

46th District Democrats Legislative & Statewide Questionnaire

Candidate Information: Friends of Erin Jones

Candidate Name: Erin Jones

Office sought: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Have you read the 46th LD Democrats Draft 2016 Platform? Yes , No
(Go to http://www.46dems.org/2016_ld_caucus and click "Draft Platform")

Why are you running for this office?

I have worked in and around schools my entire adult life - the past 25 years. I have experienced the successes in public education, and I have worked in "failing schools." I have served in classrooms where I have closed gaps, in buildings where we have closed gaps and in school districts where we have closed gaps. I have worked at the state level with policy makers and interest groups. I am seeking office now as a way to leverage all that I have learned to benefit a larger audience. I have dedicated the last 25 years to serving schools and students. It is time (now that my children are all graduated from high school) for me to serve at the next level.

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

This year is my 25th year in and around schools. However, I have been working in public education in Washington state for the last 15 years. I worked as a classroom teacher in both Tacoma and Spokane. I worked for the previous state superintendent, Dr. Terry Bergeson, as a director and then for the current state superintendent, Randy Dorn, on Cabinet for almost 3 years. I currently work in the district office here in Tacoma, the 2nd largest school district in the state of Washington. I have earned awards at every level, from classroom teacher - Most Innovative Foreign Language Teacher, Milken Educator of the Year - to district leader - Champion of Change and PTA Educator of the Year - to state leader - Educator of the Year (Northwest Asian Society, Black Trade Association). I was the educator who testified in the McCleary Case. I have demonstrated the ability to close gaps in my classroom, help close gaps in a building and in a system. I have never run for office before, but I believe I have had the experiences and developed the expertise and connections to serve the state in the role of State Superintendent.

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

This is my first foray into the political arena. Though I have not had an official role within the party I have always considered myself a Democrat and have devoted my life to advancing Democratic values. As an educator I have worked with people from all parties around the shared goal of helping our children. The Democratic Party is the party that I feel shares my values of supporting children and their families. I do believe (and hope) that Democrats and Republicans can come together around the shared priority of supporting our children

I have never been involved in a political campaign; however, I served as assistant state superintendent for almost three years under Randy Dorn (a Democrat). I was also the educator who testified in the McCleary case, which resulted in the state Supreme Court mandating the legislature to fully fund basic education.

I believe I have demonstrated Democratic values by advocating for the needs of those in the community who have not had a voice, by investing in the public education of students, by collaborating with as many stakeholders as possible, by ensuring community members have access to resources they otherwise would not.

As the mom of two small children, I had a school in my garage on the East Side of Tacoma that served 15 children after school and over the summer. While teaching in Spokane (we took jobs there for two years to follow the Act Six students), I started a clothing closet for our school and local community. I helped advocate for the Dream Act here in Washington state to provide my students and others with access to college. I caucused in my current district (I now live in the 22nd) and served as the secretary.

As a woman who was raised as an ex-patriot at the American School of The Hague, I made a conscious choice not to return home to The Netherlands after college here in the U.S., where my family remained. As a 19 year-old, I made a decision to lay down my life and invest myself in our most vulnerable communities. My husband and I made a choice as a couple to devote our lives to young people, which we have done together for 24 years by serving as youth ministers in poor communities - South Bend, In, Columbus, OH, Tacoma, and Spokane. We adopted a young girl whose parents were both gang-involved. We have had her since she was 6. She is now 20 and in college. Our son has just enlisted in the Army, because we raised our children to serve. He hopes to return after his tour and work as a teacher and football coach, like his father.

I am proud to call myself a Democrat.

What's your plan to win?

We are running an aggressive outreach campaign throughout the state with a particular focus in King County. I am proud of the broad and diverse support I have received from local Democratic Organizations. I have leveraged social media to get my message across the state. I have a following of over 5,000 on Facebook. I have a following of close to 500 on both Instagram and Twitter. In addition to social media, I have made a commitment to being in front of/with as close to 100,000 people as possible. I am likely close to 20,000 after 7 months. I have visited over 50 cities, towns and villages on the west

and east sides of our state. I am attending LD meetings and community meetings and PTA meetings and college events and fundraisers and panel discussions.

I have raised approximately \$70,000 to date with over 600 donors. My fundraising goal is \$300,000 for the Primary and General elections. I am working with my consulting team to construct an aggressive outreach plan with the resources available.

