

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
Steve		Litzow

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

State Senator, 41st Legislative District

3. Are you the incumbent? Yes No

4. How long have you resided in this district/city?

21 years

5. How long have you resided in King County?

21 years

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

7. If partisan, please indicate party: **Republican**

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Campaign Name: Citizens for Steve Litzow

Address: 7683 SE 27th St #431

City/State/Zip: Mercer Island, WA 98040

Campaign Phone: 206-275-2245

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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 Senate, 41st Legislative District	Elective	2010-present	Chair, Senate K-12 and Early Education Committee (2013 – present)
Mercer Island City Council	Elective	2003-2010	

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

Office Title	Year of Run
State Representative, 41st District	2008

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.)

I have been deeply involved with the discussion of the future of Washington's 41st District as an elected official since 2003. I am honored to have served the people of the 41st District, first, on the Mercer Island City Council for 7 years, and now for 6 years in the State Senate. The core of my public service is knowing and understanding the hopes and values of people in my community and working to address them. I have been involved in discussions about everything from dog leash laws to regional transportation plans to statewide education funding and each one matters because it has a tangible effect on our community and, most importantly, our future.

I chose to run for re-election this year because of people still struggling to find work in this transitioning economy, and unless we act, will continue to struggle in the future. I know many people and businesses in our community that are still struggling to get by. I meet with parents regularly who are concerned that their children will not be prepared by their school to succeed. I look at my own family and consider the future we are leaving to my children. I am running for re-election because I have been a part of collaborative solutions in the State Legislature over the past 6 years and I believe we can find a way forward working together to overcome both immediate and future obstacles.

There is no clearer indicator of the visionary leadership we have in Washington than the passage of marriage equality legislation in 2012. At the time, most states in the nation were choosing to ignore the issue or fully disallow the freedom to marry. However, our state legislators presented the idea, civilly debated the issue, and took a huge step forward for civil rights in America by becoming the 7th state to allow this basic freedom. The fact that we were able to civilly advance such a divisive issue and stand on the right side of history is a tribute to our state's leadership and an indication of hope for the future.

It is with the passage of the Marriage Equality legislation that has become both a marker of what we have done and an inspiration and guide to what we can do. I have seen significant advancements in the way our state promotes education, transportation infrastructure, and business. In the last four years, the state Legislature has achieved historic funding increases in Education - \$4.5B, a 33% increase over the last four years for K-12 schools, the single largest in state history – to ensure that education remains the paramount priority and duty of the State. The 2013 and 2015 biennial budgets that prioritized education were passed with the largest bipartisan votes in the past 40 years.

We still have a lot more to do to provide world-class educational opportunities for all children in the state. I have worked with parents, teachers, advocates, superintendents, principals, advocates, business owners and executives, mayors and councilmembers, and I have come to understand the economic and societal imperative for educational action shared by these many different voices. Discussions about the future of our public education system do not have to be partisan and I believe we have demonstrated that we can successfully move beyond individual interests to develop innovative solutions to ensure that every child has the opportunities and resources, both in and out of the classroom, to be successful.

This spirit of collaboration was also present as we took another historic step to invest in transportation solutions. We were able to work together to continue our development of a transportation system that increases commuter mobility through every option available. In 2015, the Legislature passed a \$16.1 billion transportation package that completes major projects around the state including I-5, SR 520, 405, 167, I-90, the North/South freeway in Spokane as well as maintenance, transit, bike paths and pedestrian walkways. My many friends and constituents from all over the district often share about the difficulty in getting around the region for work or their family. They do not ask for Republican or Democrat solutions. They simply want positive action to keep people moving. We were able to collaborate on this large and complex package to do so. These are projects we can agree will move Washington forward and help drive growth in our economy for years to come.

For these reasons and many others, I remain very optimistic about our future in Washington. Already, we have been a part of expanding civil rights in our state and achieving meaningful improvements to education, the budget, and transportation. Our success is not due to one person or one point of view, but the collective effort to put aside differences and do what is right. Washington has a very bright future if we can continue to move forward together. I want to continue to be part of that future.

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

Successful leaders demonstrate courage, vision, and collaboration. This is the approach I take to my legislative work. Doing what is right often means standing up against opposition and having the independence and internal fortitude to vote your conscience. Vision is important to continually seek solutions amidst many individual and at times, competing interests. It is the constant pursuit of finding the right opportunity despite every obstacle. The most important of these traits is collaboration, because without common trust and mutual benefit, there can be no progress.

Through 7 years on the Mercer Island City Council and 6 years in the state Senate, these traits have consistently proven their effectiveness for finding solutions in civil rights, education, transportation and the budget.

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.

My first and greatest accomplishment is my marriage to Jenny for 28 years and the 4 children we have raised. Raising a family is by far the most rewarding accomplishment, and I believe I continue to grow and learn along with them as they develop into new phases of their life. Having a family creates a greater consciousness of the future and a deeper understanding of people that continues to serve me in my work.

