

## 46<sup>th</sup> District Democrats Federal Questionnaire

### Candidate Information

Candidate Name: Pramila Jayapal

Office sought: Congress, WA CD 7

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Have you read the Washington State Democrats 2014 Platform? Yes  X, No

(See the web link - <http://www.wa-democrats.org/about/documents> - and click "Platform".)

### **Why are you running for this office?**

I am running for office because I believe we need strong people of principle in power, people who know how to effectively get progressive legislation passed, how to stand up for our values to defeat bad legislation, and also how to utilize the political platform to organize--both on the outside and the inside. As an activist for 25 years, I organized tens of thousands of people to create the political space to make policy change happen--from successfully suing the Bush Administration to stop the deportation of thousands of people across the country, to leading the largest voter registration drive in the history of the state, to helping to create the political space and then craft the bill for immigration reform at the federal level, to serving on the committee that helped pass the \$15 minimum wage. After more than two decades, I realized that we would be able to achieve much more if we elected more people from the movement who could organize and expand our democracy and be directly accountable to the movement for justice. I have seen how important my perspective as the only woman of color in the state senate is, and how much I have been able to achieve in my first two years in the legislature, even though I serve in the minority. I look forward to bringing my values, judgement and experience in solving complex issues, and standing up for working families to Congress.

At the core of my platform is racial, gender and economic equity. I will continue my work to ensure income equality through increasing the minimum wage and ensuring gender pay equity; to debt-free and tuition-free college; to expanding Social Security and Medicare; to protecting our environment for our next generation; and to continue to fight for civil and human rights for all. I intend to continue to take on the systems that corrupt our democracy, from the power and money of the billionaires and wealthiest corporations to institutionalized racism. In all of these endeavors, I will continue to build

the movement to expand our democracy and create the political space for good policy change to happen.

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

I am an activist and organizer with 25 years of experience building movements to expand the middle class and lift people up out of poverty, both domestically and internationally. I am the founder and former Executive Director of OneAmerica, now the state's largest immigrant advocacy organization. Founded in the wake of 9/11 as Hate Free Zone, I built the movement to take on the Bush Administration around civil liberties abuses, post-9/11 backlash, and anti-immigrant xenophobia, as well as building a movement for immigrant rights across our state. We built leadership amongst young people, people of color, women and those whose voices are too often marginalized. Under my leadership, we led the largest voter registration drive in the history of the state, registering over 23,000 new immigrant citizens to vote; established the Seattle Office for immigrants and refugees; started and ran the Washington New Americans program to help legal permanent residents get citizenship across our state; helped write and pass the Washington State Dream Act; helped lead the efforts to pass the Washington Voting Rights Act.

I also served on the Mayor's Income Inequality Committee to raise the minimum wage, served on the several Police Accountability panels, and co-chaired the Seattle Police Chief Search Committee. We worked closely with labor for more than a decade, including co-chairing the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride in 2003 with the King County Labor Council and playing critical roles in union contract negotiations at the Westin and Safeway. I was appointed by Governor Gregoire in 2008 to serve as Vice Chair of the Washington New Americans Policy Council, in addition to the other appointments by numerous Seattle Mayors.

Following OneAmerica, I co-directed the We Belong Together campaign, a national campaign to bring a gender lens to immigration that came out of an op-ed I published with Gloria Steinem titled, "Surprise! Immigration is a Women's Issue." We worked with Sen. Mazie Hirono to hold the first ever hearing in the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee on women and immigration, and then with women Senators to write parts of the comprehensive immigration reform bill that passed the US Senate with 67 votes and included important new provisions to ensure gender equity in immigration.

Prior to OneAmerica, I worked in international public health for PATH, running the Fund for Technology Transfer, a loan fund that successfully helped ensure that socially responsible health projects in developing countries had access to affordable capital. I also worked more broadly to expand access to maternal and child health all over the world and working directly with villagers in India who were leading social movements for change. I have been on numerous boards, including 21Progress, Hedgebrook, the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, Chaya and others. I am a member of the Writer's Union. I have been honored to win numerous awards and recognitions, including a White House Champion of Change Award in 2013 from the White House, the National Organization for Women's national award for a woman of color, and the Unitarian Universalists National Holmes Weatherly Award. I have a BA from Georgetown University and an MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, as well as several years working in the private sector. I am an immigrant from India who came to the United States at the age of 16 by myself for college, and my parents still live in India.

