

WASHINGTON COALITION OF MINORITY LEGAL PROFESSIONALS Questionnaire
for Candidates for Seattle City Attorney

Name: Ann Davison

Phone: 206.775.8838

Email: info@neighborsforann.com

Substantive Questions Your response to this portion of the questionnaire is considered publishable information. Feel free to provide your answers on additional pages.

1. Do you agree that the United States leads the world in incarceration rates? If so, is that a problem, and what would you do about it? If not, why not?

Yes, The United States has an incarceration rate of nearly 650 per 100,000 individuals which is the highest rate in the world. I fully believe this is a problem. Washington State is not like the rest of the nation and if we were our own nation state, we would have about the 75th highest incarceration rate, just above New Zealand. I still think we can have smarter policies around incarceration and I will work to find alternatives to traditional settings that can lead to better outcomes, including re-entry.

2. Please describe how you have engaged with minority groups, including communities of color, immigrant communities, and the LGBTQ+ community in your civic involvement or professional practice.

I have focused much of my life towards those who find themselves in a situation or location where capable people flee, for many years that meant I worked in helping refugees. I worked in a refugee camp along the border of Cambodia for people who were fleeing civil war. I spent time in the US and Australia working with refugee communities. I have taught English and tutored in multiple settings with non-native English speakers. I spend my personal time helping individuals on a one-on-one basis, many of which include members of the groups listed in your question. In my practice, I have had a variety of civil area focuses, but when I started my practice it included immigration law. One client I will always remember fondly and am still in touch: a physician from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who I assisted in becoming a U.S. citizen.

3. Please explain how you, as City Attorney, will engage with communities of color and ensure you are addressing their concerns.

I am in frequent contact with many leaders in communities of color and will continue to do so when elected. I intend on greatly increasing the transparency in the Law Department so that they can better keep me accountable and will invite it.

4. Describe your understanding of Native American tribal sovereignty and how, as City Attorney, you will work to engage with tribal governments and urban Native communities.

There are eight treaties and a number of executive orders that govern our relationships with the various tribes within Washington State. In many ways, tribes act as their own sovereign nations within our state. In other ways, they act as individual local governments within the state such as open transportation and interlocal agreements with counties for public safety needs. Tribes also have the ability to harvest resources like fish from areas beyond their boundaries. Unfortunately, there are many tribes like the Duwamish that never received official status and do not have the same rights.

Just because there are no federally recognized tribes within Seattle doesn't mean that the City Attorney has no interaction. For instance, there is an ongoing situation between the Sauk-Suiattle tribe and the city owned dams on the Skagit River. It will be my responsibility to provide impartial legal advice, and defend the city and its actions, but I will work hard to open lines of communication so that differences do not become situations that require litigation.

5. What efforts have you undertaken in your current and prior positions to improve diversity and inclusion in your workplace, and what efforts would you undertake at the Office of the City Attorney if elected? Please include discussion of your efforts at recruitment, retention, inclusion, bias avoidance, and leadership development of underrepresented minorities, including from Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities, other communities of color, women, and LGBTQ+ persons.

I have mainly focused on inclusion in volunteer settings because everyone has something to contribute in a joint effort toward a volunteer project. For recruitment, retention and leadership development at the Office if elected, I would actively provide avenues for a variety of positions in varying subject matters. Within that, I would create an office culture that encourages seeking opportunities into higher responsibility roles or other subject matters of interest by having more direct communications across the office, not a traditional structural hierarchy. Providing opportunities for learning and dialogue around a person's interests in their career and contribution to the department, fostering a sense of everyone's part matters to our whole.

6. When do you believe it is appropriate for police to use force, including deadly force, and what do you see as the City Attorney's role in tracking and affecting when and on whom police use force? And how do you plan to navigate any tension between that and the City Attorney's role in defending lawsuits against police?

I believe that force should be reserved for situations where alternatives are not possible or practical. I do not think that a person's race should be allowed to factor into that decision. It will be my role to monitor use of force instances and be thoroughly briefed on training procedures to continue to reduce use of force incidents in our city.

7. Please describe a situation in which you changed your beliefs about something of consequence.

In seeing our declared state of emergency on homelessness as a city since 2015 unfold with a lot of money put toward the issue, only to see the number increase, it made me change my view of how we approach things as a city. Leaving thousands unsheltered, exposed to the elements, subject to those who want to take advantage and commit bad acts, I changed my beliefs about the approach and the use of money exclusively. We are not helping by leaving people to subsist alongside the roadways while others go about daily life. This is harming not just those pushed to our literal margins of our city but it is also socially modeling to our children as to what response to take when someone clearly needs help. Leaving people in need to not be responded to by our systems, without personal investment through relationship with someone facing such challenges, is not working for our unsheltered.

8. Do you believe that you or the organizations you have been a part of have contributed to white supremacy and/or the devaluation of the lives of Black and Indigenous persons or other persons of color? If so, please explain how. If not, please explain what, if any, forces have contributed to such issues.

I have spent most of my life working to help people in need. In my youth I worked in a refugee camp for people fleeing terrible violence from civil war and at a congressional office where I helped underserved people get access to services they needed. I currently serve on a board that gives housing and support to people in severe mental health and addiction. While my time working in professional sports, often as the only woman in an office of wealthy men of various races, was much less altruistic, it was still a position of service.

9. Please describe your understanding of the role of the City Attorney with respect to crime and how you would approach misdemeanor trespass, property theft, and property destruction as City Attorney.

The City Attorney represents our crime victims and is a critical link to public safety, downtown and in our neighborhoods, deciding when to prosecute many types of criminal activity. Defense attorneys represent someone accused of a crime. When the prosecutor acts as a second defense attorney there is no justice for crime victims, who must be put in the center. Some may specifically describes those three crimes listed as “low-level” but as I have heard directly from Seattle residents from the ID to the CD, to Capitol Hill, to the north and south ends, that it is easy to describe that when it is not your own property and that being the victim of a crime is traumatic. Balancing justice for a victim and analyzing why someone communicated in the form of committing a crime can be done in a way to not invalidate the victim’s harm while also providing intervening help to the person who committed the crime.

10. What metrics do you believe should be used to determine whether the Office of the City Attorney is succeeding at improving the criminal justice system? How would you realign local, state, and federal budget appropriations to support your vision of how we could most effectively (1) prevent crime in the first place, (2) provide crime victims what they need, (3) hold people

accountable for the harms they cause, and (4) bring recidivism rates down as close as possible to zero?

I believe that the best metrics for success involve safety and prosperity in the communities especially in those that are most disadvantaged. These outcomes are the key goal of public safety, but the path to them is very complicated and requires additional metrics to understand.