

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
Dan		Shih

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

**State Representative, 43rd District, Position 1**

3. Are you the incumbent?  Yes  No

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

**7+ years (and born and raised in the area)**

5. How long have you resided in King County?

**30+ years total**

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

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

**CAMPAIGN CONTACTS**

Campaign Name: People for Dan Shih

Address: 98 Union Street #205

City/State/Zip: Seattle, WA 98101

Campaign Phone: 206-319-2800

Campaign E-mail: campaign@danshih.com

Campaign Website: www.danshih.com

**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)
None			

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

Office Title	Year of Run
None	

## 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'm running for the legislature to help pass legislation that makes people's lives better and that improves opportunities for everyone in Washington. I believe that government has an important role to play as an equalizer of opportunity, and my goal is to make sure the state performs that role.**

**Many policies must be brought to bear on that goal, but the centerpiece is education. As Gary Locke (who has endorsed me) has said, education is the great equalizer. We need to have K-12 education fully funded by the state because it is the gateway to opportunity for the next generation.**



**Dan, center, at school funding rally**

**My parents were Chinese immigrants who arrived in Washington with little more than hope that they would find opportunity here. They struggled at first because there were not many fruitful opportunities**

open to them. They eventually started a small clothing business, but it was a tough living. They wanted a better future for their children and insisted that we work hard and earn the best education we could obtain. Their sacrifices opened doors that allowed me to become an attorney, build a successful law practice, provide for my own family (my husband and I are raising three daughters in the public school system), and have the opportunity to serve my community.

I want every child in the state to have the same opportunity to succeed that my parents dreamed of for their kids. Fully funding our public schools is essential to that. I also want to see college as well as vocational school be much more affordable, along with better programs to deal with student loan debt.

To ensure continued opportunity after graduation, we must provide for healthy urban growth through improved transit and transportation options, addressing the housing crisis, and encouraging the use of cleaner sources of energy, among many other things, so that the next generation can have a chance to live in and enjoy the communities where they work.

We also need a more just society and a better consensus that we as a people are in this grand project of democracy together. We must do a better job ensuring that people, especially children, have every opportunity to succeed and are not deprived of their potential as a result of homelessness, injury or loss of health coverage, mental illness, disability, minor mistakes that really should not be a criminal justice matter, and other issues. I realize that some view such concerns as a partisan position. However, I strongly believe that compassion at the front end is not only better for the individual helped, but also saves money in the long run and unlocks potential, resulting in better outcomes, better long-term economic growth, and a better society. As a result, I believe broader coalitions, if not consensus, on such priorities is possible and worth striving for. That is the work I would like to do.

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

Let me highlight several qualities.

**First, I am an experienced advocate.** Since graduating from law school, I've spent almost ten years advocating for justice for my clients as their attorney. My class action lawsuits have recovered tens of millions of dollars for overcharged customers or investors who've been defrauded. I also handle constitutional and civil rights cases on a *pro bono* basis (i.e., without charge).

In short, I have a long history of speaking out for what is right and will continue to do so.

**Second, I get involved—deeply involved—in important causes that I am passionate about.**

For example, I serve on the board at the ACLU of Washington, where I advise on our impact litigation advancing civil liberties and civil rights.

I also serve on the board of API Chaya, which helps survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking in marginalized Asian and Pacific Islander communities. I have helped expand API Chaya, and we now serve hundreds of people a year. We help people experiencing oppression to understand their options, find safe housing, deal with immigration issues, and get training or education to secure their futures. And we train “natural helpers” in the community who are more likely to come into contact with survivors, who often face language barriers and have limited access to electronic communication, to make sure survivors know how they can get help.

I also serve on the board of the QLaw Association (the LGBT bar association of Washington), where I lead our issues advocacy efforts, including currently working to build coalitions with other organizations to stop protections for transgender people from being rolled back.

As a legislator, I will be deeply involved in developing policies to improve people's lives and will be ready to lead on policy priorities.

**Third, I'm a team builder.** Legislation is a team effort, and I will work to build consensus with legislators and among constituencies from throughout the state to get important policies enacted.

I believe in building coalitions and finding areas of common interest with others to get things done. Recently, I represented Lambda Legal and a coalition of other minority and civil rights organizations I had assembled (including Disability Rights Washington, El Centro de la Raza, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, PFLAG Seattle, Pride Foundation, QLaw Association of Washington, South Asian Bar Association of Washington, and Washington Women Lawyers) on an amicus brief in the Washington Supreme Court arguing that antidiscrimination law cannot yield to a seller's moral beliefs—in that case, a florist's refusal to provide flowers for a gay couple's wedding. Protecting same-sex couples from discrimination was not part of most coalition members' mission statements. Yet their commonality—which we noted to the Supreme Court—was the recognition that allowing any exceptions to antidiscrimination law would spill over and obliterate protections for all.

In short, I always keep an eye on not just *what* I think should be done, but also *how* I can get it done and *whose help* I can marshal for the cause.

**Fourth, I have a breadth of perspective that is unmatched by any other candidate.**

That breadth of perspective includes my experience as a first-generation American, as a person of color (Chinese American), and as an openly gay person. I understand what it's like to be part of a marginalized

community, and I also understand the importance of opportunity, hard work, connecting with others, and service to the community in overcoming marginalization. My breadth of experience includes my being a parent of three daughters and navigating the same parenting issues and juggling acts as many households in my district, layered on top of parenting kids who are persons of color, interracial, and in a family with two dads.



