

# Washington State Candidate Questionnaire

Joint Council of Teamsters No.28

Affiliated with

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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## Candidate Information

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### 1. Affordable Healthcare

Health care costs are soaring, with drug prices rising twice as fast as the rate of inflation. One in four Americans – 70 million – do not have insurance to cover prescription drugs. Drug manufacturers sell exactly the same pills to different purchasers at different prices. Some states are using bulk purchasing power to negotiate steep drug discounts and rebates to lower drug prices for the uninsured and their own state Medicaid programs.

*Do you support or oppose legislation that would direct state agencies to negotiate discounts and rebates from drug companies to help lower the cost of prescription drugs?*

YES  \_\_\_\_\_ NO  \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? Health care costs are crippling the ability of local governments, and all employers, to provide the kind of benefits that employees need and deserve. Any action that helps lower costs is one that I support.**

### 2. Right to Work (for Less) and other Collective Bargaining Issues

#### A. Right to Collectively Bargaining

When a majority of workers say they want a union, employers routinely threaten their right to make their own free choice with a campaign of coercion, harassment and firings. When faced with employees who want to join a union, 91% of employers force employees to attend closed-door meetings to hear anti-union propaganda; 79% have supervisors deliver anti-union messages to workers they oversee; 50% threaten to shut down if employees join together in a union; 31% of

employers illegally fire workers just because they want to form a union. Even after workers win a National Labor Relations Board election to form a union, one-third of the time their employer never negotiates a contract with them.

***Would you urge employers to remain neutral during organizing campaigns?***

YES  NO

**WHY? Employees deserve a free choice and should be free to organize, with or without a majority. Employers are in an extremely strong and unfair position to coerce and intimidate. As a worker I have been part of both a card campaign for a new shop of an otherwise union company, which went smoothly, and of a non-union business, which had a lot of the problems listed above and which, although ultimately unsuccessful, led to positive changes in the workplace.**

***Would you support or oppose legislation requiring union recognition when a majority of their employees chose to form or join a union?***

YES  NO

**WHY? Laws protecting the right to organize are, in a sense, bringing our shared democratic principles into the workplace. And there is no more democratic notion than this: The majority rules. You win an election by majority vote. If it works in politics, it should apply to union elections as well.**

B. Use of Public Money to Support or Deter Organizing

The Teamsters Union believes it is wrong to use taxpayers' dollars to subsidize employer's cost related to influencing their employee's decision about whether to form or join a union. State resources should not be used to either deter or support organizing efforts by organized labor.

***Would you support or oppose legislation prohibiting holding meetings against unionization on state property or while employees are performing work on state service contracts and state public works contracts?***

YES  NO

**WHY? Again, a workplace should be a neutral setting. Workers should be protected in discussing issues without coercion or fear of retaliation. And the people of the state have the right to require that their tax money not be used to subsidize coercion.**

C. Right to Work (for Less)

In state houses across the country as well as in Congress, pro-business groups are advocating enactment of a "Right to Work (for Less)" law in an effort to weaken unions. What is forgotten is that unions exist in a workplace only when a majority of the workers freely choose a labor organization to represent them.

Proponents of “right to work (for less)” claim that passage would be economic benefit for workers nationwide and at the state and local level, but evidence indicates otherwise. In “right to work (for less)” states wages are lower, fewer workers have health care coverage, and there are higher rates of workplace injuries and fatalities.

***Would you support or oppose a state “right to work” bill?***

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO X

**WHY? For all the reasons stated above. It’s a dangerous race to the bottom that fundamentally destabilizes working and middle class families, and ultimately lowers the standard of living for all.**

3. Little Davis Bacon

Several states have enacted legislation modeled after the 1931 federal Davis-Bacon Act that requires the payment of prevailing wages on state-government funded construction projects. These “Little Davis bacon” laws assure local contractors who uphold prevailing rates of pay in a geographic area a fair chance to compete for government projects without being undercut by outside firms using cut-rate labor. They also protect the government from fly-by-night operators seeking to win state contracts by paying wages too low to attract competent craftsmen.

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? I have always supported prevailing wage provisions on government and transit projects. In the legislature my 100% pro-worker record included several measures involving prevailing wage, such as a bill designed to increase enforcement of prevailing wage laws.**

***Would you support or oppose efforts to repeal a current “Little Davis-Bacon” law?***

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO X \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? Reasons stated above.**

4. Union Dues

By big margins, union members of all political backgrounds say they want their unions involved in the issues that affect their lives. They know that if working families are without a strong political voice, anti-worker forces – which already outspend working families by 24 – 1 in politics – will be free to eliminate important worker protection programs.

