



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: Sandy Kaiser

Candidate for which office: Washington State House, position #2, 35th Legislative District

Party affiliation: Democrat

Political background (*offices held or currently hold, offices ran for, party positions, etc.*): I have never run for or held elected office. I worked for the U.S. executive branch as a Foreign Service Officer, and for a statewide elected official when I was communications director at the Department of Natural Resources.

When I served as vice president for college relations at The Evergreen State College, my supervisor (the president of the college) was overseen by a board of trustees appointed by the governor.

Community or organizational memberships (past and present): I am currently vice president of the board of the Capitol Land Trust. I am a member of the League of Women Voters Thurston County, a member of Thurston County Democrats and the 35th District Democrats, as well as Thurston County Democratic Women. I have served as a docent on the Kennedy Creek Salmon Trail, as a past board member of the Olympia World Affairs Council and Thurston Community Media. I was also a Rotarian from 2011 to 2017.

Current occupation: politician

Current employer: self

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? yes

If yes, which labor organization, when, and for how long? Yes, I was a shop steward for UAW District 65 (two years), a member of IATSE Local 107 (four years) and a member of the American Foreign Service Association for 25 years. AFSA is the bargaining unit representing American diplomats in the U.S. Department of State.

General

1. **Why are you running for this elective office?** I am seeking this position because I believe our kids and rural communities should have the same opportunities for success and good quality of life as urban and suburban communities in Western Washington. That means we need to improve our schools, create better conditions for local business to thrive and grow, create more family-wage jobs, and expand rural broadband. We must invest in public safety and infrastructure to build roads and affordable housing.

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

My past work experience has prepared me to serve. Some highlights:

A 25-year career as a Senior Foreign Service Officer, advocating for American economic, security and human rights interests around the world. I left federal service with the equivalent rank of a two-star general.

Service as communications director and senior advisor at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, where we focused on sustainable forestry, keeping Puget Sound clean and improving salmon habitat. My commitment to our local environment continues through my current role as vice president of the board of the Capitol Land Trust.

Service as vice president for college relations at The Evergreen State College, where I raised awareness of the huge positive impact of the college in our region (returning \$4.5 dollars in economic benefit for every state dollar spent, with hundreds of local businesses, schools and non-profits run by Evergreen alumni), helped rebuild the college’s strong reputation for service to veterans and led its in-person return from COVID in fall 2021.

I am a get-it-done person who believes in building relationships to accomplish lasting positive change.

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 think our current state tax system is outrageous in the way it burdens poor and working people through consumption taxes on gas, food and other necessities. School funding in particular needs an overhaul so that poor rural communities aren’t penalized for their low tax bases. I support all of these ideas below in pursuit of a fairer state tax 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?**

I believe this policy deserves serious consideration at the state and federal level. Our experience with PPP during the pandemic showed that most recipients used those grants on groceries, rent and utilities. Low-income and working people of all colors are penalized under our current tax system, and BIPOC folks face even greater obstacles because of the racial wealth gap. A serious evaluation of this policy would likely show it to be far more effective and easy to administer than the current confusing mix of programs, which are difficult to navigate and hard to measure in terms of addressing overall poverty rates.

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?**

From my work at Evergreen, a public college that serves a high percentage of BIPOC, LGBTQ and non-traditional students, I saw how state investment in higher education paid huge dividends for those graduates and for the state as a whole. I know that story is the same at our community and technical colleges, and they merit additional investment, not less. As an elected official, I would advocate for additional revenue streams such as those listed under question #1. I would support allocating substantial resources to programs such as the College and Career pathways Innovation Challenge Grant and increasing funding for Washington College Grants so that every eligible student would have their tuition and books paid for.

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?**

I strongly agree with the statement “work shouldn’t hurt.” If a group of workers came to me for support, I would first urge them to get injuries and incidents on the record. With data, it’s possible to make the case for and create state legislation to better protect school employees of all kinds. There also needs to be accountability from school officials and administrators, and support for their employees as they try to help students who are sometimes a threat to them and those around them. Appropriate levels of staffing, careful medication of those students who need it and protective equipment can mitigate these problems. In addition, information on special student needs and IEPs can help avoid potentially dangerous interactions.

It’s the job of government to provide a safe, inclusive, supportive and respectful environment for the employees and students who enter the doors of our public schools..

