



## 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 25<sup>th</sup> to [aftwashington@aftwa.org](mailto:aftwashington@aftwa.org). If you have questions, please leave a message at 206-242-4777.

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### Candidate Biographical Information

**Name:** Claire Wilson

**Candidate for which office:** State Senate, 30th LD

**Party affiliation:** Democrat

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

Current State Senator in the 30th LD and former President of the Federal Way School Board

**Community or organizational memberships (past and present):**

Board of Directors for The Sidekick Collective, Advisory Board of the Washington Family Engagement Trust, former PTA President, Citizens for Federal Way Schools, Building Better Futures in Kent, and Expanded Learning Opportunity Council appointee.

**Current occupation:** State Senate, 30th LD

**Current employer:** State of Washington

**Are you currently a member of a labor organization?** no

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

**If not currently a member of a labor organization, have you ever been?** yes

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

American Federation of Teachers in Tacoma, WA from 1981 - 1991 (10 years)!!

*General*

**1. Why are you running for this elective office?**

It has been my honor to represent my neighbors in the State Senate where I have focused on investing in our children, uniting our community, and empowering the voice of parents in their children's schools. That is what I have spent my career doing – helping kids and families get access to education and opportunity.

I believe we need leaders focused on helping all people, uniting our community, and investing in our children and our future. I have spent my life working to help children and families get access to education and opportunity, and for too long I've seen our State Senate mired in gridlock due to partisanship and excuses. I am running to continue working for the families of our region—who need leaders focused on helping all people, uniting communities, and investing in our children and our future. My approach will continue to be what it has always been: focusing on the needs of people, not parties and special interests.

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

I am the current State Senator in the 30th, former President of the Federal Way School Board, and a career education professional. Since I joined the Senate, our investments in early care and education have increased **700%**. I have championed legislation that is making childcare more accessible and affordable for Washington families, ensuring that care providers receive fair wages, and that kids have access to age appropriate, scientifically informed sexual health education to empower them to make decisions about their bodies. I have a depth and breadth of knowledge, experience and expertise when it comes to working for children and families. I am excited to continue this work advocating for Washington kids and families.

*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?**

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?**

Unequivocally yes! The racial wealth gap in our community is one of the ways our nation's legacy of genocide and slavery has been passed down to us. I am committed to using my position of privilege and power as an elected official to help close this gap and to do my part in healing the larger generational trauma it represents.

In the wake of a pandemic which has inflicted widespread hardship, particularly on communities of color, and led to new levels of poverty and scarcity in our community, it is clear that drastic steps are necessary to help. We know that a universal basic income will help address the racial wealth gap, and it will mitigate scarcity problems many of our most vulnerable community members are facing. I believe it is the kind of investment we should make in everyone's ability to access safe shelter, food, and healthcare.

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?**

As a career educator and education advocate, I have seen how important job training programs like Apprenticeships and community college are and how invaluable these opportunities can be in young people's lives. I am fighting to increase and expand these opportunities so every school district and every student has the chance to gain real, on-site training to help them succeed in our economy. Students who choose not to or cannot attend a four year institution must not be left without options—we need to offer other pathways and options so that no child is denied a quality future and career. We must make college affordable for every kid who wants to attend and expand alternative programs such as apprenticeships and vocational training to help students successfully transition into good jobs.

I will continue to support efforts to increase funding of community and technical colleges through my positions on the Improving Institutional Education Programs and Outcomes (IIEPO) and Professional Educator Collaborative Task Forces. I support pay equity for part-time faculty because educators and

support staff who are playing crucial roles in the education environment deserve fair and competitive wages. One tangible thing I hope to do in my role as a Senator next session is to work with other legislators to fix our upside-down, regressive tax system. As it currently is, Washington’s tax system benefits the most wealthy among us while children, families, and the economy suffer the consequences - especially working-class families. As a legislator, I will work on and support legislation for a capital gains tax that requires the high-income earners in our state to pay their fair share.

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?**

My experiences as an educator, mother, early learning administrator and legislator have taught me that my first job when problem solving with stakeholders is to listen. Educators know what’s best for students, but they may not have the resource and/or supports needed, or might not have been provided the professional development and training to have the skills and knowledge to consider actions to take when their safety and wellbeing are jeopardized by their job. Educators are able to serve our kids when they are respected, supported and resourced, and when their social and emotional health are supported. I am committed to working with educators to continue to sponsor innovative policies that protect their health and safety at work.

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 the education arena and/or the use of public funds in pursuit of privatization. The private education system exacerbates inequalities in our state by providing opportunities only to those who can afford them. I am a lifelong personal and professional advocate for high-quality, accessible, public education and believe the investment of public funds and resources should remain in public programs, with no diversions for privatization measures.

**Do you support...**

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

*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.**

I strongly support every worker's right to collectively bargain and their right to join a union. No matter the industry, workers have a right to organize and have their voices heard, with workers always remaining prioritized in negotiations.

**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?**

I am a strong believer in the power of unions and union membership and have joined in support of every policy to defend against national attacks, strengthen protections, and increase access to union membership. I will also continue to sponsor legislation such as SB 5090 to increase workers protections, as well as supporting future initiatives that protect unions and workers rights.

### *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.**

### **Racial Equity**

When kids see themselves represented in their education, they have the tools to imagine their identities positively and complexity and the information to contextualize their experiences. We have failed to provide this to children from communities of color across the state. kids. We must update history classes to include the histories of those who have been historically marginalized - Black, Indigenous, Immigrant Refugee peoples and that our classes and their content are reflective of the diversity of the students served - an important step is making sure that students have access to books written by diverse authors with diverse histories and life and lived experiences.

