[Kevin Burton-Crow]: Olympia Indivisible Candidate Questionnaire

Thurston County Sheriff

Please note that the responses to the questionnaire will be available for the public to view on the Olympia Indivisible web site

1. **What is your background and employment in law enforcement? Courses of study, certificates, awards.**

   I bring a combined background of over 30 years of public service in military and law enforcement settings. I served 20 years in the United States Army, retiring at the rank of Sergeant First Class (E-7). During my military service, I held leadership roles at the tactical and operational levels and was responsible for the training, welfare, and mission readiness of soldiers under my charge. While in the Army, I volunteered for several additional duty positions, including Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention Victim Advocate, and completed training as a bystander intervention instructor.

   I have served with the Thurston County Sheriff's Office for more than 11 years. In that time, I have worked as a Reserve Deputy, a Patrol Deputy, a Special Victims Detective, a Field Training Officer, and a member of several specialty units. My investigative work has focused on crimes against vulnerable populations, including children and survivors of sexual assault.

   My academic credentials include a Master's degree in Criminal Justice from Troy University and a Master's degree in Public Administration from The Evergreen State College. My professional training reflects a sustained commitment to current best practices. I previously held a Washington State Reserve Police Officer Certification and currently hold a Washington State Peace Officer Certification. I completed the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission Basic Law Enforcement Reserve Academy in 2014, the Basic Law Enforcement Academy in 2021, and have maintained annual Crisis Intervention Team certification since 2018. I am a certified Field Training

Officer and hold certification as an IIT Qualified Lead Investigator. I have completed specialized training in sexual assault investigations, including the SAI-VCERT Victim-Centered Engagement and Resiliency Tactics course, trauma-informed interviewing, and the Start by Believing framework. I completed the 40-hour Crisis Intervention Training Basic course and the 40-hour Basic Peer Support Course. I have training in Animal Cruelty Investigations through both CJTC and the National Animal Cruelty Investigations School. I attended the Internet Crimes Against Children Conference in both 2025 and 2026. I completed the CJTC Pre-Supervisor course in 2025 and am currently enrolled in the CJTC First Level Supervision course with an expected completion date of May 8, 2026. My training record includes all available I-940 cultural competency coursework completed well ahead of their respective legal due dates. I am certified through the Georgetown Law School Center for Innovations in Community Safety as an Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement instructor.

I have routinely received exceeds-standards ratings on annual evaluations throughout my time in the military and with the Sheriff's Office. During both the reserve academy and the full-time academy, I was elected by my peers to serve as class president, selected as the patrol partner they most wanted backing them up on a call, and graduated in the top three academically. I have received professional recognition from organizations, including the American Legion and the National Animal Control and Care Association, for my law enforcement work.

2. **Are there titles, salutations, and/or suffixes that should be included with your name? What's your preferred name? Do you have preferred pronouns?**

   My preferred name is Kevin Burton-Crow. The pronouns I use are he and him.

3. **What do you believe is the most significant challenge facing the Sheriff's department? If elected, what is the first action you plan to take to address that challenge?**

   The most significant challenge facing the Thurston County Sheriff's Office is the absence of durable institutional systems that can sustain performance, accountability, and public

trust independent of whoever holds the office. Effective public safety cannot depend on the priorities of a single leader. It must be built into how the agency operates every day.

The first action I will take is to initiate the accreditation process through the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. Accreditation requires an agency to develop, publish, and comply with externally reviewed written policy standards. It is not a self-reported outcome. It is a verifiable, ongoing commitment to professional standards. Within the first year, I will also commission a WASPC Law Enforcement Management Audit and will communicate the results with the public. That audit will serve as the baseline against which progress can be measured. These are not symbolic actions. They are the foundation of an agency that earns trust through demonstrated performance rather than asserted intention.

