

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
Gerry		Pollet

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

**State Representative, District 46, Position 1**

3. Are you the incumbent?  Yes  No

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

**36 years**

5. How long have you resided in King County?

**36 years**

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

7. If partisan, please indicate party: Democratic

**CAMPAIGN CONTACTS**

Campaign Name: Gerry Pollet for State Representative

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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 Representative District 46	Elective	Since December, 2011	Vice Chair, House Higher Education Committee; Member House Education and Finance Committees; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
Commissioner, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), Legislative Advisory Committee, WICHE	Appointed by Governor	Since January, 2016 September, 2015-present	One of 3 Commissioners representing Washington State, serving on committee overseeing Western Undergraduate Exchange, graduate and professional exchange, and other programs
46 <sup>th</sup> District Democrats, Vice Chair; Executive Board, Secretary	elected	Vice chair, 2002-12 Executive Board, 2013-15; Secretary 1999-2002	Vice Chair responsible for programs, led Platform and Resolutions Committee; organized numerous trainings, events and volunteer recruitment activities
Hanford Advisory Board	Appointive and elected by members	Chair, Budget and Contracts oversight committee 2002-12, vice-chair 2003-14	Elected to chair committee responsible for oversight and advising state and federal agencies on budgets and contracts for the largest public works program in the nation, largest ARRA (Stimulus package) investment in the nation, responsible for developing

			advice and achieving consensus support for advice which saved hundreds of millions of dollars for federal contracts; issue manager responsible for numerous consensus advice products on cleanup of Hanford.
Washington Department of Ecology Model Toxics Control Act Policy Advisory Committee; Dangerous Waste Advisory Committee; Seattle City Light Strategic Plan Advisory Committee	Appointed by Department, City Council and Mayor	Various times 1995-2005	Developed major elements of state rules for risk assessment and public involvement for toxic waste sites, City Light energy planning
Honored as "Legislator of the Year" an unprecedented two years in a row (2014 and 2015) by the Washington Student Association for my work promoting access and success in higher education; and, "Legislator of the Year" by UW Graduate and Professional Student Senate (2013)		2014, 2015 2013	Recognized for my leadership in engaging students in the legislative process (Washington Student Association represents college and university students across Washington), working on tuition and financial aid policy and funding, and development of legislation with schools and students on "student success" – how to improve retention and completion.
2010 Community Service Award Winner, University of Washington School of Public Health			
Public education and schools volunteer, PTSA, and other education advocacy organizations			Active member PTSA and active volunteer in Seattle Public Schools for many years, and for statewide school funding and education issues; worked on numerous levies, initiatives 728, 732 and Simple Majority; Volunteered in classrooms, fundraising events, school forums; Coalition organizing to address overcrowding in schools; Founding board member Hands for A Bridge Fdn. (Roosevelt H.S. program addressing race and conflict)
League of Women Voters Sunshine in Government honoree for 2014			In recognition of introducing and shepherding through legislation over two years to train elected officials in their responsibilities under open public meetings and public records laws. AG asked for the bill to be request legislation.

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

Office Title	Year of Run
State Rep	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?

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.)

Since graduating from law school, I have dedicated my career to working in the public interest, developing policies and legislation for consumer protection; protecting our environment and public health; promoting open government; and, teaching and mentoring students to work in public service.

Before serving in the Legislature, I co-authored and led the coalition-building and lobbying efforts to successfully pass some of our state's most important laws for whistleblower protection, growth management, hazardous waste cleanup, and protection of children's health. I also spent years working statewide and in Olympia to improve and fund our public schools.

As an education activist, a veteran public schools volunteer, and faculty member at the University of Washington School of Public Health, I bring unique viewpoints and experience to Olympia to work towards our state's "paramount duty" to provide education to EVERY child in Washington, and provide every resident of Washington with the opportunities of higher education to improve their life and their families' lives. I have filed to run to represent the 46<sup>th</sup> District again in the State House for the next two years in order to provide our children and generations to come with greatly improved education, better health care, an environment that is clean and not increasingly ravaged by climate change, and reversing the glaring increase of inequality and racial injustice in our state and nation.