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 do not support wholesale privatization of complex public services such as our schools, for the reasons described in the question. In addition to those reasons, privatization weakens the community involvement in schools and deflects from the state’s responsibility to invest the resources necessary for all public schools to thrive.

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.**

Yes, I strongly support every worker’s right to join a union and collectively bargain. As a former member of three bargaining units and a shop steward, I understand the positive impact union representation has on working people.

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?**

Washington state employment law can be improved and created to build new avenues for workers to organize. If I am elected, I would work with unions to develop ideas for legislation.

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.**

Here are some examples of how I would address these issues if I am elected to the Legislature:

As a legislator, we have obligations to engage our constituents and learn about the inequities they face in their pursuit of education. In the 35th District, we have new arrivals from parts of Guatemala where Spanish is not the first language. These Indigenous students and their families need special help to join our learning communities. I would focus special attention on getting schools the resources needed to help immigrants connect with our educational system.

We know that social inequality affects children even before they ever set foot in a school. Poor children, non-white children and non-native speakers of English are more likely to have difficulties

learning to read. Access for all children to good-quality preschool programs can help mitigate this disparity, and is something that is entirely possible to create through budgets and legislation. This is an area of focus for me if I'm elected.

Economic inequity in school funding is a real problem for timber-dependent counties in our state. Washington relies on old formulas to raise local funds for capital improvements, which correlate to property values. Poor rural counties like Mason struggle to pass levies, because their working-class residents are already carrying the burden of regressive taxes like our state sales and gas taxes. The outcome is that we have students and employees in unsafe, barely functional buildings. This old formula needs a serious overhaul by the Legislature to ensure that poor communities are treated fairly in school construction and improvements.

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?

Our great country is a work in progress toward the arc of social justice. These goals have been important to me for my entire life. My mother dropped out of high school to have me, and always supported me as I overcame obstacles to succeed. Working my way through college, at 19 I became the first female member of IATSE Local 107, and the first woman movie projectionist in the area. I helped unionize Friends of the Earth in 1983 because the male management did not give people of color or women employees the same respect or opportunities as men. Joining the Foreign Service in 1986, I was the fastest-promoted member of my class and was soon able to mentor and hire women and people of color into positions that usually went to white men. Here in Washington, I sought out, hired and trained women and people of color for top roles at the Washington Department of Natural Resources and The Evergreen State College. As vice president of the board of the Capitol Land Trust, I drafted a new strategic plan for the organization that focuses on making natural landscapes more accessible for folks that haven't grown up with them.

Throughout my campaign and when in office, I will continue to lift up the voices and ideas of my diverse constituents, making sure to listen to all voices, not just the loudest ones. I will honor the wisdom of the Squaxin and Skokomish people as wise stewards of the district's lands and waterways, and I will work to ease burdens on poor and working people who pay such high percentages of their pay in taxes and for housing.

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 believe that all public servants, including police, should be accountable for their actions and performance of duties. In rural communities, sometimes it's only the local sheriff who protects vulnerable members of our community. These law enforcement staff need training and supervision to

ensure they are performing their duties in a fair and equitable manner that offers safety and security for all.

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?

Everyone can play a part in stopping hate crimes and creating safe communities. I would support efforts to build community and law-enforcement partnerships to jointly prevent and respond to hate crimes. I would also encourage work to create public awareness and offer resources to community members and victims. Finally, I would look at ways to ensure law enforcement prioritizes the fight against hate crimes, and devotes the necessary resources to training officers so they can investigate and report these crimes when they happen.

Campaign Information

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

I am running as a Democrat in the 35th District, which is ready for change. Republicans have held both district House seats in the 35th for ten years.

There are four Republicans, and me, the lone Democratic candidate. They filed last June. Their lead candidate has raised almost \$60,000 in ten months. I have raised about \$27,000 in two months. The state Democratic party is taking notice and promising support, because they see great opportunity in this race.

What is your overall campaign budget? \$160,000

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

Right now I am the only full-time worker. About 20 people have expressed interest in volunteering. I do not yet have an explicit volunteer goal, but expect to have one soon.

To date, how much money have you raised and obtained pledges for? \$27,000, with about \$4000 in informal pledges.

Please provide any endorsements you have received:

22nd District Rep. Laurie Dolan

Mason County Women Democrats

Former state Senator Karen Fraser

Olympia School Board member Darcy Huffman

Former 35th District Reps Fred Finn and William Eickmeyer

Former Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark

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