This is not a peripheral concern. Professional law enforcement organizations, including WASPC and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, recognize that policy infrastructure is foundational to everything else an agency tries to accomplish. When an agency lacks clear, published, externally verified standards, the effects compound across every other challenge it faces. Employees operate without consistent guidance and struggle to perform with confidence. Supervisors lack the tools to hold personnel accountable or to defend good decisions when they are questioned. Recruitment suffers because talented candidates evaluate organizational culture before accepting an offer, and retention suffers when people already inside the agency lose faith in its leadership. And community trust, once lost, is rebuilt slowly and only through sustained demonstrated action. Getting the institutional foundation right is not one of many priorities. It is the condition that makes every other priority achievable.

4. **What is your view of the sanctuary city status of Olympia and the impact on Thurston County and the Sheriff's office? Do you support the right of cities to become sanctuary cities?**

My view is that Olympia's sanctuary city status is an expression of self-determination and self-governance, and I support the right of cities to make that determination for their communities. That is democracy, autonomy, and humanity working as they should.

The practical impact on Thurston County and the Sheriff's Office is positive. When community members do not fear that contact with law enforcement will trigger immigration consequences, they are more willing to report crimes, cooperate with investigations, and engage with the agency. That makes every community safer. A Sheriff's Office that all residents feel safe approaching is a more effective Sheriff's Office.

The sanctuary designation is also consistent with Washington State law. The Keep Washington Working Act already restricts how local law enforcement engages with federal civil immigration enforcement. Olympia's position aligns with the legal framework my office will operate within, regardless.

I support the right of cities to become sanctuary cities. I support Olympia's decision. And I will lead a Sheriff's Office whose policies reflect the same values: that all residents of Thurston County, regardless of immigration status, deserve to be safe from victimization and to feel safe seeking help.

5. **What is the direction or orders you have given to your staff as far as interaction with ICE personnel on the streets and also in the jail? What is your stance on detaining people for ICE?**

   My direction to personnel will be grounded in Washington State law and written agency policy, not personal discretion or political pressure.

   Under the Keep Washington Working Act, Sheriff's Office personnel will not inquire into immigration status as part of routine law enforcement contact, will not detain individuals based solely on a civil immigration detainer, and will not make the jail

available as a resource for civil immigration enforcement without independent criminal legal authority. These are the requirements of state law. They will be reflected in the written policy, which will be published, and personnel will be trained in it.

Beyond legal compliance, there is a harm reduction responsibility that I take seriously. When federal immigration enforcement actions occur in Thurston County, I will direct deputies and supervisors to respond to those scenes in a harm reduction posture. That means body cameras running, badge and credential verification documented, and a clear expectation that the lawful authority of anyone representing themselves as a federal officer will be confirmed on scene. Deputies do not stand aside and observe. They are present, they are recording, and they are accountable to what they witness.

If individuals claiming federal authority cannot produce verifiable credentials, or if the conduct on scene rises to the level of a legal violation, deputies will act accordingly and at supervisor direction. The presence of a federal agency designation does not suspend the laws of Washington State or the constitutional rights of people in Thurston County. Every person on a scene where my deputies are present is entitled to the protections those laws and rights provide, and my office will enforce them without hesitation.

6. **Does diversity, equity, and Inclusion (DEI) factor into sheriff's office operation in regard to hiring or advancement or in other ways?**

Our Sheriff's Office serves a diverse community, and the agency is stronger when its workforce reflects and understands that community. This is an operational reality backed by research on community trust, communication effectiveness, and problem-solving outcomes.

In practice, this means recruiting broadly and intentionally, ensuring that hiring and promotion processes are based on clearly defined, consistently applied criteria, and that those criteria are reviewed to make sure they measure what predicts job performance. It means investing in, endorsing, and incorporating training that prepares all personnel to serve all community members effectively, including the LETCSA coursework already part

of the CJTC curriculum. These trainings and concepts are key to integrating cultural competency into the profession/office and are not just obstacles to funding that must be gotten through at the last minute. It means building a workplace culture where people are evaluated on performance, treated with dignity, and given a genuine path to advancement.