I will be working in the coming Session to:

- Lower class sizes with a well-qualified and properly paid teacher in every classroom – and end severe overcrowding in our local schools;
  - In 2007, I began working with other parents to address the rapidly increasing overcrowding in our schools. I developed proposals with the Seattle School District, well informed parents and fellow legislators to secure nearly \$50 million in funds to reopen or renovate schools to provide thousands of needed classroom seats.
- Ensure that children with special needs do not get left behind, that we expand social and emotional learning programs and other evidence based programs which reduce the achievement / opportunity gap; and, that we end the overwhelming emphasis on high stakes testing of our children;
  - Continue to provide leadership on behalf of students with special education needs and disabilities, including implementation of legislation which I championed to end the planned use of isolation and restraint of children (passed last year)
- Make our tax system more fair, so the poorest people in our state don't continue to pay more in taxes than if they lived in any other state while the wealthiest corporations in the world pay less – so we can invest in our children's future without cutting higher ed, health care and disabled services;
- Utilize my experience in higher education to develop programs which increase access and improve college retention and completion rates, such as research based student advising and mentoring support programs.
- End the massive student loan debt burden, and reinvest in higher education, including passing free community college for recent high school graduates (a proven way to increase high school graduation rates) or adults seeking a workforce training certificate, the "Washington Promise" which I am the prime sponsor of in the Washington House.
  - This year, the Governor signed into law my legislation to create a new program to allow college students who want to become teachers in shortage fields or regions to graduate debt free if they teach for five years! My legislation to relieve our teacher shortage crisis was the only new investment made by the Legislature in our public schools this year.
- Protect our children's future from the ravages of climate change, toxic wastes and pollution of our air and water.
  - I will continue to utilize my background in environmental health and risk assessment to develop and reintroduce first in the nation legislation to protect children from toxic exposures, including from used tire crumbs in playgrounds and soccer fields, or toxic and carcinogenic chemicals used in food packaging and additives.

I made a commitment to be accessible to my constituents. Because I know how hard it is to go to Olympia during the Session, when constituents most want to speak to their legislators, I may be the only legislator who returns to their district to hold drop-in, in-district office hours (my "traveling town halls") every Saturday during Session.

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

I have devoted my life and career to working in the public interest: as an attorney, organizer and leader of non-profit groups; and, to teach and mentor students to work in public service. As others often acknowledge, I work very hard and long hours. My proven dedication to openness, honesty and accountability in government are traits we need in our Legislature and want to inspire more people to serve with.

Independence and placing the public interest ahead of the interests of either a political party or a private entity are traits which the residents of the 46<sup>th</sup> District want in their Representative. Many times, open government goals are stymied by interests of political parties and political officials within my own party, who prefer to keep the status quo, avoid accountability or preserve current political advantages.

My independence and willingness to fight for open government principles, for example, are illustrated by my support for including the Legislature under public records disclosure and open meeting laws, or for ensuring that my party's caucus supports legislation that is in the public interest despite powerful private interests who contribute large sums. It's easy for a candidate to say they support those proposals. The test is whether they will effectively fight for them behind closed doors and organize for them. I have stood up to such powerful interests in my own political party in order to fight for legislation in the public interest many times.

I am a consensus and bridge builder, while being able to organize constituencies on behalf of public interest legislation. I have proven in numerous advisory committees and in negotiations with business interests that I work effectively at developing proposals that protect the legitimate interests of all parties including those that have broad political differences with me or the organizations I was representing.

For example, because of my willingness to work on behalf of common goals with people who disagree with me on many political issues, I was elected 12 times to chair the Budget and Contracts oversight committee of the Hanford Advisory Board by members who primarily represent Tri-City business and governments and who openly joke about my being the only liberal Democrat they work with. This committee is charged with oversight of, and planning for, the over \$2 billion annual budget for the cleanup of Hanford – which is the largest public works project in the USA.

