily on gross receipts. Business tax policy should encourage job growth.

I have been a longtime, outspoken advocate for comprehensive tax reform. In the State Senate I co-authored the legislation authorizing the Gates Commission, setting out in detail the process for assessment and overhaul of our regressive tax structure.

I left the Senate before many of the recommendations could be moved into law, and am disheartened to see the bulk of the report unheeded to this day, contributing to the budget crisis.

## **5. Employee Health Wages and Benefits:**

**Our members have participated in several years of work in restructuring County health plans and health benefits. Union members collaborated with the county to adopt a path breaking program providing incentives for workers to improve personal health status, and which has saved millions in healthcare costs to date. Despite our partnership with the County, there are now multiple proposals floating to shift costs of health insurance premiums onto county employees and their families.**

- **Will you protect our health plans from erosion, and fight efforts to shift health costs to workers and their families?**

I strongly support the current plan for represented employees and will fight rollbacks of those agreements. These contracts have been fairly bargained and, as a consequence, involves fair trade-offs.

With regard to elected officials, top level managers and other highly paid non-represented employees, it is reasonable that we pay a small portion of our higher salaries toward our health care premiums in order to preserve services and front line jobs. In the face of the current budget crisis and as a way to protect jobs, I have proposed that we do so.

In the end we, locally and as a nation, must find a way to drive down the cost of basic health care. The administration of the insurance system, the cost of prescriptions and the cost of common tests are far greater than they should be. It is my belief that innovation here at home, and an innovative President in Washington DC, can deliver a better, more affordable system of ensuring health care access for all.

## **6. Employee Relations:**

**King County has developed a number of ways to ensure that the County can work effectively with its union-represented workers. Will you support the ongoing:**

- **Labor Liaison staff position in the Executive Office**
- **Monthly Labor Roundtable meetings with County workers' representatives**
- **Annual Labor Summit – special meeting of the County Council to address labor issues of County workers' unions and the labor community at large**

I absolutely support the Labor Liaison, monthly roundtable meetings and the Annual Summit. In the Legislature and on the County Council I have worked closely with unions to ensure that county resources are spent in the best interests of our working families, and I will involve unions at the negotiating table as public projects develop.

## **7. Government Efficiency/Effectiveness:**

**As employees we grapple with a County bureaucracy whose inefficiencies undermine workers' rights – contracts that take years to settle; reclassification procedures (to appropriately upgrade staff working out of class) that drag on for months and years. Especially in light of budget crises:**

- **As Executive or as Council member: how do you intend to help streamline County government generally, and labor relations functions specifically?**
- **What is your experience/philosophy in streamlining a large service organization?**

At King County I have tried to lead by example, initiating performance measures, proposing reforms that do not impact critical services, even streamlining and reforming

council staffing. The approach of lurching from crisis to crisis, of chopping off valued programs and starving critical services, is bad for the workers and the citizens they serve.

Here is my general approach: Engage the workers, the people who actually deliver the services, in determining how to help more people, better, for the money we have available. They're the ones who know what works about their jobs, and what could be done better. Protect those workers so that they need not fear that the efficiencies they create will cost them or their colleagues their jobs. Create clear and meaningful performance measures so that managers have to show that the dollars they spend are getting the greatest amount of benefit for the people. Don't be afraid to ask "how can we get more bang for the buck", rather than "how much do we have to cut this year"? Our employees, some 15,000 individuals in 13,000 full time equivalent positions, are our greatest resource in figuring out how to do more in an era of limited resources, and to provide long-term security for our workers.

## **8. Area Agency on Agency Contracting**

**The City of Seattle and King County jointly run the Seattle/King County Area Agency on Aging, which contracts with and oversees private agencies providing Medicaid-funded home care services to vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities. Currently there is a wide range of labor practices and quality control among those contracted agencies — and some have even illegally denied their workers overtime pay. Will you work with SEIU 775 to ensure that the AAA rigorously enforces labor and quality care standards and only contracts with those agencies which provide quality care and respects their workers rights?**

Absolutely. In order for the County to provide the best possible care for the elderly and vulnerable, we must assure high quality and consistent oversight and expectations from contractors. We must assure that wages, benefits and working conditions are fair and safe. It is a worker rights issue, but also a patient rights issue. As I mentioned earlier, at the request of a UFCW local I recently urged the board of a local nonprofit delivering services to seniors (to which I have in the past been a donor, no less) to come to the table and reach an agreement. As Executive I will continue to fight for the rights of workers as well as the health and safety of our residents.

## **9. Responsible Contracting**

**More broadly, what are your views on responsible contracting? For example, how would you ensure that contractors using public funding abide by certain community standards that include, including not only living wages, health benefits, labor peace & project labor agreements, but also affordable housing, first source hiring, job training, and certified apprenticeship programs?**

I would first require departmental staff to make these protections part of every contract and demand follow through on monitoring their implementation. I have raised significant

questions about whether we are defining the term “responsible” broadly enough to include practices that protect workers and the public, not merely the ability to complete a contract. I would invite independent review and site-visits on projects of all sizes by labor representatives to assure standards are being met.