



AFT Washington 2022 Candidate Questionnaire

About AFT Washington

AFT Washington represents approximately 6,500 education professionals working in community and technical colleges, regional universities, early learning, and K-12. Our members work with all ages of students, from young children in pre-K education settings to adults in higher education, as well as all facets of education. Our members are bus drivers, maintenance workers, faculty, paraeducators, food service workers, custodians, success coaches, grounds crew members, and more.

Together, with our members and national organization, we advocate and fight for:

- Safe, welcoming, and thriving neighborhood schools for every student, and high-quality, affordable post-high school opportunities to fulfill our paramount duty to help *all* students succeed, at every level;
- Economic and advancement opportunities for everyone;
- Affordable, high-quality healthcare for everyone;
- Democracy, pluralism, and voting rights by involving the voices of students, parents, and the community, side-by-side with educational employees and elected officials;
- Racial, social, financial, and civic equity, and fighting back against discrimination, hatred, and bigotry.

We hope you will take this opportunity to complete the questionnaire below and allow us to better understand your candidacy. Completing the questionnaire is required for consideration of endorsement or possible campaign contributions. If our Committee on Political Education (COPE) decides they would like further information, we may ask you to participate in an interview.

To be considered, return your completed questionnaire via email, by close of business, on March 25th to aftwashington@aftwa.org. If you have questions, please leave a message at 206-242-4777.

Candidate Biographical Information

Name: April Berg

Candidate for which office: State Representative, 44th LD

Party affiliation: Democrat

Political background (*offices held or currently hold, offices ran for, party positions, etc.*):

I represent the 44th LD in the State House and serve on the Everett School Board. Prior to that I served as an Edmonds School Board Director and Mill Creek Planning Commissioner.

Community or organizational memberships (past and present):

Current: Director, Everett School Board
Board Member, Economic Opportunity Institute
Member, Snohomish County Juvenile Court Cultural Competency Committee
Member, Jackson High School PTA
Trustee, Seattle Children's Theater

Past: Member, Everett School District Capital Bond Committee
Washington State School Director's Association Legislative Rep. for Director Area-1
Member, Edmonds School Board
Legislative Liaison Edmonds School Board
Washington State Elementary Chess Championship Board Director
Founder, Seaview Elementary Chess Club
President, Jack and Jill of America (Seattle Chapter)
Member, Oregon State Board of Higher Education
Student Body President of Oregon State University

Current occupation: State Representative

Current employer: Washington State Legislature

Are you currently a member of a labor organization? No

If yes, which labor organization, and how long have you been a member?

If not currently a member of a labor organization, have you ever been? I have not been a union member

If yes, which labor organization, when, and for how long?

General

1. Why are you running for this elective office?

I am running for State Representative because I understand the challenges that Snohomish County and specifically 44th District families are facing due to growth, rising prices, and economic uncertainty. As a School Board Director across Snohomish Districts, and now as a Legislator, I have an important perspective about what our state must do to address the needs of every child and to better support our educators, families, and most vulnerable students.

I believe in my first session I demonstrated that my background and experience make me uniquely qualified to be an effective voice in Olympia for working families, kids, and seniors and I am excited to get to work doing just that!

2. What qualities distinguish you from other candidates for this office?

As a first term Legislator I was able to pass eight meaningful pieces of legislation (five in my first year). These include eliminating the reduced price school lunch fee, providing free period products for menstruating individuals in all schools 3rd grade-College (public and private), allowing 9th graders to receive College in the High School Credit and creating a simple, accessible online portal (via OSPI) that will allow families to provide income data needed to access services.

My experience as a School Board Director for the two largest school districts in Snohomish County (Edmonds and Everett), as well as my experience as a Planning Commissioner for the City of Mill Creek make me uniquely qualified to represent the 44th District in the Legislature.

As a School Board Director, I help create a vision, goals and plans to improve student achievement. My experience also includes developing policies and directing resources to enhance student improvement and teacher professional development as well as ensuring equity in the programming and resource allocation.

As a Planning Commissioner, I have worked collaboratively to support existing and future businesses, improve transit connectivity and worked to accommodate growth and housing choices.

As an African American woman, I will bring a perspective of inclusion to the legislature. I've had the opportunity to work collaboratively with many diverse groups, including communities of color, people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, first generation college students and the LGBTQ+ community.

Revenue and Education

- 1. For decades Washington State has had the most regressive tax system in the country, contributing to underfunding of public education and many other investments in the public good. **The pandemic has highlighted the numerous gaps in education funding that persist, for example in the form of the digital divide, the need for wrap-around services, stagnant wages, etc. When new funding is allocated, it is often for specific populations of students or specific programs and in relatively small sums. How will you approach finding new sources of revenue to both invest in Washingtonians and create a more progressive revenue system?**

I am excited about the work of the Tax Structures Work Group. I will use their findings to guide my approach to moving our state towards a more progressive revenue system. I was supportive of the Capital Gains tax as a first step. Next we need to focus on passing a Wealth Tax and anti-displacement legislation that will allow working families that rent or own to lower their tax burden. I also would like to expand the Working Families Tax Credit. Fixing our upside down tax code and reducing the tax burden on families least able to pay will be my top priorities in the 2023 session.