*Dan reading with his three daughters*

**My breadth of perspective also includes my varied work experience. Before working with individuals and business clients of all shapes and sizes in my law practice, I worked in retail, warehouses, small businesses, software development, professional services, universities and research institutes, and government (including clerking for a judge at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and summer positions with the Department of Justice). I believe this broad experience helps me relate to people from a wide variety of backgrounds.**

**My breadth of perspective further includes the wide variety of organizations I have served and issues I have been involved with, ranging from civil liberties and civil rights to education to anti-violence and anti-oppression. This ensures my understanding of problems that people throughout our society face.**

**And, of course, my breadth of perspective includes my experience as an attorney. Much of my work is dealing with holes, ambiguities, and issues in the output of our legislature, namely statutes. That perspective is invaluable for someone responsible for the content of legislation.**

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.

**First**, I would point to my legal career, which I started about ten years ago. My practice is focused on complex litigation. The subject matter of my cases is varied, including among other things consumer protection, investor fraud actions, class actions, commercial disputes, intellectual property disputes, and civil rights and constitutional issues cases.

Complex litigation is a challenging field. The legal questions are often unsettled, the facts are often highly technical, and the issues are often very nuanced. My firm frequently takes on “hard cases” where the path to victory is uncertain or we are not expected to succeed. And there are always some failures or setbacks in the best of cases, such as unfavorable court rulings or the discovery of unfavorable facts, that require rethinking the legal strategy and adapting the legal arguments. Yet I have achieved successful outcomes in many such cases. I have learned to dive deeply into new subjects; develop a command of the law, facts, issues; advocate strongly for my clients’ interests inside and outside of the courtroom; and maintain courteous relationships with opposing counsel that allow for negotiation and compromise when appropriate.

I am proud to have my accomplishments in the field recognized by my partners, who several years ago made me a partner of our firm, Susman Godfrey (rated the nation’s No. 1 litigation boutique for the last five years in The Vault’s annual survey). And for the last several years, Super Lawyers has awarded me the status of “Washington Rising Star.” I am also proud that many of the law students and young attorneys I have been a volunteer mentor to over the years have achieved their own successes in the field.

**Second**, I would point to my volunteer work as board treasurer at API Chaya. As an organization dedicated to helping some of the most vulnerable in our society—people and families impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking—we regularly encounter more need for our services than our resources can provide. We also sometimes encounter down years during which we’ve had to make difficult budget decisions about what services to prioritize and which to cut.

At API Chaya, I have worked hard to improve the financial management of the organization, institute better controls, and develop and implement plans for putting us in better financial health. This has required diving deeply into the finances of the organization; working with staff and committee members to understand issues such as grant accounting, the impact of certain forms of revenue on costs, and potential control risks; developing reporting that lets us identify and address issues sooner; and identifying areas for potential operational improvement and driving those changes.

I am proud that, thanks in part to our management and planning work, we have been able to grow the organization, manage a budget of more than four times what it was when I joined the board (now over \$1 million per year), and serve hundreds more people in critical need of our services every year.

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.

**American Civil Liberties Union of Washington**, board member (2014–present), currently Treasurer/Secretary, chair of finance committee, member of executive committee, and member of legal committee (which advises on the organization’s impact litigation). The ACLU of Washington is a nonprofit advancing civil rights and civil liberties.

**API Chaya**, board member (2010–present), currently Treasurer, chair of finance committee, and member of executive committee. API Chaya is a nonprofit that helps people and families impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, primarily in Asian and Pacific Islander communities.

**Trauma-Informed Practice Workgroup** (2016–present), member of task force working to develop protocols for implementation of H.B. 1840 (passed in 2014) to protect survivors of domestic violence by requiring their firearm-owning oppressors to surrender their weapons if they are deemed by a judge to pose a credible threat to the survivor.

**QLaw Association of Washington**, board member (2010–present), currently board Vice President, chair of issues advocacy committee, member of executive committee, member of judicial evaluation committee, and law student mentor. QLaw is the LGBT bar association of Washington and seeks to make the legal system fairer for LGBT persons.

**Lakeside School Alumni Board**, board member (2014–present), chair of connections committee, and member of executive committee. The alumni board is charged with understanding the educational innovations of the school, representing the alumni body, educating alumni about the current affairs of the school, and keeping the alumni community connected. I act as an ambassador for the school, answering questions and informing students and families about the school and its application process, especially in communities where scholarship opportunities available at Lakeside are less well-understood.

**The Sedona Conference**, Working Group 10 on Patent Litigation Best Practices (2013–present), best practices contributor, discussion leader, and drafter. The Working Group develops nonpartisan, consensus-based recommendations and best practices aimed at improving the legal system.

**TOPS K-8 School**, parent volunteer (2013–present). TOPS is one of the Seattle Public Schools, located in Eastlake. I volunteer occasionally in the classroom or for field trips and manage the class fund.

**Princeton Club of Western Washington**, interviewer of applicants to Princeton University (2015–present).

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

Former Senator and Vice President Hubert Humphrey aptly described some key considerations that a legislator must address when he said, "The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped."

I view the duties of the office of state representative as including: (1) representing the people of the 43rd District as well as the interests of the whole state in ensuring opportunities for all, protecting the most vulnerable, and fully funding public education; (2) researching and identifying issues and problems the legislature should address, and introducing and working to pass legislation to address them; (3) doing my homework to make sure I know what I am voting on and making sure there are no oversights or unintended consequences in such legislation; (4) listening to those who have ideas or concerns, especially those who cannot afford lobbyists; (5) building relationships with other legislators, regardless of party, to learn about issues and problems in other parts of the state and to find potential allies; and (6) resolving problems constituents have with their government. These are all important and interdependent duties.

Ultimately, to serve the people, the legislature must get things done. I will work hard to make sure the legislature does that. As Gary Locke recently stated in endorsing me, "Dan Shih will be a leader the 43rd District can be proud of, a leader who will get things done!"