However, anti-worker forces are not content to outspend union members by that margin and are constantly at work to further tilt the political playing field. Federal

legislation has been introduced in the past to restrict the ability of unions to collect and spend funds for legislative and political education. The proponents of this legislation claim that unions spend dues money without the proper consent of their members. In fact, unions are voluntary, democratic organizations in which the majority determines the union's political activities.

***Do you support or oppose restrictions on the use of union dues for political and legislation activities?***

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO X \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? I have always opposed such restrictions, and was on the front lines of great fights in Olympia to keep such bills off the floor. Of course, if shareholders had to individually approve any political expenditures of the corporations in which they own stock...**

5. Comp Time and the 40-Hour Work Week

Millions of working Americans depend on overtime pay to make ends meet. Legislation has been introduced that would permit employers to "offer" workers time-off or comp-time – at straight-time pay – instead of time-and-one-half overtime pay. Employers would get total autonomy to determine when employees work and when they get time off. There are no penalties for employers who force workers to "volunteer" for comp-time, instead of overtime pay.

Employers are also attempting to weaken or eliminate the 40-hour workweek through various types of legislation including requiring workers to go to an 80-hour biweekly schedule. Employers would then be free to schedule a worker over 40 hours in one week and not pay them overtime pay is calculated so workers would receive less pay for overtime work.

***Do you support or oppose legislation that would give employers the power to determine when workers receive overtime pay?***

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO X \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? A good part of our hard-won victories over the last century or so have to do not just with wages, or benefits, or health and safety on the job site. They have to do with making work and family life compatible; of creating the space to raise the children, spend time with the spouse, care for the aging parents, and enjoy the fruits of one's labor. I often think of my grandfather. He, like his father, was a union sawfiler at the Scott mill in Everett. He was the only wage earner in the family. He was able to put my mother and her brother through college, to drive a decent car, and to build a little cabin on Port Susan Bay. And every summer weekday afternoon from the beach I could see his car pull up at the side door, and in a few minutes he'd come out the front door with his towel and swim trunks, sit for a moment on the porch and survey the day, and then**

go for a swim in the bay with his grandkids. That's what he had worked for, and that's what the labor movement has worked for all this time. And we shouldn't give it away.

*Would you support or oppose efforts to weaken the 40-hour work week?*

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO X \_\_\_\_\_

WHY? See above

6. Unemployment Insurance

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) system is often referred to as the "first line of defense" in the event of a recession, not just because it is relied upon to provide income support when needed to laid off workers but also because the money invested in UI benefits during recession significantly boosts and stabilizes the economy. However, due to outdated rules, most unemployed workers – over 60% in 2000 – don't collect UI. And those that do collect do not receive sufficient funds or the training necessary to return to the workplace.

*Would you support or oppose legislation to expand UI eligibility to include more low-wage and part-time workers?*

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

WHY? UI is a basic safety net—it must include those who need it most. The economy has changed. When I was a kid most people in my neighborhood worked for a handful of large businesses – Boeing, Bethlehem Steel, etc. No more. Today's economy is more diversified, but the impact of a job loss is just the same.

*Would you support or oppose legislation to boost the value of UI benefits and extend the weeks of support?*

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

WHY? People are hurting. The economy needs people to be able to keep spending. Government services funded by general taxes can't come close to covering the gap. We need people to be able to keep a roof over their head and keep their kids fed while they find work.

*Would you support or oppose legislation to extend benefits for workers in training programs and increase the number of state-funded training programs?*

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

WHY? Particularly in this recession, people seeking training need to be able to make ends meet.

7. Privatization

Employees are afforded certain benefits and protections under law by being classified as full time employees. In some cases, companies, states, and municipalities try to shirk their responsibility to those dedicated employees and cut costs by privatizing, contracting out and misclassifying workers who perform services, work, or production of goods. These “throw away workers” may not be entitled to overtime provisions, social security protections, health care coverage, vacation pay, employer pension plans and sick pay entitlements that were afforded them when they were employees. Many times “leased employees” and “independent contractors” are doing the very same jobs they did when they were employees of the companies.

***Would you support or oppose legislation that would require state and local governments to provide proof that there is a cost savings to privatizing jobs currently performed by state and local employees?***

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? I have always opposed and have voted repeatedly against contracting out of government services performed by union workers. Providing proof of cost savings – if that is the justification - is the least that should be required.**

***Would you support or oppose legislation making it harder for employers to classify employees as “independent contractors” or “leased employees”?***

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO X \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? It’s simply a way to deny benefits. And, of course, it can be a big hassle at tax time for the “independent” contractor. I think we should do more to support small and medium sized businesses that choose to provide benefits, including health care, to their workers.**

8. Expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was enacted in 1993 to address the needs of employees who require time off from work for family responsibilities. Gaps in the FMLA’s coverage have been remedied by state legislative action. They have included childcare, education leave, care for older family members, and for non-emergency routine medical care.

