

2016 Candidate Questionnaire

SECTION I

BASIC CANDIDATE INFORMATION

1. Name as it will appear on the ballot

First Name	Middle Initial or Nickname	Last Name
Ruth		Kagi

2. Office sought (include office, jurisdiction, position/district number):

State Representative 32nd District Position #2

3. Are you the incumbent? x Yes No

4. How long have you resided in this district/city? All but four years of my life.

5. How long have you resided in King County? Same

6. Is the office sought partisan or nonpartisan? x Partisan Nonpartisan

7. If partisan, please indicate party:

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Campaign Name: Citizens for Ruth Kagi

Address: 13504 8th Ave NW

City/State/Zip: Seattle, WA 98177

Campaign Phone: 206-459-8609

Campaign E-mail: kagi@seanet.com

Campaign Website: Ruthkagi.org

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

1. Beginning with the most recent position, please list public offices you have held. Include positions on appointive boards or commissions.

Public Office	Elective or Appointive?	Dates Held	Leadership Role (if any)
State Representative 32 nd District	Elected	1999 to present	Chair, Early Learning and Human Services Comm. Co-Chair, Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission to create a new children and families department.
Washington State Institute for Public Policy	Elected (by board)	2013 to present	Co-Chair, 2013 and 2015-6
National Council of State Legislatures—Human Services Committee	Appointed to Committee, elected as chair	2003 to present	Chair 2009-10

2. If you ran for public office but were not elected, please list those races below:

Office Title	Year of Run

SECTION II

In this section, we are seeking responses that reflect the four ratings criteria: involvement, effectiveness, character, and knowledge. These are defined as follows:

- **Involvement:** What has the candidate done previously in family, neighborhood, community, volunteer work, employment or public life to suggest readiness to accomplish challenging objectives? How do these activities demonstrate readiness for the challenges unique to the office sought?
 - **Effectiveness:** Has the candidate demonstrated promise of being productive in the office sought? Has the candidate shown the ability to work with other people?
 - **Character:** Do the candidate's personal traits show the ability to take on the responsibilities of campaigning for and holding the public office she or he is seeking? Is the candidate a leader, participant or observer? Is the candidate trustworthy, reliable and candid?
 - **Knowledge:** Has the candidate demonstrated the willingness and ability to learn and adapt? Does the candidate understand the duties and challenges of the office sought? Does the candidate have a firm grasp of the issues important to his or her constituency and their potential effects?
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1. In one page or less, why are you running for this office? (Note: the interview committee will be given a copy of this statement before your interview; at the beginning of your interview you will have the opportunity to expand on this statement in any way you wish.)

All children deserve the opportunity to succeed, but the disparities in our state between children in poverty, children of color, and children of means continues to grow. Most of my work in the legislature has focused on creating more opportunities for families who face enormous barriers to parenting, employment, housing and other essential services, and for children to succeed when they get to kindergarten and beyond.

I am running for re-election to continue this work. As Chair of the Early Learning and Human Services Committee, Being Chair of the Early Learning and Human Services Committee has provided me with the opportunity to influence state and local policies regarding early learning (child care, home visiting, pre-k and supports for parents and care givers), foster care and child welfare, chemical dependency treatment, children's mental health, early intervention services for developmentally delayed children, homeless youth, and juvenile justice issues such as sealing juvenile records. We are making significant progress in each of these areas, but a great deal remains to be done to remove barriers to children being successful, and to build the supports in our society to support their education and progress.

I currently serve as the Co-chair of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Delivery of Services to Children and Families whose charge is to make recommendations for a new Department of Children and Families for the consideration of the next legislature and would like to shepherd that bill through the legislative process.

In my time in the legislature, I have passed numerous bills designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state government, including a bill requiring the Children's Administration to implement performance based contracts and a bill to improve the court system to support better outcomes for foster children. Several years ago, when a friend was killed by a logging truck, I sponsored and passed a bill to establish a safety compliance system for in state trucks which previously were not regulated. I also sponsored and passed a "Secure your load" bill. When I see a serious gap in our laws and policies, I work with stakeholders to understand the problem and draft legislation that will address it.

Finally, as a longtime member of the Appropriations Committee, I work with the Chair and members to assure there is funding for early learning, education, social services and the courts.

2. Describe your most important personal characteristics or traits as they relate to the office you seek.

The process of getting a bill passed into law is long and tortuous with many barriers in the way. Persistence, determination and optimism are essential to success, as is the ability to work with people, understand their concerns and priorities, and gain their support. My success as a legislator who has passed many controversial bills is due primarily to my persistence, determination and optimism – and to being a good listener.

My extensive experience in public policy positions at the federal, state and local levels has been very valuable in determining what is practical and effective. For example, four years ago I worked with Congressman McDermott on a bill to grant more flexibility to states to administer their child welfare programs. States could only use federal funding to pay for out of home placements, not to pay for services to keep children safely at home. I testified in Congress and worked with Congressional staff to get the bill passed. As a result, Washington implemented Family Assessment Response. Now, when a neglect allegation comes in and a child is not in imminent danger of harm, an assessment worker goes to the family's door- instead of a CPS investigator- and works with the family to address the issues that brought them to the child welfare system.

