



During the [endorsement process](#), our endorsement committee got to know the candidates who sought our endorsement through questionnaire responses and in-person interviews. Here are the endorsement committee's impressions of the candidates.

Whatcom County Council At-Large Position B

Endorsed: Carol Frazey

- Carol impressed us by demonstrating a developed understanding of the issues of primary concern to the Riveters' platform, despite the fact that she is a relatively new candidate. Carol is clearly committed to putting in the research work necessary to really understand the issues facing our county.
- Carol relied on demonstrating her ability rather than talking about her ability, and it came through loud and clear.
- Carol is eager and ready to serve the people of Whatcom County. She showed an energy that was lacking in interviews with some candidates for other positions.
- Carol doesn't seem afraid to talk to anyone. We believe Carol when she says she plans to seek out all serious perspectives on all important issues.
- Carol struck us as perhaps the strongest candidate of all those we interviewed on her ideas of how to improve community engagement. She described a plan to develop community liaisons with local constituencies and advocacy groups, to sit down and actively co-create policy with her constituencies, and to make use of existing county service structures. As Carol has developed her campaign, she has done her due diligence, including meeting with the Sheriff, County Executive, County Financial Manager, and at least 3 current County Council members to learn about the position and develop relationships.
- And, memorably, she asked us how we will want to be engaged once she is elected.
- Carol was clear that she sees her district as Whatcom County, not Bellingham. She plans to represent everyone.

Aaron Thomas:

- We were very impressed with Aaron's desire to seek out voters where they live and work. He has solid plans to engage the constituencies in the County. In particular, we were impressed by his passion for advocating to house our unhoused neighbors, including by providing wraparound services for mental and behavioral health.

Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney**Endorsed: Eric Richey**

- We encourage all Riveters to spend the time to read the written responses that the candidates submitted. Eric did an exemplary job of engaging critically with the questions we asked.
- Eric's experience in the office clearly translates into deep knowledge of the system and a demonstrable understanding of where change needs to happen.
- Though he hasn't necessarily been treated by the broader conversation as the "change candidate," we saw a passion in Richey for substantive, deep changes to the justice system.
- Richey has a notable head start in terms of his policy agenda because he can build on existing relationships and leverage them to implement best practices across issues.
- Richey was a vocal advocate for building measures for real transparency into the system. We were pleased to see his plans to "bring the prosecutor's office to the people."
- Richey supports many of the key pillars of the Riveters' platform.

James Erb:

- We want to commend James Erb on a very strong performance. James brought notable passion to the interview and showed that he is an adept communicator. James showed good alignment with key pillars of the Riveters platform, and we look forward to working with him in the future. Specifically, we appreciated James' strong stance on the need to change the makeup of the prosecutor's office in order to set the stage for a fairer process and more just outcomes.

WA State 40th District State Representative**Endorsed: Alex Ramel and Debra Lekanoff****Alex Ramel**

- It was refreshing to us to see a candidate who was so impressively self-aware, including about his privilege.
- Alex left us convinced that he could represent us capably on any stage, because he showed a truly impressive depth of knowledge about a broad array of issues. Of all the candidates we interviewed, Alex showed the most developed understanding of the position he is running for.

- Alex has extensive experience with public process, which we are confident would give him an edge in Olympia.
- Alex's resume demonstrates his enthusiasm for and expertise at building coalitions across constituencies. We were inspired by Alex's history of bringing competing interests to the same table because we see a notable lack of this quality in our legislators working in Olympia today.
- Alex took a markedly strong stance in support of gun safety reforms that we believe will make our community safer.
- Alex was the most educated candidate of those we interviewed about healthcare, and took a realistic perspective on the issue, providing strong detail to back up his points.
- Alex is an environmental champion with strong policy chops. We are confident that he would work hard to protect and rebuild the environmental systems our region cares so much about.

Debra Lekanoff

- Debra is an inspiring candidate with strong, well-articulated values that unquestionably align with the Riveters' platform.
- Debra has practical experience building consensus around progressive policies that we believe would make her an effective advocate for our region. We were encouraged by her extensive experience managing to work across aisles while still effectively defending her values.
- Debra is a skilled and accomplished communicator. Of all the candidates we interviewed, Debra's presentation in our in-person interview stood out as exemplary. As a result, we are convinced that Debra would be an effective representative in Olympia who could fight for issues of concern to constituents in the 40th District.
- Debra's support for a stronger, fairer, and more representative education system stood out.
- Debra is a force. We are confident that Debra has a bright future in politics and we look forward as Riveters to emphatically supporting her in her public service.

Rud Browne

- Rud brought a depth and breadth of experience to the table, which we were impressed by. Rud is, without a doubt, a qualified candidate and a capable politician. We were pleased to see him representing Whatcom County well in this race.

WA State 42nd District State Representative Position 2

Endorsed: Sharon Shewmake

- Sharon's ideas are bold, specific, and ahead of the curve. They proved that she is a visionary leader who will work hard for a stronger Whatcom County. Crucially, she was committed to supporting ideas that are borne out by the data.
- Unlike so many of our traditional politicians who pretend to understand the economic impacts of their policies, Sharon showed an impressive aptitude for evaluating policies.

based on their long-term economic impacts. We are confident that her decision-making as our Representative in Olympia will be comprehensive and fair.

- Of all our candidates, Sharon proved most clearly that, throughout her campaign and as our Representative in Olympia, she plans to work to counter misinformation and to change the dominant, biased narratives with truthful counternarratives.
- Sharon showed unwavering commitment to building a local economy that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable.
- Sharon is a hard worker—she was the first candidate of 11 to submit her questionnaire, and put serious time and thought into it, relative to the efforts of other candidates.
- Sharon doesn't mince words.
- Sharon was clear that she wants other women to succeed, and is working hard to pave the way for them.
- Sharon asked for our feedback regarding both her policy points and her presentation style, which showed a humility that we really liked.

WA State 42nd District State Representative Position 1

Endorsed: Justin Bonneau

- Justin showed an inspiring degree of passion about policy that will strengthen working families.
- Justin provided serious perspective and specifics about fixing our regressive tax code as a step toward adequately funding our underfunded education system.
- Justin spoke knowledgeably about his approach to designing a comprehensive policy platform that will ensure that our healthcare system works for everyone. He is a strong advocate for the right to quality healthcare.
- As a military veteran and a gun-owner, Justin spoke from experience about the salience and importance gun safety reforms.

WA State 42nd District State Senator

Endorsed: Pinky Vargas and Tim Ballew II

Tim Ballew II:

- Tim's leadership has proven a transformative way of working with diverse stakeholders to encourage civic engagement.
- Examples of his experience include the Portage Bay Partnership .
- Tim approached the conversation about equity more strongly than any of our other interviewees.
- Tim also was clear that he would make no decision without strong consideration of the impacts those decisions will have on future generations.
- Tim broadens the electorate, a fact that is greatly valued.

Pinky Vargas:

- Pinky is a staunch supporter of reproductive rights for women, and of free, equitable, and public education.
- Pinky also got specific about reforms to our tax structure and supported a capital gains tax as a way to fund our priorities.
- She's a long-time public servant who has experience and is a polished presenter.
- Her work on the Clean Energy Challenge showed a desire to build consensus across constituencies.
- Pinky has strong campaigning skills with proven success.