

## 46<sup>th</sup> District Democrats Legislative & Statewide Questionnaire

### Candidate Information

Candidate Name Alec Fiskén

Office sought Washington State Treasurer

Mailing address: 1009 Summit Ave. E., Seattle, WA, 98102

Phone: 206-310-4137

Email: alecfisken@gmail.com

Campaign Manager Name: Paul Elliott

Consultant(s): Northwest Passage Consulting

Website: fiskenfortreasurer.com

Facebook: Alec Fiskén for Treasurer

Have you read the 46<sup>th</sup> LD Democrats Draft 2016 Platform? Yes , No   
(Go to [http://www.46dems.org/2016\\_ld\\_caucus](http://www.46dems.org/2016_ld_caucus) and click "Draft Platform")

Why are you running for this office?

For two reasons:

First, my education and experience are particularly well-suited to the position of Treasurer. I will go into the office thoroughly understanding the responsibilities and challenges that the Office has been managing successfully for a number of years. Since I understand the work that the Office is responsible for, I can ensure that it continues to run competently and with scrupulous honesty and transparency.

Second, the Treasurer, working with legislators, can be an effective advocate and facilitator for designing and implementing a sensible revenue system for the State that brings in sufficient revenue to fund basic services, and does so in a less painfully-regressive manner than our current tax system. Despite inaction on these issues in the past few years, I'm an optimist, and believe that movement on these issues will begin in 2017. It would be wonderful to be able to make a real contribution to that effort.

Please briefly describe your qualifications for this office and your personal and professional background.

I have a Master's in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School (my undergraduate degree was in History, from Yale University). I worked for ten years in banking/investment banking, structuring bond issues, dealing with rating agencies, and preparing debt capacity analyses for the largest cities, ports, and utilities in Washington State.

I subsequently worked for the City of Seattle (Nickel's administration) as a Strategic Planning Advisor on transportation and utility finance issues. I served as an elected commissioner at the Port of Seattle, focusing particularly on marine terminal finance issues.

Do you consider yourself a Democrat? Have you ever been a member of another party? Have you been actively involved with the Democratic Party?

I have always been a Democrat, and have never been a member of any other party. At one point I served as a PCO in the 36<sup>th</sup> LD.

What's your plan to win?

Treasurer being a down-ballot race, it is hard to compete with more prominent political campaign in either publicity or advertising. Based on education and experience, I think I have a very good chance at getting newspaper endorsements, and I am working hard at labor and Democratic endorsements all across the State. In addition, I plan some targeted radio or internet advertising.

What do you see as the most important functions of the position you are running for? What qualities do you possess that make you the candidate best suited to this role?

The Treasurer has two roles. The first is to manage debt, the State's reputation in financial markets, and the investment of operating funds and pension funds. That requires a broad understanding of those markets, and an understanding that the Treasurer's Office must perform those functions with perfect competence and absolute honesty and transparency – there is no room for error.

Second, a Treasurer whose expertise is respected, can be an effective advisor and facilitator with the Legislature on revenue structures, and taxation, and an advocate for a more sensible financial structure overall.

I have the background and understanding to be effective in the first role, and, since I have no further personal political ambitions, I can work successfully with legislators in advocating for sufficient state revenues, collected in a more progressive fashion.

If elected what would your top three priorities be?

1. Manage the office honestly with a zero error rate.
2. Achieve the twin goals of complete safety for our funds with maximum investment earnings.
3. Make a significant contribution to establishment of an adequate, progressive financial structure for our State.

How will you support women and families' economic opportunities? Would you support legislation closing the wage gap, funding childcare options, and requiring paid family leave?

I would support that legislation, although the Treasurer's Office does not have direct control over it. At the same time, the Treasurer can have a real impact by supporting revenue structures that will fund reasonable human services in our State.

How will you work to address racial equity?

I will encourage an awareness of racial equity issues in hiring within the Treasurer's Office.

Describe your stance on Washington's tax structure. What needs to be changed? What should stay the same?

Washington State is a rich state. There is no reason that it should not have sufficient revenue to fund basic services for its citizens, and no reason that the revenue cannot be collected in a reasonably progressive manner. Both of those need to change.

