

Washington Conservation Voters Endorsement Policies and Procedures

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Washington Conservation Voters Endorsement Policies and Procedures Overview

Washington Conservation Voters ("WCV") is a nonpartisan political organization that works to elect and support environmentally responsible candidates for elected office at the state and local level, and at the federal level in specific strategic circumstances. Candidates, both challengers and incumbents, are evaluated for endorsement based on their environmental record and their commitment to environmental values.

Through these Endorsement Policies and Procedures, WCV endeavors to conduct an endorsement process that is fair, effective, and efficient. While we cannot hope to achieve consensus in every situation, WCV strives to provide consistency in our endorsements and to be adaptable to current and changing political circumstances. WCV believes that discussion and review of a broad spectrum of information will lead to the endorsement of the most environmentally responsible candidate.

As WCV has grown, new electoral arenas and judicial races have been added to its strategic plan. In order to keep pace with a dynamic political process, WCV is committed to the development of specific environmental priorities, working with our partners in the political and environmental community, and to working in concert with the environmental priorities process.

WCV recognizes that its endorsement process is an educational opportunity for members of WCV and for candidates. It is an opportunity to educate candidates about current environmental issues and values, as well as an opportunity for WCV to learn more about local candidates and the communities that they serve or hope to serve.

These Endorsement Policies and Procedures are open to review by members of WCV, by the public, by incumbents, and by candidates, and WCV encourages their distribution. WCV believes that the open dissemination of these Endorsement Policies and Procedures allows members of WCV, candidates, incumbents, and other organizations to better understand how our endorsement decisions are made.

These Endorsement Policies and Procedures apply to the WCV State Board ("State Board") and the Political Committee.

1.1 Participation in Electoral or Judicial Races

WCV has discretionary authority to determine whether it will participate in an electoral or judicial race based on multiple factors, including but not limited to:

- Statewide, regional, or local environmental impact on environmental policy
- Statewide or regional impact of a race
- Development of political power
- Impact on racial equity and environmental justice
- Usefulness as an organizing tool
- Available resources
- Political ramifications of WCV participation
- Ability to mobilize the grassroots

1.2 Ballot Issues

WCV may endorse, oppose, or take no action on a ballot issue.

Initiatives, referenda, and other petitions to the people or the Legislature that qualify for the ballot will be handled by the State Board. This includes statewide, regional, or local ballot issues. To consider a ballot issue for endorsement or active opposition, the State Board must determine that there is a compelling reason for participation based on the following factors:

- Statewide, regional, or local environmental impact on environmental policy
- High degree of consensus within the environmental community
- Development of political power
- Impact on racial equity and environmental justice
- Usefulness as an organizing tool
- Available resources
- Political ramifications of WCV participation
- Engagement with Washington Environmental Council

If WCV participates in a statewide ballot issue, then the State Board will follow the endorsement process outlined in Section 1.3 and the voting guidelines outlined in Section 1.7. The State Board will strive to have pro and con presentations in contested initiatives where possible.

1.3 Endorsement Process

WCV may make endorsements in electoral races. The full State Board is responsible for approving statewide endorsements. The Political Committee is responsible for identifying statewide races to consider for endorsements by the full State Board. The Political Committee will approve endorsements for all other races that are not ballot issues or statewide races.

The State Board or the Political Committee will use an oral interview and internal research process to assess the viability and environmental responsibility of candidates for statewide races. The interview may be waived when a candidate is clearly not viable. The State Board or the Political Committee will use a written questionnaire for each race, unless the Board or Political Committee determines that a questionnaire is not necessary. The State Board will offer the same endorsement process to each viable candidate in a particular race.

The WCV Political Committee is chaired by the Political Chair and is responsible for considering all races that are not ballot issues or statewide races. The Committee should be a minimum of seven (7) board members. WCV staff bring recommendations for endorsements to the Political Committee. Staff notifies all Board Members ten (10) days prior to the Political Committee considering an endorsement and conducting interviews. Working with WCV staff, the Political Committee will conduct internal research and ask candidates to complete a written questionnaire (unless it has been determined one is not necessary) to assess the environmental responsibility of the candidates, and to ensure that the candidate is viable. When deemed necessary, the Political Committee conducts interviews. The interview may be waived in the following situations:

- when a candidates is clearly not viable;
- when a candidate clearly has an established record or history of voting or advocating against environmental positions ;
- when a race has an extraordinarily large number of candidates; or
- when the opposing candidate did not choose to participate in the endorsement process and submit a completed questionnaire.

The State Board or the Political Committee will offer the same endorsement process to each viable candidate in a particular race.

