



2018 Legislative candidate survey

Candidate name: Manka Dhingra Legislative district: 45th

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?

I previously worked for King County as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. Although I have never held elected office in local government, my work in the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office was an excellent opportunity to participate in local government, bringing together city, county, and state resources to solve problems and create change. I’ve also served on advisory councils for the Shoreline and Seattle police departments and worked with King County law enforcement to lead Coordinated Crisis Intervention Response meetings that better prepare first responders to work with those in crisis.

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.

Washington should not divert revenue that is expected to help cities and instead use it for other projects. Instead, we should consider funding these projects by revising our upside-down tax code. Closing corporate tax breaks and loopholes can generate hundreds of millions of dollars that can go towards the state’s operating budget.

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?

We need to create a budget with sustainable revenue sources. It is not sustainable or appropriate to continue draining PWTF to address whatever new issue is facing the legislature. As previously stated, I believe we need to create new sources of revenue by closing tax breaks and loopholes.

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:

I am a strong advocate for mental health, having served on the Board of Directors for NAMI Eastside and bringing a mental health focused approach to my work in the King County Prosecutor's Office. I believe that the issues of ending homelessness, addressing the opioid epidemic, increasing mental healthcare accessibility, and promoting affordable housing are all related and require a regional approach to solve. By bringing together cities, counties, and the state we can approach these issues together, creating a coordinated method that will establish real and measurable results. I would like the cities at the table providing input before the state would take any action on overriding local zoning or density decisions. We have to address these issues together.

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?

I think it is important we expand economic opportunity for all Washingtonians. Educational workforce programs including apprenticeships, vocational schools, and job trainings are an essential way to build a diverse workforce that can adjust as our economy shifts. City, county, and state governments should work together to expand these opportunities so that the economic growth our state is seeing is not limited to King County. I also believe in funding infrastructure projects that create jobs in both the short and long term across our state.

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.

Put simply, I believe local governments know best what their communities need to succeed. In the past I've supported bills such as Senate Bill 6146. Had SB 6146 passed, it would have allowed local governments to pass their own laws regulating firearms. The Legislature needs to consider reversing preemption laws and instead work together with local governments to reach our shared goals. I'm willing to work with colleagues in the legislature and to make this argument.

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!