Do you support...

	Yes	No	
--	------------	-----------	--

Capital Gains Tax?	X	
Wealth Tax?	X	
Estate Tax?	X	
Elimination of cap on Workforce Education Investment Account tax?	X	

2. During the pandemic, many Washingtonians have lost their jobs and been evicted from their homes. The poverty rate has increased during the pandemic, particularly for BIPOC Americans. In the 2022 legislative session, a bill was introduced that would have given cash assistance to those below the poverty line with a stipend, also known as Universal Basic Income or Guaranteed Basic Income.

What is your position on this policy? Do you believe it can help address the racial wealth gap?

Before Covid-19, Washington had a strong economy that was working for many, but at the same time leaving many behind. Our economy, and specifically our tax code, works well for corporations and our wealthiest households, but requires middle and lower income families to pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes. That is exacerbated by rising housing costs, healthcare costs, and higher cost of living across the board.

I am a believer in getting people what they need. Needs can include healthcare, childcare, food security and sometimes cash to make ends meet. I am excited about the data that is coming from states and localities that are piloting UBI projects. The data is showing that when folks get UBI they make good decisions about how to meet their specific needs....UBI empowers people.

I don't believe UBI will close the racial wealth gap. Anything that is universal will not close a gap....the gap will still exist but families of color and marginalized communities would be helped by an UBI. In order to close the racial wealth gap, we must address the institutional barriers that BIPOC families face at all income levels.

As a State Representative, I believe we need to see Covid-19 economic recovery as an opportunity to change the way we do things and finally close the tax breaks and corporate loopholes that are leaving essential revenue on the table. That would allow us to have conversations about investing in our workforce, our families, and our communities, rather than making additional cuts to already under-resourced programs.

In addition to tax code reform and investing in our priorities, I will advocate for infrastructure projects and working family jobs as paths that will bring us economic recovery. I will also support economic growth outside of the Puget Sound region through innovation such as increasing broadband coverage statewide to allow technology hubs and STEM education in non-metro areas.

3. Public education, from K-12 through Post-High School has seen state disinvestment for several decades. **What will you do to increase the funding of community and technical colleges in order to invest in the workforce? Do you support pay equity for part-time faculty?**

I support the recommendations listed above to right side up our tax code and generate progressive revenue streams so that we can fund our priorities -- including post-high school community and technical colleges. In addition to generating that revenue, I believe we need leaders in Olympia who understand the funding challenges our schools and educators face and can advocate effectively for that funding. I have a proven track record of doing just that as a School Board Director including increasing

the recurring teaching and learning budget by \$800,000 to allow for regular textbook replacement, ensuring that students receive the most up to date information and to align the district with national guidelines; developing a comprehensive school garden policy that gave all schools the access and tools to establish school gardens to engage students with hands on learning in science, math and nutrition; and helping students facing unthinkable challenges to gain access to alternative educational opportunities to complete high school. In Olympia, I will continue to be a tireless advocate for funding our schools from K-12 through post-high school, including the support and services our kids need to be successful, and including fair wages and pay equity for educators.

I absolutely support pay equity for part-time faculty.

- 4. Pre-K 12 employees work with students dealing with a wide range of issues outside of school, e.g. trauma, behavioral challenges, developmental disabilities, health issues and more. This can pose safety issues, for example for paraeducators who are often hit, bitten, shoved or in other ways harmed because of student behavior. Many factors contribute to this phenomenon, which translates to a range of potential solutions. **How would you approach problem solving if a group of workers sought your support in addressing this issue?**

The problem of teachers and paraeducators feeling unsafe in some classroom environments is an issue that has increased because of the isolation that was created by this public health crisis. If a group of workers approached me about this issue I would prioritize the worker’s safety while working on solutions to get the students the behavioral and educational services they need.

- 5. In recent years public officials have attempted to solve budget problems through privatization of public services. This diversion of public funds has led to a poor quality of services, reduced accountability, and a loss of good jobs, while failing to realize the promise of saving money. **What is your position on privatization in the education arena? Please explain.**

I am opposed to privatization in education in any form. It undermines the quality of education our kids receive and the protections and wages of the educators who teach them and provide support.

Do you support...

	Yes	No
Public tax dollars funding private charter schools?		X
Privatization of school and college resources (i.e. counseling, childcare, student services)?		X
Public Capitol Funds for projects at private colleges and universities?		X

Collective Bargaining

1. Many Washingtonians recognize the value of union representation and are organizing at their workplace, such as legislative aides in Olympia, workers at Starbucks, etc. **Do you support every worker's right to collectively bargain for better working conditions, and their right to join a union? Please explain.**

Absolutely! All workers should always have the right to organize, bargain and strike collectively.