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?

My top priority for K-12 schools is to eliminate barriers and develop support systems for educators. As I have traveled to every corner of the state over the past 8 years, (and especially during the past 8 months) I hear from staff - administrators, classroom teachers, para-educators, counselors - that they feel burdened by the extensive needs of students that are not being met and the lack of training and support that exists when it comes to serving those who are most vulnerable.

Students of color, ELL students, students who receive special education services and students who have experienced trauma need better support networks to ensure their success. As educators, we do not have control over what happens to students outside of our buildings, so I believe our greatest strength is well-informed, well-supported educators who can make the most significant impact inside buildings and classrooms.

It is my goal to work with the legislature, the federal government, and with our state lawyers to determine what laws/rules/processes can be eliminated that are creating barriers for great work in our schools, as well as how we can provide resources and support systems that allow educators to get the time and professional development they need to confidently and effectively serve all students.

I am the only person in this race with the experience in education necessary to close the opportunity gap and support educators to do their best work on behalf of our children. I have not just been an award-winning classroom teacher. I have been a leader at the systems level (both at a district and at the state, where I served on the State Superintendent's cabinet). I know what the work has been, but I have now been away and experienced how schools and districts interact with the current OSPI, which has given me great experience to know how to better serve in this role.

I am also the only candidate in this race with experience and relationships on both sides of our state and in two other states, so I have a breadth of experience to pull from. I have taught over 10,000 current and aspiring teachers over the course of the past 5 years and have the best sense of what students are getting in colleges of education and what they still need. I believe I have demonstrated over the past 25 years that I am committed to education and improving the experience for all students and staff.

If elected what would your top three priorities be?

1. Full funding of public education MUST be a priority for the state legislature! We cannot expect educators to server the wide variety of students that call Washington state home with less and less time, resources and support.

2. Students and families must have access to and understand the pathway from pre-school to beyond high school. It is our responsibility as a state agency to paint a clear path that helps students and families understand how to navigate public schools in order to ensure that every student leaves with not only a diploma but with a plan for post-high school success in an area connected to his/her passions and interests.

3. Educators on the ground need to have a voice in helping the state develop a strategic plan and inform legislation that is developed regarding public education. This means OSPI needs to be more visible in communities, AND Olympia needs to be more intentional about engaging educators from a variety of environments and locations.

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 most definitely support all of these policies and though I would not be in direct control of how they would be implemented I believe all to be factors on how well our students perform. I see the position of OSPI as a bully pulpit to advocate for policies such as these in addition to increasing school funding.

How will you work to address racial equity?

As a Black woman adopted by a white couple who made the choice to raise me overseas because of treatment by our community (Minnesota), the mother of 3 black children and the (unofficially) adoptive parent of 2 homosexual children, I have seen first-hand the implications of racism and other forms of prejudice. I have spent my entire career in Washington state (I was a teacher in two other states before here) working in the highest-poverty, most diverse communities with children who were usually underperforming, from families experiencing brokenness for a variety of reasons. I have always been the advocate for children and families who were "othered" for whatever reason.

Social justice is a huge deal for me. I began doing training in cultural competence almost 10 years ago while living in Spokane. I have continued to do this work as an employee for OSPI and then in communities across our state and have trained over 10,000 people. This training helps adults and students understand how to more effectively communicate with people from a variety of cultures, orientations and language groups. The training helps board members and classroom teachers and administrators and college professors understand how to recognize the negative impacts of language and how language and attitudes/stereotypes/prejudice lead to policies and practices that disproportionately impact certain populations - race, class, gender, sexual orientation, home language, religion.

As state superintendent, I will require that staff receive training and support to address these issues. I don't believe we can expect school districts to address social justice issue if we are not modeling equity at the very top. How the state leaders speak about and make decisions absolutely impacts how district leaders will make decisions. I must set the tone, but I must also advocate for the support and time to engage in the conversations at the district level. Currently, there are no paid professional development days for districts. If we really want to give people the time they need to think and act differently in order

to ensure the needs of ALL are being met, we must give people the time to have the difficult conversations and develop different policies and practices that will better serve marginalized groups.

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

Our tax system is the most regressive in the nation. It is structurally imbalanced and we must make it fairer. Corporations should not receive tax breaks if they no longer serve the purpose of creating jobs and we must find ways to make sure the wealthiest are paying their fair share. Education needs to be the State’s top priority. Though I am not running for a position that would control sunseting tax exemptions I think it sounds like a great idea.