I was deeply honored to be a part of the effort to pass marriage equality in Washington. We as a country believe that people have been endowed by their creator with the right to pursue happiness. I believe that the pursuit of happiness includes marriage and that an adult should have the freedom to marry whomever they choose to love and that no one should face discrimination for their choice.

I was honored to join with former Senator and current Seattle Mayor, Ed Murray, to move this legislation forward and pass it into law. While I was grateful to be recognized by highly respected organizations – including as a co-recipient, with then Senator Murray, of the 2012 Municipal League Foundation Warren G. Magnuson Award for Bi-partisan Leadership - and news publications in the community for these efforts, I was not the one who deserved these accolades. It is the thousands of men and women across the country facing unimaginable adversity and discrimination while courageously dedicating their lives to equality and freedom that set the stage to pass this legislation in Washington. The fact that we were able to advance such a divisive issue and stand on the right side of history is a tribute to our state's leadership and provides a touchstone and hope for the future as we continue to fight against discrimination.

I am also very proud to have worked with my colleagues from both parties as Chairman of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee, along with parents, teachers, superintendents, advocates and businesses to achieve historic funding increases in education and re-prioritize educational efforts within the Legislature to build a world-class education system for every student. In the past 4 years, we have

increased K-12 funding by \$4.5Billion, the single largest increase in state history. This bi-partisan education funding included funding for for full-day kindergarten for every 5 year old in Washington State, provided teachers with a cost of living adjustment for the 1st time in 7 years, record investments for high quality early childhood learning, record investments to lower class size in kindergarten through 3rd grades, and a college tuition reduction – another historic first for Washington and all our students. Additionally, we worked together to pass legislation to begin closing the opportunity gap, keep charter schools open, help homeless students and address the social and emotional learning aspects of a child’s education. These accomplishments provide a foundation and collaborative environment to solve the current unconstitutional levy funding issue that has eluded the legislature since 1977.

Additionally, it was a tremendous pleasure to partner with State Representative Ruth Kagi (D-Seattle) to champion passage of the Early Start Act. This important legislation provides thousands of Washington children and families with access to the high-quality early learning that helps more children be happy, healthy, and prepared kindergartners. It provides a real path forward to close the opportunity gap that affects far too many children of color in low-income communities throughout the Washington. This was a multi-year collaborative effort that again included legislators of both parties and both chambers, advocates, non-profit organizations, providers, parents and businesses coming together behind a vision of helping the most vulnerable children early to dramatically improve the chances for success later.

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.

- Washington State Senator, 2010-Present

- **Chairman, Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee: 2013 – present**
- **Ranking Member, Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee: 2010 – 2012**
- **Member, Senate Transportation Committee: 2010 – present**
- **Member, Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee: 2010-12, 2015-present**
- **Member, Senate Energy, Environment & Telecommunications Committee: 2013-2014**
- **Member, McCleary Joint Select Committee on Article IX Litigation: 2012 - present**
- **Member, McCleary Joint Task Force on Education Funding: 2012-2015**
- **Member, Washington State Education Opportunity Gap Accountability and Oversight Committee: (2012 – present)**

-Two terms on the Mercer Island City Council, 2003-2010,

Served on Public Safety Committee, Planning Committee, Sustainability Committee, Disability Commission, Arts Council, the Eastside Transportation Partnership and the Green Ribbon Commission

I currently serve on these boards:

- **Thrive by Five Board of Directors (2010 – present)**
- **Puget Sound Partnership Ecosystem Coordinating Board (2012 – present)**

I am/have been an active member of these groups:

- **Bellevue, Mercer Island, Renton, Sammamish and Newcastle Chambers of Commerce**
- **Mercer Island Rotary Club: 2001 - present**
- **Mercer Island Boys and Girls Club: 1996 - present**
- **Mercer Island PTSA: 1996 – present**
- **Lake Heights YMCA Y-Guides & Y-Princesses (1996-2008)**
- **Mercer Island Senior Foundation (2005-2008)**

I have also been a member of the following Boards:

- **Summer Search Board of Directors, a mentoring program for at risk youth, (2007-2015)**
- **The Nature Conservancy Board of Directors (2012-2015)**
- **Bellevue College Foundation Board of Directors (2008-2013, Ex-Officio 2014 – present)**
- **NARAL PAC Board (2006-2007)**
- **Mercer Island Rotary Colon Cancer Half Marathon Board (2005-2006)**
- **Mercer Island Youth and Family Services Board (2002-2003)**

I have been married for 28 years and have lived on Mercer Island for 21 years raising 4 very active children and attending an astonishing number of school, community and athletic events with them.

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

It is my duty to create innovative solutions for the problems facing the 41st District and to pursue a vision for moving forward. This involves maintaining open and proactive communication with my constituents as they express their ideas and concerns. It also requires maintaining current knowledge of the most pressing issues facing people and development of plans to address them.

In the Senate, my duties require me to develop and maintain relationships with other Senators and Representatives to maintain a collaborative spirit and to build coalitions to solve problems. I also spend time listening to the views of the many interested parties that contribute to the legislative process and finding ways to include their vision in the plans we are creating for the future.

My job as State Senator is primarily about people. Listening, communicating, collaborating, and leading people.