***Do you support or oppose legislation that would expand Family and Medical Leave coverage?***

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? Generally, the work of raising kids and caring for elders is critical to society’s well-being. Creating the time for this important work to be done by family members saves money and saves us all a world of worry.**

9. Workers' Compensation

The Teamsters Union believes that workers have the right to expect adequate health care and financial compensation when injured at the workplace. Unfortunately, workers are frequently denied these rights due to the use of "Independent Medical Examinations (IME)". In practice, these IME's are anything but "independent". Typically, employers or insurers hire doctors, nurses or IME "firms" to do evaluations of workers' compensation claimants. In some cases, IME's don't even involve trained medical personnel or actual exams of the injured workers. IME's have a monetary incentive to provide findings favorable to the employer or insurer who has hired them. State agencies can provide a mechanism for appointing IME's and it is time that they provide appropriate oversight.

***Would you support or oppose legislation allowing injured workers to select their own medical providers?***

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? Workers should not be forced into shoddy, sub-standard care or unfamiliar providers. And they should not have their care depend on the opinions of those whose compensation depends benefits being denied. People want to go to their own doctors, whom they trust and who have worked with them over time. I worked for years in the legislature, as Co-Chair of the House Judiciary Committee and with the Trial Lawyers Association to fight these kinds of practices.**

***Would you support or oppose legislation that would provide a fair and equitable mechanism for appointing IME's?***

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? If they were truly independent then the perverse profit incentive could be removed and all parties could have faith in their conclusions.**

***Would you support or oppose legislation to increase worker compensation benefits to injured workers?***

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? Because worker comp cuts off other civil remedies for injured workers, providing protections to employers, the benefits need to be updated to keep up with costs, so that workers are protected too.**

10. Mandatory Overtime – Health Care Industry

Mergers and privatization have created terrible working conditions in the health care industry driving nurses and other health care workers out of the health care

industry. The workers who remain are working in conditions of chronic understaffing, frequent forced overtime, and lack of supervisory and other support.

An investigation series by the Chicago Tribune attributed at least 1,720 hospital patient deaths and 9,584 injuries since 1995 due to errors committed by registered nurses because of fatigue, understaffing, equipment failure, poor communication and lack of training. Some professions, such as airline crews and truck drivers are limited in their hours of work to prevent fatigue that can lead to accidents.

***Would you support or oppose state legislation to limit mandatory overtime in the health care industry?***

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? We cannot rely on overtaxed, overtired workers in these critical health care settings. It is a worker rights issue, but also a patient rights issue.**

#### 11. Budget Priorities

Increasing budget shortfalls are forcing state and local elected officials to make hard choices when it comes to which programs should receive funding. The Teamsters Union believes in programs that assist working families that provide adequate education, health care and workplace protections.

***How would you describe your approach to any budget shortfall? What programs would you cut first and which would you protect?***

**WHY? 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 administration. 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 what we need to do: Engage the workers, the people who actually deliver the services, in figuring out 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.**

## 12. Project Labor Agreements

Project labor agreements are negotiated between project owners (or government agencies or construction management firms) and unions before a project starts or workers are hired. Congress realized the value of these pre-hire agreements 40 years ago when they were made lawful under amendments to the Taft-Hartley Act. The terms of the agreements can vary from project-to-project, rules, working conditions, hiring practices and methods for settling disputes – usually with the stipulation that there will be no strikes by labor and no lockouts by management.

***Would you initiate the negotiation of a PLA on projects to be built in your city, state or county?***

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? I have always supported PLAs. They are fair to workers, provide management with certainty, and protect the taxpayer.**

***Would you invite labor union representatives to come to pre-job negotiating meetings?***

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? Helps inform the process. Provides clearer understanding of the constraints and opportunities for cooperation.**

In the private sector, “union only” PLA’s are frequently negotiated, but they are illegal on public projects – state, local and federal status prohibit discrimination of any kind against bidders or workers and every public PLA contains a non-discrimination. The result is that non-union contractors and workers work side-by-side with union contractors and union members. Many business owners and developers have realized that “union only” construction projects are more likely to be completed on time and more likely to be built according to pre-established safety standards. “Union only” projects also have a lower rate of on the job injury or accidents. Some proponents believe that officials responsible for public projects should have the right to determine if they would like to negotiate a union only PLA for public projects under their jurisdiction.

***Do you support or oppose efforts to make “union only” PLA’s legal on public projects?***

YES X \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY? We restore public confidence in government when we prove that publicly financed projects can be built within a desired budget and timeline. PLAs help achieve that goal. As a staffer to the King County Council in the early-mid 1990s I worked on what was then referred to as “Boston Harbor Agreement” language – project labor agreements – to guarantee prevailing wage and benefits and project stability. Just after I joined the council in 2002 we passed the Harborview agreement that led eventually to the 2005 PLA for that major construction project.**