One of my legislative accomplishments was bringing together stakeholders to address the problem of predatory towing charges. Local news media highlighted stories from around the state of tow truck companies gouging consumers, often to the tune of \$1200, and up to \$2,000, for a consumer to get their car back after parking in the wrong spot or lot. People had to choose between paying rent or a mortgage or having their car. Having drafted consumer protection legislation in the past, I set to work gathering input from aggrieved consumers, from state and local officials, and from the towing industry itself. After lengthy discussions with industry representatives, I learned that a few bad actors were responsible for most predatory activities, and was able to craft legislation that ended the charging of exorbitant rates without punishing the majority of the industry that was already operating in a responsible manner. I also worked closely with local officials and colleagues from other districts to ensure that the legislation would operate effectively across the state. The final result was a bill that protected consumers from future price gouging, met the needs of the towing industry, and benefited local jurisdictions statewide. The industry began by attacking my legislation and ended up honoring me at their annual meeting, and asking me to sponsor additional regulatory updates for their industry.

I am a practitioner of principled facilitation, to ask people to bring forward the principles or goals they are seeking to achieve or protect, rather than only talking about their "positions". These skills have allowed me to develop legislative agreements on major ratepayer protection, hazardous waste, regulation of for-profit colleges, and open government legislation. I also serve effectively on the board of the WA Coalition for Open Government with people who are on the far end of the political spectrum from me – and defend our collaboration from people more interested in party labels.

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.

In 2016, the Legislature adopted ground breaking legislation in two areas for which I had led the development of legislation over lengthy periods of time. I know that it often takes several years of hard year-around work to develop the consensus and broad support for major new legislative proposals. My willingness to travel the state, work with stakeholders and emphasis on research and evidence based legislative proposals were key to success in passage of: first in the nation legislation to protect public health and prevent youth access from e-cigarettes; and, our state's comprehensive response to the teacher shortage which prevents us from meeting constitutional duties to lower class sizes.

My public health background (I am on the faculty of the UW School of Public Health) led me to read the growing body of research about the harm from electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and "vaping" products with growing alarm starting in 2014. The CDC supported Healthy Youth Washington survey showed that nearly a quarter of our high school seniors and juniors in King County were using e-cigarettes. My own observations and discussions with high school students, teachers and parents supported this concern over youth access. Research shows that half of these youth will start smoking cigarettes. Yet, there was not a single state law anywhere in the US, or federal set of rules, to model legislation on to protect public health.

Starting in 2014, I began working with local public health agencies from across the state, public health organizations (e.g., Cancer and Lung Associations), state officials and colleagues at the UW School of Public Health to define major issues and regulatory needs to prevent a new generation from being addicted to nicotine, disclose and regulate toxic and carcinogenic ingredients, and prevent child poisonings. Over a year of very hard work, with research to document why each element was important, we developed national model legislation. It was not easy to pass – the industry (including major cigarette companies) launched attacks, including highly personal attacks with threats from vaping industry to mobilize voters against me.

I developed a very strong bipartisan legislative coalition for this legislation, coupled with research based evidence and public health advocates. It took three years to pass, but Washington State now has the first in the nation legislation to prevent youth access to e-cigarettes, including retail sales enforcement, labeling requirements and other public health protections! Now, my work includes implementation of the law.

In 2015, I was asked by colleagues and leadership in the Education Committee and House to develop the legislature's response to the need for responding to the severe state and national shortage of teachers. At the end of the 2015 Session, I educated colleagues on the need to have a plan and investment to address the teacher shortage if our State is going to be able to meet our moral and constitutional duties to lower class sizes (as ordered by the Supreme Court in McCleary).

Over the course of the summer and fall of 2015, I met with our teacher education colleges, school districts, educators, teacher unions, our State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Public Educators Standards Board, minority education advocates and many others to develop agreements defining the needs and obstacles to meeting our need for thousands of teachers. My commitment to using research and evidence based approaches enabled us to pull together a widely supported comprehensive approach for Washington to respond to the teacher shortage. This included having to reject some proposals with strong constituencies, but which were in conflict with what research showed should be our most effective priorities given limited funding. I was responsible for shepherding this throughout the legislative process. The result was passage and funding for most of the elements we proposed at the start of the Session, including a first of its kind program of grants to college students who get certification in teacher shortage areas and commit to teach for five years (half of all teachers leave in their first five years); a new fund and program to mentor new teachers in order to improve retention and performance for those first years; programs to increase diversity of our teacher corps; and, portals to make it easier for teachers to apply and for small districts to recruit teachers.