Of all the candidates in the race, I am the candidate with the most experience working with Congress for more than a decade on numerous issues from immigration reform to gender equity to violence against women. I am also the only candidate that has actually served in a minority and knows how to get things done in that situation. Finally, I am the candidate with the most substantial experience in building movements and ensuring that we organize people to create the political will for policy change to happen.

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

Yes, I consider myself a Democrat. I have never been a member of another party, and I have been actively involved with the Democratic Party, often organizing the movements that helped create legislation later endorsed by the Democratic Party--from immigration reform to the Dream Act to the Washington Voting Rights Act. My entire life has been spent fighting for the values of the Democratic party and engaging more people to win on issues that are core to Democrats.

**What's your plan to win?**

I have won the endorsement of almost every major organization that has endorsed in the race so far. This includes: 19 labor unions; the sole endorsement recommendation of the King County Labor Council; every single women's organization including NARAL, EMILY's List, NOW, NWPC as well as women leaders such as Gloria Steinem and Wendy Davis; Friends of the Earth and many environmental leaders such as Bill McKibben, Paul Hawken, Peter Goldman, Gregg Small, Stephanie Solien; and dozens of endorsements from Federal, state and local level officials. Most recently, I was endorsed by House Progressive Caucus Co-Chair Keith Ellison, Congressman Ami Bera, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

We have a strong field campaign also and plan to knock on tens of thousands of doors. During my race for Senate, my volunteers and I knocked on 25,000 doors. We didn't just talk to "likely voters." We talked to *everyone*, and they voted. My campaign for Congress has been and will be an opportunity to do the same thing. We need to expand our democracy and make government relevant to the people again, and having these conversations with people are so important to making that happen. As such, we will be focused on voter contact and outreach. We have 6 organizers who are actively engaging our team of over 1,000 volunteers who have signed up so far. I am a movement builder, and this will be a movement.

Finally, we will continue to raise our dollars from regular folks. We are not taking any corporate PAC money, and so far, have over 30,000 supporters for our campaign, 96% of whom have contributed \$100 or less. At the end of April, we had raised more than \$750,000--far ahead of any of our competitors.

**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?**

Of course, members of Congress work hard to craft and pass bills to move our country forward, but being a member of Congress can be about more than just that. I want to use the platform to organize

a movement that will make government relevant to the people again. Voter turnout is extremely low, and a big part of that is because people don't feel like they are being represented. I believe that one of the most important functions of a Congressperson, especially one in a district like Washington's 7th, is to get people engaged in making change. My history as an organizer and a movement-builder makes me well-suited to do just that. As the Executive Director of OneAmerica, I led the movement that got 23,000 new immigrant citizens to vote. I led the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride. I helped bring members of the immigrant community to the issue of marriage equality. In the Senate I have successfully built coalitions to pass good bills and block bad ones. I am the candidate who can bring people to the table and build movements to pass progressive policies. I am also the candidate who has a proven track record of taking on issues when they are most controversial and helping to build consensus and political will to address those issues. This is true of post-9/11 civil liberties, my speaking out against the war in 2003, and addressing immigration reform and racism.

**If elected what would your top three priorities be?**

1. Racial and gender justice: both passing legislation and using my platform to organize a movement for change, in both foreign and domestic policy arenas
2. Climate justice: primarily focusing on a carbon tax and clean energy alternatives
3. Economic justice: primarily on raising the minimum wage, free community college and scrapping the cap

**What are your ideas for combating climate change?**

While in the State Senate, I helped lead the effort to strip bad environmental provisions from the transportation package, and fought for the largest investment in multimodal transportation options. I helped pass incentives for electric vehicles and investment in the state's electric vehicle infrastructure. As Ranking Member of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee, I stopped attempts to undermine environmental provisions that preserved funding and access to state park lands. I have looked creatively at ways to combat climate change, despite being in a Republican-controlled Senate, and I will do the same in Congress.