But it is not useful for a candidate for Treasurer to run for office supporting a particular tax plan. The current Treasurer, Jim McIntire, has a well-drafted tax plan that he has presented in various venues around the State. But as a candidate for the office, my interest is in being in a position to assist legislators with the development of whatever versions they believe are most promising. At the same time, my assistance is based on the premises that any revision to the current tax structure must provide sufficient revenue, and must be more progressive than the current structure.

Are there issues that you've worked on or are excited to work on that are not receiving much media attention?

Public debt and investment rarely receive much media attention, even though they have a big impact on the cost of government services. Sadly, it's only the bad news (like Puerto Rico) that seems to become news. But in my experience, there are public officials who take a fierce pride in the work that they do as custodians of public funds, and who don't mind that the work that they do is largely unrecognized.

How will you combat climate change?

While combatting climate change is largely a legislative responsibility, there may well be areas where the State Treasurer can contribute to energy efficiency. The Treasurer has a voice on the State Housing Finance Commission, which controls the State's allocation of Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds, the Treasurer may be in a position to encourage energy utilities to adopt marginal cost pricing for large customers, as BC Hydro has done successfully, or to suggest banking structures that facilitate the use of ground source heat pumps – another technology that generates significant energy savings.

Question	Support	Oppose	Qualify, if needed
Do you support or oppose Raise up Washington's initiative to increase the minimum wage?	X		

Do you support or oppose access to safe and legal abortion?	X		
Do you support or oppose amending Washington's Constitution to require a two-thirds vote to raise revenue?		X	
Do you support or oppose allowing coal or oil to be exported from Washington State's ports?		X	Although not absolutely, in every circumstance
Do you support or oppose making two years of community college or technical school tuition-free?	X		
Do you support or oppose requiring paid vacation and sick/safe leave?	X		
Do you support automatic voter registration?	X		
Do you support or oppose the death penalty?		X	
Do you support or oppose barring employers from asking criminal history questions in job applications?	X		With some exceptions
Do you support or oppose legislation to fix Washington's "three strikes" law?	X		

The following questions are position specific. You only need to complete the questions for the position that you're running for.

### **Superintendent of Public Instruction**

How will you work to address the achievement gap in our public schools?

Please describe your position on standardized testing.

Given the *McCleary* decision, what legislation do you support or propose to fully fund education and maintain funding for other basic services? Do you support increasing revenue? Given existing public needs and the state of the economy, should such legislation include increasing revenue?

Do you support or oppose charter schools? Why or why not?

**Secretary of State**

How will you work to increase voter enfranchisement?

**Legislature (House and Senate), Governor, Lt Governor**

Given the *McCleary* decision, what legislation do you support or propose to fully fund education and maintain funding for other basic services? Do you support increasing revenue? Given existing public needs and the state of the economy, should such legislation include increasing revenue?

Do you support or oppose charter schools? Why or why not?

**Lt Governor**

How would you use your office to promote international economic development that benefits our state?

When the Governor is out of state or otherwise incapacitated, the Lt. Governor becomes the acting Governor. How would you handle that responsibility? What kind of actions would you take?

### **Commissioner of Public Lands**

In 2015, Washington faced the largest and most destructive forest fires in history. What will you do as Lands Commissioner to prevent or respond to wildfires?

Timber, many parts of the state, is a hot button issue. While some want to protect our forest canopy, others see jobs and resources for building schools as more important. Where do you land in this debate? How will you use your position to find compromise?

### **Treasurer**

What role does the Treasurer hold in maintaining a healthy credit and bond ratings for the state of Washington? Do you see room for improvement?

**The Treasurer is directly responsible for maintaining the State's bond rating, and the Treasurer's Office has developed an active program for maintaining regular and candid communication with the rating agencies (and with the major holders/buyers of Washington State debt).**

**It is very unlikely that we could raise the rating unless we stopped selling bonds – and that is neither likely nor desirable. It is however possible that we could raise the “outlook” for State bonds from stable to positive, and that would certainly be my goal over the next several years.**

### **Auditor**

How will you restore confidence in the office of Auditor as a successor to Troy Kelley?

How will you prioritize agency and organizational audits?

### **Attorney General**

What accomplishment from your tenure are most proud of?

**Insurance Commissioner**

What accomplishment from your tenure are most proud of?