What I will not do is use DEI as a slogan that substitutes for measurable action. Outcomes matter. I strongly believe that intentional recruiting, retention, and advancement campaigns across the profession should strive to increase the representation of women and people of color at rates that match or exceed those of the populations they serve. The agency's workforce composition, promotion rates, and retention data will be part of the public reporting structure I intend to build.

7. **During the pandemic, did you support and enforce the governor's mask mandate? What was your reasoning?**

I was on active military duty for much of the pandemic, and I complied with and enforced the masking requirements issued by my chain of command. I also participated in masking requirements in my role as a reserve deputy. I did so without reservation.

My view is straightforward. Science should guide public action in a public health crisis. Wearing a mask is among the least burdensome things a person can do if there is credible evidence it reduces harm to themselves, their family, and their community. I did not experience that as a difficult call. I still do not.

Where I want to be precise is on the question of enforcement. I supported the mask mandate and I would again. But a Sheriff's Office is not the right instrument for rigid, punitive enforcement of public health measures, and treating it as one does more harm than good. Criminal enforcement in that context has to be approached with nuance and judgment. It should be a last resort, not a first response. The goal of any public health enforcement contact should be compliance and safety, not citation or arrest. That means education before escalation, conversation before consequence, and an honest

recognition that the circumstances people were navigating during the pandemic were not uniform. A single enforcement approach applied without regard for context would have been neither just nor effective.

I believe in public health mandates. I also believe that how law enforcement engages with the public during a crisis either builds trust or destroys it, and that the damage from getting that wrong outlasts the crisis itself. My approach would have been and will always be to lead with humanity first.

8. **How will the substantial Thurston County budget cuts affect the Sheriff's office programs and personnel? How will you address this?**

   The Sheriff's Office represents a significant portion of the Thurston County budget, and that comes with a responsibility to be an active, informed participant in the budget process rather than a passive recipient of whatever is allocated. As Sheriff, I will have a complete and current understanding of where every dollar is going and why.

   My first step will be a thorough review of the agency's budget, programs, and procedures to identify opportunities to streamline processes and reduce costs without cutting the services the community depends on. Staffing and direct public safety services are the highest priority. Administrative overhead, redundant processes, and spending disconnected from measurable outcomes are where I will look first.

   I will engage directly and collaboratively with county commissioners and partner departments as part of a broader solution. Budget challenges are not unique to the Sheriff's Office, and approaching them in isolation misses opportunities for shared efficiencies and collective problem-solving.

   Beyond the internal review, I will aggressively pursue alternative funding. This includes state, federal, and nonprofit grant sources, as well as incentive programs already available to the agency. The Lexipol 80/80/80 program offered through the Washington Counties Risk Pool is one concrete example of a cost-offset opportunity that should be

actively pursued. Grants tied directly to public safety outcomes should be a standing part of the agency's funding strategy, not an afterthought when budgets tighten.

I will also insist that agency spending be tied to programs with demonstrable public safety impact. Personal passion projects and organizational habits that cannot be connected to community outcomes will not be protected in a constrained budget environment.

Finally, the budget itself will be publicly available without requiring a records request, written to be understood by any community member, and accompanied by published reports that show what spending actually produces. That level of transparency serves the public, supports sound budget decisions by county leadership, and demonstrates that the Sheriff's Office takes its stewardship responsibility seriously. Transparency about spending is not a burden. It is the baseline expectation for any public agency.

9. **How do you balance aggressive crime enforcement with civil liberties and citizen safety protection?**

These are not competing values. They are complementary ones. Aggressive crime enforcement that erodes civil liberties also erodes the community trust that makes effective law enforcement possible. You cannot have one without the other over any meaningful time frame.

Upholding civil liberties and constitutional rights is not a constraint on good law enforcement. It is good law enforcement. When constitutional rights are sacrificed in the name of enforcing the law, the enforcement itself becomes the violation. That is not a philosophical point. It is a practical one. Evidence obtained unlawfully does not result in a conviction. Community members who feel their rights have been disregarded do not cooperate. Cases fall apart. Crime does not get solved.