At the Federal level, we must promote a clean energy economy that invests in alternative energies like solar and wind power, and put an end to toxic fracking and deepwater drilling that threatens our environment. I will support research and development of next-generation technologies that curb greenhouse gas emissions and improve our health while promoting economic growth and protecting our most vulnerable communities.

All of these ideas are good changes that we must fight for, but I will also challenge the system that allows big corporations--who are the largest polluters--to get away with forcing taxpayers to foot the bill for their emissions. We need to put a price on carbon and build a movement that changes the system that allows these corporations to make demands that are so detrimental to our planet. I will not only fight to combat climate change, but I will also fight for climate justice, ensuring that the voices of those most affected by climate change are at the table to help shape strong and equitable policies to address climate change.

**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 have fought for women and families for over two decades, including fighting for an increase in the minimum wage and paid safe and sick days; directing We Belong Together — a campaign to bring a gender lens to immigration reform policy that keeps families together and empowers women; and working for decades on expanding access to healthcare for all women.

In the Washington Senate, I introduced legislation to expand contraceptive options for women and led efforts to provide critical services to victims of domestic violence. I passed legislation to increase the number of women in the state highway workforce, including securing \$5.25 million to fund pre-apprenticeship programs in order to create economic opportunities specifically for women and people of color. I also fought for paid family and sick leave, as well as an increase in the minimum wage—helping working mothers make ends meet.

I have been a fighter and advocate for women's right to make their own healthcare decisions. It is clear that Planned Parenthood is under attack, and we must fight for expanded access to women's healthcare, including access to safe abortions. There are many areas where progress can be made with legislation. For example, in the State Senate, I helped ensure that women on Medicaid would have access to multiple forms of contraception, including long acting reversible contraceptives. Previously, women on Medicaid in Washington were not being reimbursed at the same rates as women who used insurance. This creates a major gap for low-income women. I fought to close that gap, and we must look at how these laws are carried out on the national level.

I am fully supportive of and would advocate for funding childcare options. Right now, families are spending extremely high percentages of their income on childcare. This disproportionately affects low-income people, people of color, and single parent families, which are overwhelmingly headed by women. I would also support paid family leave. There is a wealth of research that shows that paid family leave is worth the investment.

We must pass stronger legislation on closing the gender pay gap. We must remove pay secrecy laws and create strong, actionable regulations to make sure that Equal Pay Day is the same for men and women. This year, Equal Pay Day was April 12th, but for women of color, it takes several months longer to earn what men earned in the previous calendar year. For African-American women, it is August 23rd, and for Latinas, it is November 1st. This is unacceptable, and I am committed to passing legislation to change this.

**How will you work to address racial equity?**

As a long time civil rights activist and a woman of color, I have been working at the intersections of every issue and race and gender for 25 years. I personally have been denied service because of the color of my skin; and have fought collectively for our institutions to recognize racism and to work to change that. I have also worked hard for decades to bring those people of color most systemically left out of the system into the fold of our democracy so their voices can be heard.

I believe the Black Lives Matter Movement is bringing enormous focus to the issues of systemic racism in our country, including within the progressive movement. Too many systems of oppression still

thrive in our communities and the system as a whole. Congress should be combatting these systems through many channels. We need to demilitarize our police. We need to close the opportunity gap and deconstruct the school to prison pipeline. We need to invest in communities of color. We need to end the War on Drugs and fight against its criminalization of black and brown men. We need to reevaluate sentencing guidelines at both the federal and state level. We need to ban the box and take real steps to combat recidivism. We must restore voting rights. Congress should take a more active role in all of these things, and I will be a strong fighter for racial equity.

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

I would be the first South Asian woman ever elected to Congress, and the first woman ever elected to the 7th Congressional District. I would be the first person of color to ever be a part of Washington's Democratic delegation. I mention this, because as an immigrant, a person of color, and a woman, I would bring a unique perspective to Congress--every hearing I chair, every committee I sit on, every issue I look at, I would bring multiple lenses. One example is my proactive initiative to change racist geographic names across the state. While this caused consternation from some at the beginning--as any issue involved race often does--just last week, the Wahkiakum County Council voted to change the name of three locations named "Jim Crow." Most wonderful was what was sparked by my putting the initiative out there--many residents from the County wrote to tell me how excited they were to get rid of those racist names. Just as many went and testified before the County Commission, and a couple of Commissioners who had been opposed realized they needed to change their mind. It is this creativity that I will bring to Congress, no matter what the issue is.

