

2017 Candidate Questionnaire

**SECTION I**

**BASIC CANDIDATE INFORMATION**

1. Name as it will appear on the ballot

First Name	Middle Initial or Nickname	Last Name
<b>Manka</b>		<b>Dhingra</b>

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

**45<sup>th</sup> LD Senate seat**

3. Are you the incumbent?  Yes  No

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

**Over 21 years**

5. How long have you resided in King County?

**Over 21 years**

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

7. If partisan, please indicate party: Democrat

**CAMPAIGN CONTACTS**

Campaign Name: Friends of Manka

Address: PO Box 2467

City/State/Zip: Redmond, WA 98052

Campaign Phone: (425) 270-8660

Campaign E-mail: Manka@electmanka.com

Campaign Website: [www.electmanka.com](http://www.electmanka.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)

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.)

I am running for the State Senate, not as someone who has traditionally been involved in politics, but as a King County prosecutor, non-profit founder, board member and PTA parent who has been working on the most pressing issues facing our state. As impactful as my two decades of professional and community service have been, the 2016 Presidential election made me realize I can do more for our neighbors of the 45<sup>th</sup> District and across our State in elected office.

For over 21 years I have been working to strengthen our communities through domestic violence prevention, criminal justice, mental health, and volunteering in our local public schools. I have done this work because at every juncture I have identified a need that is not being met and have stepped in to address it. As a parent and citizen, I am greatly concerned about the tone and tenor of the political discourse taking place across our country. Elected officials have become entrenched in party politics and partisan bickering and have forgotten the people they represent. This must change.

We are fortunate to live in one of the highest educated, most innovative states in the country. Washington is full of opportunity, yet our legislature cannot fully fund our public education system or take care of our youth. A functioning public education system is the foundation of our democracy and gives each child their best opportunity to succeed. We have seen too much gridlock on issues as fundamental as how we fund our schools. This cannot be a partisan issue but an opportunity to invest in our state's future and ensure that our children are ready to lead. Currently, there is a fundamental gap in our ability to connect children coming through our schools with the many amazing career opportunities that are available to them. The 45<sup>th</sup> District has some of the top schools in our state, but there are still gaps for far too many children and there must be a greater urgency behind fully funding our schools statewide so every child has equal access and a foundation for success. Fully funding education so that each and every child is set up for success is my number one priority. Having run Passport club, Chess club, Math club and coached Destination Imagination, I have seen first-hand how children soar when they are given access to opportunity.

In addition to our schools, there are many other important issues that must be addressed by our Legislature and I believe I bring a diverse background and problem solving experience that can help advance positive outcomes. Our region has experienced much economic success, but with that comes challenges which includes our rapid growth and how we deal with the thousands of people who are moving here every month. Voters and the Legislature have recently passed a large amount of new funding to help address our growing transportation and infrastructure needs, but it is critical that we are vigilant and use data to ensure increased accountability and proper prioritization to help provide immediate relief. We need elected officials who are not afraid to lead and will make tough decisions while listening to the will of the people instead of rolling back voter-approved programs.

As a King County Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, I have helped drive policies and programs to better meet the needs of individuals who struggle with mental illness. I have expanded our Mental Health Court to ensure individuals with severe and persistent mental illnesses have the resources, accountability and supervision they need to regain their lives. I have worked to create our Regional Veterans' Court to provide resources and support to those who have served our country and sacrificed so much in the line of duty. I have been working on improving public safety, saving taxpayer resources, and assisting people through difficult times by closing the revolving door of jail, homelessness, and crime that impacts too many in our community. I have been changing cultures by being involved in the Crisis Intervention Program for law enforcement from the beginning.

Ultimately, I want to restore trust, transparency, and accountability so we can see government work effectively again. Throughout my personal and professional life, I have focused on bringing people together to address complex problems in a sustainable way. For me, it is not about political party – it is about doing what's right and solving problems.

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

It is never easy to talk about oneself in these terms, especially for women, but some of the strongest personal characteristics I bring to the table are my personal commitment to honesty and integrity, a strong track record of collaboration and my problem-solving ability.

Restoring the public's trust in their government is critical to our long-term success and a big part of that is being open, honest and transparent with the people you represent. Our failure to do so has hurt our ability to effectively govern and encourage participation in our political process. I am an analytical thinker and litigator who appreciates directness and values honesty. When I see dishonesty or injustice, I work to correct it. I am committed to changing our political dialogue and to being open and direct with voters. As a State, we are going to have to make tough decisions for the future and we need leaders who will respect their constituents enough to try to solve real problems instead of providing platitudes. They deserve transparency and accountability and I believe they will respond even if we might not agree on every issue.

