



2018 Legislative candidate survey

Candidate name: Maia Espinoza Legislative district: 28

You are a candidate for: House of Representatives Senate

If you are a candidate for the House of Representatives, which position are you running for? Position 1 Position 2

Local government background

Have you ever been elected or appointed to a local government position, or served on a local government board, committee, or as staff? *Local governments include cities, counties, public utility districts, school districts, fire protection districts, port districts, and more.* Yes No

If yes, in what capacity?

1. State-shared local revenues

When the state encounters fiscal problems, legislators often take revenues historically shared with cities, or increase fees on services provided to cities to fill the state's budget deficit. Recently, some shared revenues have been restored. However, during the last recession, the Legislature enacted cuts and diversions, while unfunded mandates and other local government cost drivers remained unaddressed, including the following items:

- Changes in liquor tax and profit distributions resulting in losses of nearly \$200 million in funds that supported essential local services, such as public safety;
- Sweeping and diverting over \$1 billion in local utility taxes, real estate taxes, and project loan repayments from the nationally-acclaimed Public Works Trust Fund (PWTF) that helps keep local infrastructure operating; and
- Requiring cities to pay training fees for officers attending the Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA).

Do you support or oppose the Legislature continuing to use locally-shared revenues or revenues intended for capital projects in order to balance the state's operating budget? Support Oppose

Briefly describe one or more actions that you would take to ensure your views on these issues are accounted for by your caucus and in a final budget.

The state needs to balance their *own* budget. We can't continue to pass unfunded mandates that our local governments and cities have to comply with. This is allowing the Legislature to continue spending irresponsibly. Cities are often the ones paying the price of unchecked state spending.

We should be able to see what the state is spending our money on. If the taxpayers are given an itemized receipt this could cut irresponsible spending. As law makers, we must be efficient, responsible and trustworthy. Let's not take from one another, let's work together.

2. Basic infrastructure financing

Cities face many challenges when repairing and updating critical infrastructure such as drinking water and sewer systems. Historically, the Public Works Trust Fund (PWTF), a revolving loan fund, was a significant source for financing infrastructure. As the state wrestled first with a recession and then with the *McCleary* education funding challenges, legislators repeatedly turned to diverting these funds and leaving nothing in their place. Since 2013, nearly all of the tax revenues deposited into the PWTF were diverted to the state's education funding account instead. Those revenues were scheduled to come back to the PWTF in 2019, but the revenue diversions were extended another four years.

Would you support or oppose a budget that diverted more resources from the PWTF to address state general fund obligations? Support Oppose

Do you believe that it is part of the state's obligation to help fund critical local infrastructure, especially when taxes and fees raised to do so in 1985 continue to be levied? Yes No

As a lawmaker, how will you work to secure the revitalization of the PWTF and protect it from future raids?

As I said previously, the state needs to be responsible with their *own* money instead of robbing cities and the crucial programs that are funded on the community level. I will push for our state to spend only what they actually have the money for, not what we can receive through diverting funds, dipping into saving accounts or raising taxes. This is simply irresponsible spending.

The state should continually evaluate our spending and reduce our reliance on local revenues.

3. Homelessness, affordable housing, and mental health

Across the state, housing costs are rising and affordability issues are impacting homebuyers and renters, as well as exacerbating the already critical homelessness problems in many communities. Mental health services are stretched thin and cities (not normally in the business of providing these particular social services) find themselves increasingly trying to help residents and keep their communities safe and secure. Cities have a strong desire to work together with the state, counties, business, nonprofit, and faith communities to help address these challenges. We continue to seek financing, regulatory, and funding tools to help.

Which of the following are priorities for you? Choose all that apply.

- Help to end homelessness
- Ensure adequate mental health services for those in need
- Provide tools to help control the spiraling cost of housing

Would you support or oppose a proposal for the state to override local zoning or density decisions to promote more affordability in housing construction? Support Oppose

Changing zoning decisions is a key part of creating more affordable housing. Cities are closest to their communities and state legislators should work together, as opposed to a top-down approach.

Please elaborate on what you suggest doing to address one or more of these issues:

The more we spend on homelessness the worse it has gotten. We should strategically fund programs that serve people in multiple ways, not just a meal or a bed. We know that mental health is a significant factor which contributes to homelessness. Comprehensive programs would address mental health, addiction, and the more immediate needs of food and housing.

I serve on the board of Coffee Oasis, a non-profit organization that focuses on alleviating youth homelessness in our region by providing shelter, services and job training. I suggest funding and modeling programs like these that are making *real*, measurable progress.

Finally, we should not discount the pressure that rising property taxes and the shortage of housing stock have on renters and potential home buyers. We need more housing statewide. I suggest we make it easier and less cost-prohibitive to build and buy housing by reducing regulations and fees.

4. Economic development

Economic development opportunities vary greatly across the state. Some communities have deteriorating commercial or industrial areas or lack the needed infrastructure for critical development, and others lack access to adequate broadband services. AWC supports expansion of current programs and funding, including expansion of state Local Revitalization Financing (LRF) and Local Infrastructure Financing Tool (LIFT) programs as options to incentivize economic development and support job creation.

Would you support or oppose legislation that expands the financing options available to local governments for economic development? Support Oppose

What other ideas do you have for bolstering the state's economic development opportunities?

As a small business owner, I've experienced the challenges of not only starting a business but keeping it going. Our state can greatly improve our economic development by better supporting small businesses. Reducing and/or redefining our B&O tax rate is the first thing I would do to bolster economic development and local job creation.

5. Local control

Cities succeed when they can respond to local residents' unique needs and desired outcomes through exercising local control. The State Constitution and state statutes provide cities with wide discretion in serving their communities. However, the Legislature sometimes considers preempting cities from enacting local ordinances or engaging in certain activities. We believe that the relationship between the state and cities functions best as a partnership, where the state gives careful consideration to the varied conditions of local governments, and appreciates the importance of retaining local flexibility.

Do you believe that local control is important to ensuring responsive local government? Yes No

If you disagree that local control should be preserved, please describe one or more specific issue areas or situations in which the state should preempt local control.

OR

If you agree that local control should be respected, please describe how you would argue for the protection of local control to colleagues who want to preempt local governments.

If elected, I'll be the only legislator who resides in the City of Lakewood which is split between two districts. I've often felt that my city is still underrepresented. For me, this highlights how difficult it is for state lawmakers to effectively address the varied needs of local municipalities. Cities are closer and more connected with their communities. State legislators should work collaboratively with cities and encourage more involvement at every level of governance so that *everyone* in our district is truly represented.

If you have any questions, please contact Regina Adams, AWC Government Relations Coordinator, at 360-753-4137 or ReginaA@awcnet.org. Please return your survey **by the end of the day on Wednesday, July 4** by:

- Email to ReginaA@awcnet.org;
- Fax to (360) 753-0149; or
- U.S. mail to AWC Candidate Survey, 1076 Franklin Street SE, Olympia, WA 98501-1346.

Thank you for your participation!