Additionally, we know that kids of color do better in school when they are taught by teachers who look like them, and that white teachers have the bandwidth to educate themselves on issues of racial equity when they are not overworked. We need to invest in our schools and create more pathways for people of color to become teachers. I will continue to advocate for investments in our schools with an eye towards racial equity.

### **Social Equity**

We have a lot of work to do when it comes to funding our schools equitably. I will continue my work leveling the educational playing field by protecting and expanding funding for our schools. The quality of a child's education should not be dictated by where they live. I will look to reform our tax structure by finding progressive revenue solutions, such as implementing a capital gains tax, so our schools will be fully and responsibly funded.

### **Economic Equity**

As a career education professional, which includes formerly working as a teacher and in my role as President of the Federal Way School Board, I know that children cannot learn when their basic needs are not met. My first priorities are addressing child hunger and homelessness and working to improve our foster care system and other responses to child abuse and neglect prevention. From there, I will continue to champion investments to increase children's access to opportunity regardless of economic

circumstance including investments in early learning and childcare, afterschool and summer programs, and special education.

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?**

I am most proud of my work in the legislature creating legislation to fight racial and economic disparities while supporting young kids by:

1. Expanding access to families with children to the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program to those whose income is below 200 percent of federal poverty.
2. Fighting the opportunity gap for tribal children by creating a pathway to stream funding directly through tribes.
3. Expanding access to childcare for parents who are attending high school or working towards completion of a high school equivalency certificate, as well as those student parents who are attending our 2 and 4 year colleges and universities.

I will continue to support investments in childcare, affordable housing, and healthcare to close inequities in our state.

This session was my first Chairing the Senate Human Services, Re-Entry, and Rehabilitation Committee which all involve systems and institutions that have historically disproportionately have impacted communities of color and immigrant/refugee communities and the work accomplished this last session has a clear social justice lens. I am also proud of legislation I have passed in prior sessions to make our criminal justice system more humane by prohibiting the use of solitary confinement in juvenile facilities and institutions, prohibiting juveniles charged as adults from being held in adult jail for longer than 24 hours without a court order, supporting the use of secure Internet connections to facilitate postsecondary education degree opportunities and training for incarcerated adults and expanding medicaid benefits and re-entry services, resources and supports for persons released from confinement. I will continue to work with my colleagues to address the inhumane treatment of prisoners in our incarceration system and the root of the problem: police bias and misconduct.

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?**

Every community in Washington deserves to feel safe from crime and police misconduct. I strongly support the work of my fellow 30th LD Representative Jesse Johnson and I am committed to continuing to hone initiatives designed to reduce police violence and hold police accountable. Systemic reform is rarely easy or quick to implement. We need police departments and unions to collaborate with legislators to address the safety concerns of the communities they are charged with protecting. I will continue to listen to communities about their safety needs and ensure that they see the effects of legislation to protect their safety.

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?**

Elected officials have an important role to play in decreasing the number of violent hate crimes. We are cultural leaders in terms of the power given to marginalized communities in Washington. Unfortunately, some of our leaders have exploited the fear caused by a rhetoric of hate and prejudice to assume power and keep it by denying our most vulnerable residents rights and protections. Modeling this kind of prejudice has riled up the festering underbelly of American culture and led to violence. In Washington State, we should do better. When re-elected, it will be important for me to signal that people who commit violent bias crimes do not stand with the state. I am committed to employing my privilege to lift up people of marginalized genders, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ folks, and those with disabilities.

I do believe that the prosecution of hate crimes is appropriate, particularly as a symbol of how the state views hate. However, I do not believe that focusing on long sentences will effectively deter these kinds of crimes.

## Campaign Information

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

Having the endorsement of my AFT brothers, sisters, and siblings meant the world to me in my first campaign in 2018. I know this campaign is going to be just as challenging and I am counting on your continued support so that we can improve the education system, opportunities, and outcomes for all of Washington's scholars.

### **What is your overall campaign budget?**

My goal is to raise \$500,000 and while I am well on my way to that goal, it is going to take the financial support of allies like you to get me there.

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

I am just getting my campaign launched after a busy legislative session, but I know I will have a committed team of volunteers on my campaign, just like I did in 2018, communicating with voters, including new voters as a result of redistricting, about the successes of the past four years and my renewed commitment to keep delivering for the 30th LD. I walked over 2,000,000 steps in my 2018 election talking with voters in the 30th and my plan is to do the same in 2022!

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

I have raised just over \$65,000 to date.

### **Please provide any endorsements you have received:**

30th LD Democrats

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation

King County Democrats

Muckleshoot Indian Tribe

Nisqually Indian Tribe

Puyallup Tribe of Indians

Quinault Indian Nation

Rental Housing Association PAC

SEIU 755 Quality Care Committee

SEIU Healthcare 1199 NW

SEIU Local 925 Public Service

Stand for Children Washington PAC

Tulalip Tribes of Washington

Victory Fund

WA Federation of State Employees

Washington Teamsters Legislative League

Bob Ferguson- Attorney General  
Mike Pellicciotti- State Treasurer  
Hilary Franz- Commissioner of Public Lands  
Dow Constantine- County Executive  
Jesse Johnson- State Representative, 30th LD  
Jamila Taylor- State Representative, 30th LD  
Marko Lias- State Senator  
Manka Dhingra- State Senator

Patty Kuderer- State Senator  
Lisa Wellman- State Senator  
Trudy Davis- FWPS School Board Director  
Luckisha Phillips- FWPS School Board Director  
Tammy Burke Forme- FWPS Superintendent  
Geoffrey McAnallo- Fmr. FWPS Board President  
Liz Drake Former- FWPS School Board Director

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