2. We see ongoing attempts to weaken unions and diminish working conditions here in Washington State and at the federal level. **What policies can support unions and workers' rights and how will you work to enact such policies?**

As a State Representative, I have worked to protect and expand the gains our unions have made including family wages and pensions; and opposing privatization of public sector jobs at all costs.

Legislation that I have written and passed for tax incentives, has included language about prevailing wages, healthcare and project labor agreements. Implementing creative legislation to minimize the devastating impacts of Janus here in Washington State will remain a top priority, so that workers across Washington can always organize, form and join a union, and remain in that union without fear or retaliation.

Social Justice

1. What do you see as **your role** as a state official in addressing racial, social, and economic inequities in our educational system? **Please specifically address each issue.**

My experience in elected office began when I was elected the first African American and youngest student body president in the history of Oregon State University. Soon after I was appointed by the Governor as a student representative to the Oregon State Board of Higher Education.

The racial, social and economic inequalities in our educational system are a 'feature not a bug'. Our educational system was not created for or by BIPOC communities, socially marginalized communities or for communities without means. The inequalities are a part of the foundation institutions (a feature) not an unintended consequence (a bug) that can be fixed with a one-day seminar/training/book study, etc.

As an elected leader, I view policy through a racial justice and equity lens. I understand the need to focus on structural changes in policy that will increase equity and decrease racial injustice. Because I have attended racial justice workshops like the People's Institute for Undoing Racism, I understand how to use my role as an elected leader to help undo institutional racism. Structural changes I am advocating for include compensation for community participants in workgroups/roundtables; including people with lived experience in discussions around policies that affect them; and as many of the school districts in the 44th have over 50% BIPOC students, we must recruit and retain more teachers of color.

2. We are faced with numerous threats to social justice, including ongoing threats to our immigrant communities, the housing affordability and student debt crises, police accountability, and more.

Where have you shown leadership and acted on issues of social justice in the past? What will your social justice priorities be if you win your election?

In addition to the leadership I have shown above, I voted to allow transgender students access to bathrooms that reflect their gender identity. The Edmonds School District was one of the first districts to adopt an inclusive and comprehensive policy to address the needs of transgender students.

As a State Representative, I wrote and passed legislation that allowed for period products to be available in all schools. The bill used inclusive language that was free of gender bias (ex. menstruating individuals) and the bill required products to be available in at least one designated male restroom if gender neutral restrooms were not available. My goal was to make period products available to our trans-male students.

Also, I was proud to vote on the Working Families Tax Credit funding policy that included I-TIN filers. This will allow for immigrants without Social Security Numbers to access the tax credit. The bill would not have had my support if our immigrant communities were excluded.

3. Several bills were passed in the 2021 legislative session designed to reduce police violence and hold police accountable; in the 2022 session attempts were made to dilute the definition of excessive force and minimizing the role of de-escalation. **What is your position on these issues?**

I supported the 2021 bills and I supported the 2022 bills. We have more work to do to reduce police violence and increase accountability. Public safety has been the number one issue for folks in the 44th. My constituents, from numerous immigrant communities, were adamant that we find a middle ground.

4. Hate crimes have risen 25 percent nationally since 2015. But the number of hate crimes in Washington state increased by 97 percent. There were 542 hate-crime incidents reported statewide. **How do you plan on addressing the increase in hate crimes in Washington state?**

Hate crimes have dramatically increased statewide. During the summer of 2021, I talked with community groups, local leaders and legislative colleagues about solutions. The issues went beyond traditional hate crimes and many of the incidents were domestic terrorism. After meeting with the leadership at the Fusion Center (a federally funded terrorism collaborative with multiple agencies including the FBI and Washington State Patrol), I asked for funding for the Attorney General's office to study Domestic Terrorism in our state. This study will inform policy solutions to the growing problem of domestic terrorism in our state.

Campaign Information

Are there any additional comments you would like to provide that you believe are necessary in understanding your candidacy?

I am a mom and School Board Director who knows what it means to be a working family member, and how hard it is for working families to survive and thrive in our current economy. While representing you in Olympia, I have advocated for families like mine in the 44th LD and across our state to ensure they have equitable access to living wages, quality public schools from early learning through career, affordable housing and healthcare, transit solutions, and equitable opportunities. I would be honored to have your support.

What is your overall campaign budget?

My goal is to raise \$400,000 for the Primary and General Election, relying on investments from organizations and unions who share my values and priorities, as well as friends, family, and supporters of previous campaigns.

How many volunteers are currently working on your campaign? What is your goal for volunteers working on your campaign?

I was proud to have an energized team of over 20 volunteers on my campaign for State Representative. My goal in 2022 is to meet and exceed that and I know we will be successful!

To date, how much money have you raised and obtained pledges for?

I have raised \$57,000 so far this campaign.

Please provide any endorsements you have received:

WEA-PAC

Campaign address: PO Box 14893

City: Mill Creek

Zip: 98082

Campaign phone: 425-200-4668

Home phone: 206-963-4437

Email address: april@aprilberg.com

Website address: aprilberg.com