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.

In 1987, when I first started working to expose the massive contamination at Hanford and to unite the region to clean up the western hemisphere's most contaminated area, few people knew of the threats to the Columbia River and public health. To tackle the problem I founded Heart of America Northwest and created a task force, which the Governors of Washington and Oregon and many Members of the two states' Congressional delegation agreed to sponsor. The task force, including major regional business leaders, created the proposal for cleanup that the entire region united behind. I spearheaded the efforts to unify the region to the point where Hanford Clean-up is now viewed by our region's public officials like motherhood and apple pie. Hanford Clean-Up is funded at \$2 billion a year and employs far more than nuclear weapons production ever did.

My ability to bring people together despite diverse political, economic or geographic differences is reflected in my having been elected 12 times to chair the Hanford Advisory Board's Budget and Contracts Committee, to provide oversight of those massive budgets and contracts. The majority of members are local government, Hanford contractor managers (or retirees from management) and other Tri-City interests, whose economy relies on the cleanup funds we oversee and advocate for. Thus, it is most unusual that for so many years, committee members selected an outsider and environmental group leader to chair the committee (while I still serve on the committee, my legislative duties preclude me from being able to devote the time to serve as chair or vice-chair since 2013).

This skill and experience is reflected in having been willing to sit and work with industry representatives who I was proposing to regulate – even after their initial reaction that they would simply fight legislation, as the towing industry did before agreeing to discuss responsible regulation. That dialogue led to a strong consumer protection law. It is also reflected in my role as one of the leading advocates for open government in the Legislature, where I have repeatedly volunteered and been asked to gather opposing interests who view the public records access (FOIA) laws as burdening local governments and allowing public employees and officials to be harassed, while news media and civic activists view their rights to request public records as being spurned by agencies and local governments.

For nearly 20 years, I have been an active volunteer in our public schools and have lobbied for improving our schools. I have volunteered hundreds of hours and actively recruited volunteers and campaigned for initiatives to lower class size, increase pay for teachers and allow school levies to pass with a "simple majority." I have worked to have the state adopt stronger high school curriculum and basic standards for early learning for three to five year olds.

For five years, I was part of a core group of parents working with the Seattle School District to address the problems of severe overcrowding in North Seattle schools (the district's enrollment is now growing by the equivalent of 3 elementary schools per year). I brought this experience to Olympia and shared with colleagues the impact of having reading taught in hallways or on lunchroom stages during lunch time, or first graders going to school in portables without bathrooms. I continue to engage parents who have great expertise in capacity and planning, which they share regarding enrollment forecasts and how to meet the capacity crisis in Seattle – which is increased due to the need to lower class sizes at a time when the District already lacks capacity.

I have been responsible for engaging Seattle legislators with the School District and parent advocates to develop priorities for first-time ever special appropriations to help school districts to renovate or reopen schools to add capacity and address safety risks. The District had never asked for such funding and was not even meeting regularly with Seattle legislators before I asked the District to join me in convening meetings with parents and legislators to develop "distressed school district" grant requests. As a result, as a freshman, I was able to secure \$9.5 million in funding to reduce overcrowding in Seattle schools, and have continued each year to bring together the District, parents and legislators to be successfully reopen and renovate numerous schools in Seattle – literally from the farthest SW corner to the farthest NE corner of Seattle.

From 2008 to 2013, I was an initial board member and active participant in the Roosevelt H.S. "Hands for a Bridge" program, a unique educational program in Seattle schools addressing racial and

ethnic conflict through both curriculum and outside work and exchanges.

My active involvement with our schools – from volunteering with teachers to advocacy work has enabled me to share the actual conditions in Seattle schools, including innovative programs, the success of the state’s first teacher evaluation and development program, and funding needs to successfully influence budgetary and policy decisions.