Finally, I rely heavily on research and evaluation to guide my policy work. Working with stakeholders to understand their concerns and ideas has been critical to building support for legislative initiatives. I work hard to find consensus before proposing a bill, and pay close attention to objections and suggested amendments before moving a bill forward. My goal is always to respect other people's opinions, and to keep a sense of humor.

3. Please describe, in sufficient detail, one to three accomplishments or contributions of which you are most proud. These examples should illustrate skills and capabilities you think apply to the office you are seeking. These accomplishments may have occurred at any time in your personal, professional, or public life.

Last year, the legislature passed the Early Start Act which creates a framework for improving the quality of early care and education programs across Washington. The legislature invested \$159 million in early learning in this biennial budget.

Over the past decade, I have worked to educate the public and the legislature about the science of early childhood development – the importance of stimulating, stable, loving relationships to the growth and brain development of young children. Ten years ago, I sponsored the bill to create the Department of Early Learning and Thrive by Five, a public-private early learning partnership. As a result of the work of DEL, Thrive and the legislature, Washington State is viewed as a national leader on early learning, implementing evidence based home visiting programs, aggressively expanding our state pre-school program and, now, implementing Early Start. It truly has been a privilege and an honor to work with two governors, leaders from both the House and Senate from both sides of the aisle, and a broad array of stakeholders, including sheriffs, police chiefs, early learning providers, child care providers, children's advocates and many others to successfully pass this bill.

Building support for this bill required pro-actively reaching out across the aisle to assure that both parties understood the value of early learning investments, and would support an expensive, controversial and hugely promising bill to implement and fund a quality rating and improvement framework for Washington. During the 2015 session, I heard many times, from Governor Inslee in his State of the State to individual senators and representatives: "Early Learning is the best investment we can make." By giving a rich, high quality early learning opportunity to our most at risk, low income children, Washington is giving children the opportunity to succeed when they start kindergarten – the first step in their educational journey. A recent study of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that children in our state pre-school are succeeding in school – through the third grade. It is a hopeful, transformational initiative that bears the greatest promise of narrowing the opportunity gap our children now face.

A second bill is the Youth Opportunity Act. Very few people understood that juvenile records in Washington were completely open in Washington, severely damaging the opportunity for youth to move beyond a juvenile arrest to get scholarships, an education, jobs and housing. Working with law students at the UW, legal advocates, judges, churches, youth and the Senate Chair of the Human Services Committee, the Youth Opportunity Act passed the legislature and has given a future to thousands of youth across this state. It is one of the bills I am most proud of working on.

My work on foster care has spanned the length of my legislative career, including bills requiring stability in school when a child is placed out of home, requiring performance based contracts, giving rights to foster parents, directing a new single provider for health services for foster and adoptive youth, creating the Family Assessment Response program and many more. Because of the complexity of the child welfare system, the opportunities to improve current programs and policies is never ending.

Finally, my work on drug sentencing reform continues to yield great benefits to individuals, families, communities and the state. More than a decade ago, I worked with prosecutors, judges, the defense bar, treatment providers and many stakeholders to draft and pass a bill to reduce penalties for low level drug crimes, and invest the savings from prison beds into drug courts. At the time, over 20% of our prisons were filled with non-violent drug offenders. Now it is less than 7%. The savings, in human lives and in taxpayer dollars, continue to accumulate as the years pass.

4. Please list or describe current and past activities in the community in which you have acquired skills that relate to the office you seek. Include your role in the activity and the year(s) in which you were involved. Involvement consists of many areas such as family, neighborhood, community, employment, or public life.

I served as the Vice President of the League of Women Voters of Washington before running for office, and worked with a broad spectrum of organizations and individuals on issues under consideration by the legislature or being proposed as ballot initiatives. It taught me the value of working with stakeholders to fully understand different perspectives and to reach agreement on issues before moving forward with public education and advocacy.

As a citizen lobbyist for the League, I personally experience the frustrations of trying to access and impact the legislative process. The experience has been invaluable as I work with individuals and organizations interested in proposing legislation and getting it passed.

My extensive involvement in volunteer community activities related to children and families at the city, county and state levels, as reflected on my resume, has provided valuable experience and on-going connections to people and issues of concern to my community. Although, due to time constraints, I no longer serve on local human service commission, non-profit boards, Rotary or foundation boards, my work continues with organizations in my community.

5. Please describe the duties of the office you seek. Which are the most important duties and why?

As State Representative for the 32nd District, I have two primary responsibilities: to represent my district, and to propose and move forward public policies on priority issues. I make every effort to find time to meet with constituents during session to talk with them about their priority concerns, and have sponsored a number of bills that address specific issues that require a legislative remedy. For example, I sponsored and passed legislation requiring a child death review when a child dies in child care or pre-school. The issue was brought to me by a constituent who lost her baby in child care.

As Chair of the Early Learning and Human Services Committee, I am responsible for policies and budgets that impact children and families across the state. I personally review every bill before the committee, and work with sponsors and staff to address concerns and potential amendments. Helping new members to understand and successfully navigate the legislative process is part of my job. I work with members, staff and stakeholders to assure that quality legislation leaves the committee before it is considered by the full House.

Finally, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, it is my responsibility to develop budget priorities within the human services and early learning budget, working with other members of the committee and stakeholders. Building support for those priorities, working with members of my caucus, is one of my main tasks during a legislative session.