The practical application of this principle is clearly written policy, consistent training, and real accountability when policy is not followed. Policy needs to be publicly available and regularly reviewed. Personnel need to be trained not just in tactics but in de-escalation

and in the legal and constitutional boundaries of their authority. When things go wrong, which they will in any agency, the response must be honest and corrective rather than defensive.

10. What do you see as the top three public safety challenges facing this county?

Behavioral health and crisis response. A significant share of law enforcement contacts involve people in mental health or substance use crisis. Deputies are often the first responders in those situations, and while they frequently provide exceptional service, they are rarely the best sole resource for these calls. Expanding partnerships with mental health and substance use response providers is essential, and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion and other criminal justice alternatives need to be fully funded, built into deputy training, and actually available when a deputy needs them. The response to a behavioral health crisis should match the nature of the crisis, not default to the resource closest at hand.

Staffing sustainability. Recruitment and retention are difficult across the country, and Thurston County is no exception. The answer is not simply compensation, though compensation matters. It is building an agency with a clear professional development pathway, strong supervision at every level, peer support infrastructure, and a culture that genuinely values the people doing the work. Employees who feel seen, supported, and understood by their organization's leadership are far more likely to extend that same care to the community they serve. An agency that treats its people well builds the kind of workforce that stays, grows, and performs.

Crime and recidivism reduction. Effective public safety requires a robust, well-trained patrol function capable of responding to emergencies consistently and skillfully. But the initial response cannot be the end of crime reduction. Sustainable reduction requires partnerships with co-responders, county departments, and nonprofit providers who can address the conditions that drive repeat contact with the justice system. A small number of prolific offenders account for a disproportionate share of crime in most communities, and disrupting those patterns requires coordinated, proactive analysis rather than purely

reactive response. Reducing recidivism is crime reduction. That means coordinating services before someone is released from custody, not after they reoffend. It means implementing programming inside the jail, including medication-assisted treatment, educational opportunities, and other evidence-based interventions. And it means the Sheriff's Office working closely with release supervision, transitional housing providers, and community-based organizations to improve the odds that someone leaving custody does not return. Wrap-around services should be offered proactively and, where appropriate, required.

11. **Would you commit to regular public reporting on crime trends, use of force, and department spending?**

    Yes, without qualification. But I want to be precise about what that commitment means, because saying you will be transparent and actually being transparent are not the same thing.

    Curated narratives and social media posts have a place in public communication, but they do not constitute accountability. They are produced by the agency, controlled by the agency, and cannot be independently verified by the community members consuming them. Real transparency requires information that the public can assess on its own terms.

    My commitment is to provable, verifiable, and accessible reporting. At a minimum, the agency will publish annual reports covering crime trends, use-of-force data, complaint and disciplinary outcomes, and budget spending tied to measurable results. Policies will be publicly available without requiring a records request. Budget information will be written so that any community member can understand it, not just those with the time and background to decode government documents.

    The tools that make this commitment credible are the same ones that anchor my broader platform. WASPC accreditation requires published, externally reviewed policy standards. Law Enforcement Management Audits provide an independent assessment

that the agency cannot control or soften. A community advisory board gives residents a formal, ongoing role in evaluating whether the agency is delivering on its commitments. These are not add-ons. They are the infrastructure that turns a promise of transparency into something the community can hold me to.

12. **How would you handle misconduct complaints against deputies internally or with independent oversight? Have there been any complaints during your tenure?**

    Accountability within a law enforcement agency begins with a genuine commitment to the investigation process, not a defensive posture toward it. Every complaint deserves a thorough, impartial investigation. That serves two equally important purposes: holding accountable those who commit misconduct and exonerating those who do not. Both outcomes matter. We ask the community to trust this process, and that trust is only warranted if we are as open to oversight and scrutiny as we expect the public to be. There should be no fear of and no reluctance toward investigation, at any level of the agency.