The Political Committee may ask outside citizens and Regional Advisors to work with the Political Committee to help conduct interviews or give feedback on federal, legislative, regional, and local races as part of the Political Committee's responsibilities. The Political Committee will approve individuals to participate with specific races in each electoral cycle depending on political conditions. For each race, the Political Committee will aim to have a minimum of two (2) Political Committee Members participate in interviews, in addition to staff, outside citizen participants and/or Regional Advisors.

The State Board or Political Committee shall utilize and consult with WCV Staff prior to making endorsement decisions. If the Political Committee determines that an endorsement should be discussed and voted on by the full State Board, then the Political Committee can recommend a discussion and vote at the Board level.

1.4 Endorsement Factors

The following factors are to be evaluated by the State Board and Political Committee in evaluating candidates and making endorsement decisions:

Environmental Factors

- Knowledge of statewide and local environmental issues
- Demonstrated leadership and integrity on environmental issues
- Impact on environmental policy

Candidate Background

- Recruitment by or involvement with WCV
- Voting record, including WCV Legislative Scorecard rating and substantive accomplishments
- Evident capability to achieve outcomes
- Position on Environmental Priorities
- Potential for productive relationship building

Political Climate

- Political implications for WCV from participation
- Viability (i.e. ability for candidate to run a competitive campaign)
- Ability to impact the environmental balance of the jurisdiction
- Political office to which the candidate is seeking election
- Viability of the opponent
- Resources WCV can provide to the candidate

Racial Equity & Environmental Justice

- Reflects the communities that are served by their representation
- Understanding of racial justice and social equity in their communities, and how those issues intersect with environmental issues and environmental policy.

Other

- Degree of consensus within the environmental community
- Usefulness as an organizing tool
- Available organizational resources

The following factors may not be considered in the endorsement process:

- Votes and/or positions on non-environmental issues
- Whether board members will vote for the endorsed candidate in the election
- Party affiliation
- Personal or professional relationship or friendships with the candidate

WCV can use questionnaires, oral interviews, and research that is provided by the candidate (such as past reports, a current brochure or resume, and Public Disclosure Commission filings) or obtained by the State Board, Political Committee, or Staff.

1.5 Multiple Endorsements

WCV endeavors to provide clear direction to the voting public through its endorsements, as well as the distribution of its political resources. In addition, WCV often seeks to influence the outcome of a race in the early stages. Therefore, WCV strongly discourages multiple endorsements in the same race.

However, there are certain circumstances where multiple endorsements in the same race may be warranted. A multiple endorsement decision will be based on consideration of the following factors:

- Whether the candidates have equally viable campaigns
- Whether the candidates have equally strong environmental values
- Whether the candidates have equally strong voting records on environmental issues and/or strong history supporting environmental issues.
- Demonstrated leadership and integrity on environmental issues.
- Whether the candidates have been previously endorsed by WCV
- Whether there will be political implications to WCV by providing multiple endorsements
- Whether the candidates have previous involvement with WCV

Multiple endorsements may be approved by the Political Committee, except in statewide races or in races that the Political Committee recommends review and approval by the State Board.

1.6 Judicial Races

Judges render decisions that have significant impact on environmental policy. While Judicial Races are considered to be nonpartisan, and while judicial candidates are not supposed to state an established predisposition towards a particular legal issue, a judicial candidate's environmental values are a valid consideration in evaluating his/her qualifications.

WCV may endorse, oppose, or take no action on a Judicial Race. Judicial Races fall into three distinct categories: Statewide, Regional/Cross- Jurisdictional, and Local.

Statewide Judicial Races such as the Washington Supreme Court will be handled by the State Board. Regional/Cross-Jurisdictional such as the Washington Appellate Courts will be handled by the Political Committee.

If WCV participates in a Judicial Race, then the State Board or Political Committee will follow the endorsement process outlined in Section 1.3 and the voting guidelines outlined in Section 1.7

1.7 Voting Guidelines

- Quorum
 - For the purposes of voting on endorsements at an actual or telephonic meeting, a quorum is defined as one over 50% of the voting members of the State Board or Political Committee.

- Voting by Electronic Transmission
 - For the purposes of voting on endorsements via electronic transmission, 100% participation and approval of all eligible voting members of the State Board and Political Committee is required.

- Proxy
 - For the purposes of endorsement voting, proxy votes are not allowed. All State Board members and Political Committee members must cast their own vote and cannot have other persons vote for them.

Voting Requirements

- State Board & Political Committee Endorsements
 - A majority vote of those eligible State Board members present at an actual or telephonic meeting is required to confer an endorsement.

- Ballot Issues
 - A majority vote of those eligible State Board members present at an actual or telephonic meeting is required to confer an endorsement.

For purposes of Section 1.7, a determination of "eligible" State Board members depends on the application of the WCV Conflict of Interest Guidelines.