Political party too often divides our legislature and we need to change the culture from one of divisiveness to one of collaboration. Ideas that are forged together, last. We need to be embracing a diversity of ideas instead of stonewalling or casting aspersions on one another. Good solutions, regardless of party affiliation need to be embraced. This is an important skill as policy is crafted and is important for the long-term health of our Democracy. I have always been committed to collaboration and listening. Whether it is working with law enforcement to help better train them on dealing with crisis intervention, bringing people together to talk about tough issues like domestic violence and sexual assault or working with our hospitals, mental health agencies and Department of Social and Health Services to work out creative solutions. When we work together and understand all sides of an issue it only makes the solutions we arrive at that much stronger. This is what we need more of in Olympia. To be successful, you need buy in from all sides. This is the only sustainable way to govern effectively.

Finally, I bring with me strong problem solving skills that can help us meet future challenges head on. Supervising the Therapeutic Alternative Unit in my role as a Senior Deputy King County Prosecutor I have learned that there is not one solution to every problem. Circumstances are always unique, individuals have different experiences and histories, and it is critical that we work to understand those who are in crisis so we can get them the treatment they need. For many years that has not been the case and it leads to a revolving door where individuals with mental health issues found themselves stuck in our system at the expense of taxpayers and the detriment of their health. I have been successfully working in problem solving courts with clinicians, defense attorneys, probation officers, legislatures, law enforcement, hospitals (including the VA) and community providers. I have navigated various conflicting interests to find common ground so that programs and resources can be expanded so that needs can be met.

It is critical that lawmakers look at all sides of an issue and listen to those that are impacted by the decisions they make. Compromise, analysis and data should guide our decision making so we can continue to move the ball forward and ensure Washington thrives.

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.

Two examples of accomplishments that I am particularly proud of are the founding of API Chaya and my role in the creation of the Therapeutic Alternative Unit at King County.

21 years ago, when I moved to Redmond, I identified a need here in Washington for resources that address the needs of victims of domestic violence in the South Asian community. South Asian women were not accessing the mainstream domestic violence organizations. This was not about lack of access but rather a lack of understanding of cultural norms. This of course was not acceptable and was the impetus behind co-founding Chaya. Chaya has since merged with API Safety Center to form API Chaya.

API Chaya is a non-profit organization that currently serves thousands of women throughout Washington providing a support network for women that face domestic abuse and sexual violence. The program brings women and the community together raise awareness and discuss with open and honest dialogue cultural norms, stigmas, and experiences in an attempt to better provide support and resources. As one of it's founders I helped write our initial by-laws, articles of incorporation and developed the advocacy program. I was the first advocate before we were able to raise the funds to hire staff. I worked to train Chaya volunteers and advocates as well as provided culturally specific training for domestic organizations in the community. I also lead a girls' group to empower young women in the South Asian community. I was on the board for 8 years and served as President for the last two. The organization has gone from one that the South Asian community was embarrassed and uncertain to be associated with to having the most popular yearly fundraising event.

The second achievement that I am incredibly proud of is the creation of the Therapeutic Alternative Unit—which encompasses, the King County's Regional Mental Health Court (RMHC), Regional Veterans' Court (RVC) and the Community Assessment and Referral for Diversion program (CARD). The King County MHC was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mental Health Court in the country with only a couple of calendars in District Court, which dealt with only misdemeanor cases. Today it serves up to 275 individuals and is an incredible example of how collaboration among disciplines and agencies can achieve positive outcomes.

Under my leadership, the RMHC has expanded to 5 calendars per week in Seattle, Kent and Issaquah. The court's criterion has expanded to accept a range of cases, which includes felony cases. In fact, about 65% of the cases are now cases that were originally filed as felonies. The court was further expanded to accept all cases from all cities within King County truly making the program a Regional Mental Health Court.

When the program started, there was only one part-time prosecutor assigned to MHC. Fast forward to today where I chair the Therapeutic Alternative Unit (TAU) and supervise 3 deputy prosecutors, 3 paralegals and a victim advocate. The TAU now encompasses RMHC, RVC and the CARD program. I worked with the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorney, the Department of Social and Health Services and the Governor's Mental Health taskforce on legislation for the funding and proposal for CARD.

Most importantly I have been working with law enforcement since the inception of the Crisis Intervention Program at the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission to develop and execute the program. Through this program, I work as an instructor at the 40-hour crisis intervention training for law enforcement and I run our monthly coordinated crisis intervention meeting with all law enforcement officers in King County to problem solve on criminal justice, mental health and homelessness related issues.

Finally, I am very proud of working with the Center for Court Innovation and the Urban Institute in developing and implementing data driven prosecution and risk needs responsivity tools that can be resources for prosecutors across the country.

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.

**Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney with the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office January 2000—**

**Present:** I have worked in the Prosecutors office for more than 17 years where I currently serve as a mental health and crisis intervention expert. I am Chair of the Therapeutic Alternative Unit. The Regional Mental Health Court, which I supervise, received the Randy Revelle Award from the Washington State Psychiatric Association. The Regional Veterans Court is a national leader in the work that it is doing with the Center for Court Innovation in validating a risk needs responsivity tool for criminal justice involved Vets. My unit is the only prosecuting attorney's office in the country using a national database to identify all veterans charged with crimes in an effort to provide diversion and resources services. I also helped develop and oversee CARD, an innovative diversion program in the State of Washington. I train locally and nationally on therapeutic courts and crisis intervention. In my professional capacity, I also serve as a member of Shoreline Police Department's Advisory Group for Response Awareness De-escalation and Referral (RADAR) and participated in the Seattle Police Department's Muslim, Sikh, and Arab Advisory Council. I lead the Coordinated Crisis Intervention Response meetings where I collaborate with all King County law enforcement officers to find creative solutions and coordinate responses to help individuals with mental illness.

**Member of Board of Directors of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Eastside 2009—Present:** I am currently Vice President of the Board of Directors of NAMI Eastside, an organization that works to improve the quality of life of all those affected by mental illness. I was Chair of the Board from 2015 to 2017 and Co-Chair of the Board from 2013 to 2015. I have volunteered in and run the organization's Public Policy Committee for years. I earned the organization's highest award, the Rynas Advocacy Award, in January 2017. NAMI Eastside worked hard to pass Joel's Law and Assisted Outpatient Treatment.

**Co-Founder, Victim Advocate, and Advocacy Trainer at Chaya 1996 – 2004:** As a longtime advocate for women and immigrant rights, I co-founded Chaya (now API Chaya) and led the organization's work to end systemic violence through education and prevention. While at Chaya, I was President of the Board of Directors for two years, worked as a victim advocate, led a girls group to empower young women in the South Asian community, and provided training for Chaya volunteer advocates as well as culturally specific training for domestic violence organizations in the community.

**PTSA Member 2007—Present:** I received the PTSA Golden Acorn Award for my work at Redmond Elementary School running their Passport club and Chess club. I was also the Math coach for both my son and daughters' teams at Redmond Elementary, Einstein Elementary and Redmond Middle School. I was a reading mom at Einstein Elementary and volunteered at Science Fair at both Einstein Elementary and Redmond Elementary.

**Destination Imagination Coach 2012—Present:** One of my greatest joys in life is children. Creating opportunity for them and then seeing them succeed is the best feeling in the world. Destination Imagination is a unique competition that challenges creativity and innovation. I have coached my children's teams for 4 years now and assisted other new teams with guidance and advice. Bringing DI to Redmond schools is a good start and I would love to see the program be offered to every child in the State. Schools that sponsor DI make it to nationals and globals in much larger numbers and the leadership, team work, creativity and innovation is truly exceptional.

I am a proud Girl Scout cookie mom with my daughter's troop.

**Intern 1998—1999:** I worked in the Washington State Attorney General's office in the Criminal Division assisting with Sexually Violent Predator cases.

**Judicial Clerk 1997—1998:** I clerked with Justice Barbara Madsen at the Washington State Supreme Court.

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

Being trustworthy, transparent and accountable to those you are elected to serve is at the top of the list of important duties for this office. We need to fundamentally restore trust in government and meet the needs of constituents to help achieve this goal. That means leadership and a willingness to break from the status quo. Voters are tired of excuses and finger pointing when it comes to the core responsibilities of the job of governing.

I am committed to finding a solution to our education-funding crisis, which I believe is the paramount duty of the office. We need to be open-minded when it comes to finding long-term and sustainable funding for the growing needs of our schools. The Legislature has taken the politically expedient route in recent years and has not realistically looked at the needs of the State. Funding education does not mean that children are able to complete a check list. Funding education means providing each child an individualized plan for success. Given all my work in problem-solving with our court system, I know data tells us that to ensure student success the whole child must be attended to. Health, housing, and other critical human service needs are essential for student success. Sound bites like “fund education first” are not an honest assessment of the needs of our diverse communities and do not set up our youth for success. These are complicated issues that take courage, a willingness to engage in honest dialogue, and the foresight to plan for the future.

The health, well-being, and safety of our communities is also paramount and crucial to governing. Accountability with our tax dollars is a necessary component of restoring the public’s trust of which I have previously mentioned. I have demonstrated a commitment to these values through my community involvement and I want to take the skills I have learned and the unique understanding of the 45<sup>th</sup> district’s needs to get results for those we serve.

I know the answers to these questions are not easy and it will take courage to do what is right to ensure our communities thrive. It’s time to end gridlock and make progress – and I am committed to doing so.