



2018 Legislative candidate survey

Candidate name: Sharon Shewmake Legislative district: 42

You are a candidate for: House of Representatives Senate

If you are a candidate for the House of Representatives, which position are your 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?

Whatcom County Climate Change Impact Advisory Committee member
Lettered Street Neighborhood Association, Vice President now Region Rep. (LSNA is a non-profit but related to the work cities do)

I'm also an economics professor who specializes in urban and environmental economics, especially how transportation and housing choices impact the environment. I have a passion for local government and I would be absolutely honored to receive the endorsement of the Association for Washington Cities.

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.

Depriving cities of needed funds, to be used for state purposes, is self-defeating. The role of state and local government is to serve citizens 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?

The state is responsible for funding *McCleary* and should be building reserve funds in the event of a recession. When our economy is booming, we should be setting aside revenues. Not diverting revenue from critical infrastructure.

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

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

Homelessness is a failure of society to care for all its members and provide affordable housing, not a failure of individuals. Every \$100 increase in rents results in a 6% increase in homelessness. Homelessness is a condition, not a character flaw, and individuals experiencing homelessness deserve to be treated with dignity and compassion.

Ending homelessness is more difficult than simply providing homes. It needs to include mental health services, social workers and drug addiction treatment programs and generally a better social safety net. This is one of the key components of my campaign.

My opponent has voted *against* feeding children and against workers while giving platitudes about how we can't afford it. In fact, we can't afford not to invest in our people. We can end child poverty. Social scientists have calculated that for every \$1 invested, we receive \$7 worth of benefits. That includes higher wages, reduced incarceration rates, and improved physical and mental health for parents and children.