    My commitment is to a fully staffed, fully empowered Office of Professional Standards with organizational independence to do its work without interference or conflict of interest. That means a dedicated unit reporting directly to the Sheriff or Undersheriff, with no collateral duties that create competing loyalties. In practical terms, this is, at minimum, a two-person function: a supervisor and an investigator who together are responsible for complaint investigations, policy review, accreditation compliance, and the full range of professional standards requirements. This is not an administrative add-on. It is the structural backbone of an accountable agency, and it will be resourced accordingly.

    I also believe the community has a legitimate interest in how complaints are handled and what outcomes look like over time. Complaint and disciplinary data will be part of the agency's public reporting, presented in a way that is accessible and meaningful to community members without a law enforcement background, while simultaneously respecting employee rights and human dignity.

Regarding my own record: I have no sustained complaints and no discipline throughout my law enforcement career.

13. **Are there existing issues concerning transparency, accountability, and/or responsiveness in the Sheriff's office and, if so, what are your plans to address those issues?**

Yes. There are existing issues, and it does a disservice to the community to minimize them.

The agency does not currently publish its policies in a readily accessible format. It does not produce outcome-based annual reports that allow residents to evaluate whether the agency is meeting its stated goals. It does not publish or meaningfully train on its strategic plan. The professional standards function lacks leadership support, staffing, and training it needs to operate with full credibility and organizational independence. And there is no formal community advisory structure that gives residents a consistent, institutionalized voice in agency operations. What exists in its place are complaint channels, compliments, and social media, none of which constitute genuine accountability.

It is important to acknowledge that the exceptional work being done by the employees of the Thurston County Sheriff's Office is being done despite these conditions. That speaks directly to the caliber and dedication of the people who have chosen to serve this community. They deserve an institutional foundation that matches their commitment, and the community they serve deserves no less.

My platform addresses each of these directly. WASPC accreditation requires published, externally reviewed policy standards. A commitment to annual outcome-based reporting creates accountability that the public can verify rather than simply accept. Structural reform of the professional standards function, including dedicated staffing and leadership support, will restore the integrity the function requires. And I will establish a

formal community advisory board with an open application process for community members, business leaders, and agency personnel.

These are not gestures toward transparency. They are the infrastructure of it. A formal advisory board prevents agency leadership from existing in an echo chamber. Published policy and outcome reporting give the public something concrete to evaluate. External accreditation and audits provide oversight that the agency cannot control or curate. Transparency that cannot be independently verified is not transparency. It is public relations. This community deserves the real thing.

14. What is your opinion of SB 5974 and how it will affect you as Sheriff?

I support the core principle behind SB 5974: the certification and decertification standards that apply to every deputy and officer on the street should apply equally to those who lead them. There should be no separate tier of accountability for law enforcement executives. A sheriff who cannot meet the same professional standards required of their line staff has no business leading a department. This is not a radical idea — it is the foundation of any credible institution. The analogy is straightforward: a disbarred attorney cannot serve as a judge in Washington State. The same logic should apply to a decertified peace officer serving as sheriff.

As someone who has spent a combined career in the United States Army and the Thurston County Sheriff's Office, and who is grounded in integrity and professional standards, SB 5974 does not concern me. A colleague of mine put it best: throughout her career, she never once went to bed at night worried she would wake up decertified. If you do the right thing, you do not have to fear accountability.

That said, I believe the rulemaking process ahead is critical. The Criminal Justice Training Commission will now codify the practical details of this law, and that conversation deserves careful public attention. I look forward to engaging in that process. Two areas I believe warrant further discussion are the qualifications framework, specifically, whether advanced education or executive law enforcement training, such as the FBI National Academy, should be credited toward the experience requirement, and the due process

protections surrounding formal removal following decertification. I would be interested in seeing the development of a legal framework that allows a decertification appeal to be reviewed by the county superior court, providing an independent judicial check.
No process is perfect. But accountability and professional standards are values I have built my career around, and they are central to the kind of sheriff's office I intend to lead in Thurston County.

Please return your completed questionnaire to endorsements.olympia.indivisible@gmail.com.