Since 1980, I have been engaged in numerous neighborhood efforts in North Seattle and to enhance the quality of life in all of Seattle. I have served on several Seattle City Light advisory groups appointed by the Mayor or Council, including the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee and to the toxics reduction advisory committee. The latter involved work with neighborhood groups across the city to address concerns ranging from pesticide use to high voltage line placement, and succeeded in removing many hazards from our communities and setting a model used by all City agencies. I was deeply involved in taking the input from neighborhood groups and developing plans or proposals that were viewed as practical by the utility to be adopted. I have also worked to ensure neighborhood concerns were addressed in regard to transportation, to protect trees and habitat in Seattle, provide parks or open space and address planning and zoning issues. This history is why I many neighborhood and community council leaders are actively working for and supporting my campaign.

As described in the prior question, my work to involve students in serving their communities has been recognized by the honor of being named the University of Washington School of Public Health’s 2010 Community Service honoree. Other recognition for my community service includes the top annual award given for peace and environmental work in Washington by Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility (previous awardees included Governors Gregoire and Lowry). The Washington Student Association, representing college and university students at all our public institutions, gave me the unprecedented honor of being “Legislator of the Year” two years in a row in recognition of my commitment to engage students in legislative decisions and bringing to the Higher Education committee their perspective along with the perspectives I gather as a faculty member.

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

First and foremost is the duty to represent the values of my district on policy issues facing Washington State and to ensure that the concerns and needs of 46<sup>th</sup> District residents are being addressed by the State. Those concerns and priorities are not parochial. Our district’s voters clearly want a Representative who will be a leader on behalf of their values on major statewide issues, including their desire for our State’s tax system to no longer have one of the most regressive tax systems in the nation, and to make our budget and revenue system more sustainable to provide for the health, safety net and education of all Washington residents; and, to dramatically improve our state’s education system from pre-k through higher education. Our district wants its Representatives to be leaders for protecting our environment and health. These are my clear priorities.

I made a commitment to be accessible to my constituents for open dialogue and input.

For many years, I organized parents with PTSA’s to go to Olympia to meet with their legislators to support funding for schools and other education bills. It would often take five hours of driving and parking to attend meetings which were scheduled for fifteen minutes, but were often reduced to five or shifted to inexperienced aides.

From that experience I committed to return to the 46<sup>th</sup> District every Saturday during session (when we are not voting) to hold drop-in, in-district meeting time at local coffee shops or meeting spaces around the district so constituent do not have to travel to Olympia to meet with their legislator during session – when they most want to communicate about legislation.

I believe I am the only legislator who returns to their district every weekend to hold drop-in meeting time with constituents.

In talking to thousands of residents, I am confident that the 46<sup>th</sup> District’s voters do not see their Representatives as representing solely their local interest. I view the job as representing the broad interests of our State, even where that may clash with local self-interests, based on the clear values I have told voters I will apply to our state’s issues.

To represent the values and concerns of the 46<sup>th</sup> District, I believe it is vitally important to be

accessible and actively discussing issues with residents, neighborhood and community groups, advocacy groups (e.g., for education), and businesses. I also believe it is important to continue to be at community meetings or public hearings about local issues of concern.

This input is also vital for a legislator to ensure that the concerns of constituents are reflected in the state's budget. The budget is where hundreds, if not thousands, of policy issues are prioritized. It is very important for me as a legislator to be engaged in the budget and ensure that it reflects both the major priorities and values I have promised to represent, but also engaged to support the myriad important interests of the district, including, for example local social service agencies, schools, food banks, disability services....

I believe that as a Representative, I should be working collaboratively with key constituency groups to put forward proposals to address our state's needs for education, revenue, tax, environmental protection and promoting health. In my role as one of a very few legislators with connections to our state's higher education institutions, I also believe I have a special responsibility to work year around with institutions, faculty, students and staff from across Washington to understand issues and develop collaborative proposals.

Finally, but not least, a legislator must be an example to the community for openness and accessibility in government and community involvement. As discussed here, an effective Representative must listen and be active in the community, not just work on policies in a vacuum. As a public official, I believe I have a duty to be involved serving my community and inspiring others to be involved in serving