**What are the United States' essential security interests and needed outcomes in the Middle East? How will you decide what should be pursued with force and which left to diplomacy?**

Fundamentally, I don't believe that war should be our first option. In fact, I don't believe it should be our second, third, or fourth option either. I was proud to be one of the first to speak out against the war in Iraq, and I would do so again. I have seen the ravages of war first hand in refugee camps along the borders of Laos and Cambodia. My birth country has gone through several divisions and conflicts in my lifetime. The instability and displacement that results from war should be avoided whenever and wherever possible. However, there are instances where intervention is necessary. We must prioritize diplomacy, and, if and when intervention is necessary, we must carry it out with as few civilian casualties as possible. We must also make sure that we are assisting with the development of war-torn countries. Dismantled governments, lack of resources, and a lack of opportunity foment insurgency and dissent, so we should not engage militarily if we cannot also engage humanitarily. Ultimately, peace and security are vitally important, not only to the United States, but to the region. Millions of refugees are on the move. We must seek a resolution to this conflict that has gone on for years, costing hundreds of thousands of lives.

**Congress has huge responsibility on many, many issues. How will you prioritize between those most important to you? For example, how will you prioritize funding for mental health services, veteran affairs, education, healthcare, transportation and infrastructure, homelessness, etc.?**

Unfortunately, funds are obtained and spent in ways that are not in the best interests of the people. In looking at every budget and issue, I would view it through a lens that would look at what is best for the people. We should not be looking at cutting any of the services listed above. We should be expanding and improving them. We need to address our military spending, which is exorbitant, and we need to take a look at our tax system. We are providing subsidies and leaving money on the table, and we shouldn't be. We need to do things like "scrap the cap," so we can increase Social Security and Medicare. We need to redirect some of the money currently going toward military spending to veterans' affairs and housing. We need to move to a single payer healthcare system, and we need to stop giving tax breaks to corporations, so that we can fix our lopsided tax structure to pay for things like infrastructure and transportation.

Throughout all of these changes, we need to make sure that we are threading gender equity and racial equity into our new framework. For example, when the Washington State Senate voted to approve the transportation budget, they voted to include my budget proviso, which allocated \$5.25 million toward pre-apprenticeship programs specifically geared toward women and people of color. We can change our system, but it will take legislators who are willing to stand up and fight for things before they are popular or easy. I have done that throughout my career, and I will continue to do it in Congress.

Question	Support	Oppose	Qualify, if needed
Do you support or oppose adopting Pres. Obama's proposal for raising the national minimum wage to \$10.50?	X		Actually, I support Patty Murray's bill to raise the minimum wage to \$12, and I even support a higher national minimum wage. I introduced a bill in the state legislature to raise the minimum wage and am currently working to help pass Raise Up Washington, which would raise the wage to \$13.50.
Do you support or oppose access to safe and legal abortion?	X		
Do you support or oppose requiring 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	However, we must make sure that our transition to a clean economy creates new union jobs and provides worker retraining programs, so that the men and women who work in our port are not left without good jobs.

Do you support or oppose making two years of community college or technical school tuition-free?	X		I was the prime sponsor of a bill this past session in the Senate to do exactly this. I will continue to fight for free community college and technical schools.
Do you support or oppose requiring paid vacation and sick/safe leave?	X		I was on the committee that helped pass this in Seattle.
Do you support automatic voter registration?	X		I introduced a bill this session to make this happen. I worked across the aisle and was able to get two Republican Secretaries of State, including Sec. Kim Wyman and former Sec. Ralph Munro, to support it. It was very carefully crafted to address Washington state law, which allows all immigrants to get drivers license and therefore would make it problematic for WA to pass an automatic voter registration bill such as that of Oregon or California.
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	I was glad that the City of Seattle “banned the box,” and I think this needs to expand to become a national law.
Do you support or oppose legislation to fix “three strikes” law?	X		There are many improvements that need to be made to our criminal justice system, and this one is key.