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

I believe one of my most significant accomplishment has been the training of over 10,000 educators in the past 8 years in reframing how we see, talk about, and interact with students of color and students who live in poverty. Reframing the conversation from "achievement gap" (that which blames students and teachers and communities and families) to "opportunity gap" (ways we can ALL be part of the solution) has been huge as I talk with public school educators and those who work with and around schools.

How will you combat climate change?

As the state superintendent, I do not have any authority over environmental issues, although, much like with social justice, I believe as a leader we can model behavior and promote "green" attitudes and thinking - recycling, natural energy, science curriculum that teaches students about the importance of taking care of our environment, promoting the use of environment-friendly chemicals in janitorial work, considering green building structures as new construction takes place, etc.

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		X	

Constitution to require a two-thirds vote to raise revenue?			
Do you support or oppose allowing coal or oil to be exported from Washington State's ports?		X	
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	
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?

Like I mentioned above we need to reframe this language to make it not about achievement but about opportunity. There are five things we must do differently in public education to address the opportunity gap:

DATA: We must gather more data than just test scores and graduation rates. We must begin to consider social, emotional and discipline data. Data must be accurate, and there must be transparency with the public. Data must stop inform all decisions.

STAFF: WE must be more intentional in recruiting more diverse educators, and placing those individuals who are most effective and experienced with our most vulnerable student population (students of color, ELL, SPED). Staff must be supported with the necessary resources and professional development to best serve these populations. Staff must be compensated appropriately to ensure retention.

FAMILY/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: We must do a better job of seeing family and community as equal partners in the education of children. Educators alone cannot meet the many and varied needs of students.

STUDENT SUPPORT: We must ensure the academic, social-emotional, physical, and cultural needs of all students are being met. Students whose needs are not met or who do not feel connected into the school community do not learn well.

TRANSITION: We must do a better job of aligning systems from preschool to post-secondary. We are losing too many students of color, ELL, SPED, and foster children in the transition point from elementary to middle school, from middle to high school, and high school to adulthood. We must create a smooth pathway for students and families to understand how to navigate the complex system of public education.

Please describe your position on standardized testing.

As a former classroom teacher and district administrator, I believe our reliance on high-stakes testing is incredibly dangerous. I have personally watched 3rd grade students and teachers cry from the anxiety of preparation for their first shot at the SBA. I watched my own son, who is dysgraphic and struggles with writing and my daughter who experienced trauma as a young child, struggle with finding success on state assessments even though both have strong academic skills. I watched students in middle school computer labs last year take anywhere from 4-6 weeks completing the SBA. This is criminal! Our most vulnerable students are losing valuable instructional time only weeks before leaving school for the summer when they will lose another 2 months of learning.

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?

I was the educator who testified in the McCleary case. My message then was that school districts should not have to depend on levy funding (whether they get it or not) to fully compensate their teachers/educators' salaries. This causes incredible inequity. Full funding should first include funding educator salaries and making sure there is a Cost of Living increase (something that most districts have not "been able to afford" for the past few years, at least). Full funding should involve paid professional development days for EVERY teacher across the state. We cannot expect educators to implement new standards and curriculum and expectations if there are NO days allocated by the state legislature to provide opportunities for staff to learn and grow and become familiar with these changes. Full funding

should also involve assuring that EVERY school district has access to wi-if. Since so much of our assessment system requires access to technology, it is a huge inequity that some schools have regular, reliable access to wifi and computers, while other districts (because of lack of resources) have none. I believe the state will HAVE TO fix our very regressive tax system and require that our most profitable businesses pay taxes at the same rate as everyone else. I do not believe fully funding education should come at the expense of other social services, like health care or housing.

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

I firmly oppose charter schools and I would like to see charter schools dismantled. I believe charter schools are actually most damaging to the very students the movement says it is seeking to serve - students of color, ELL students, students who receive SPED services. If we just look at this session's budget, the 1,000 children in charter schools received \$10,000,000 from the state's budget, whereas the 1,000,000 children in the rest of our public schools received the same amount of money. This is a huge issue of equity. Imagine if we could invest that \$10 million into the students who currently sit in our public schools... What charter schools want - smaller class sizes, special programs, less regulations - is exactly what staff want in the current schools we have. We MUST prioritize the "many,"