

**2018 Questionnaire for State Senate**

Progressive Maryland is a grassroots community organization that acts for social and economic justice by developing civic leaders and cultivating allies in order to advance economic, racial, and environmental equity, and to change our economic system for the benefit of all people in Maryland. Learn more at www.ProgressiveMaryland.org

Progressive Maryland supports candidates who will work to build a society and economy that works for all Marylanders, with special emphasis on traditionally marginalized groups–low and moderate income residents, people of color, women, LGBTQ+, and all oppressed and exploited people. Elections can have an enormous impact on our work to reduce inequity and to improve the lives of residents all over the state. It is our responsibility not only to advocate for residents but also to empower them to engage in the political process at every level, from member-led canvasses to trainings for our members who wish to run for office.

To be considered for Progressive Maryland’s endorsement, please return the completed questionnaire to our Policy and Legislative Director Jennifer Dwyer at Jennifer@progressivemaryland.org **no later than 5 P.M. on Friday, March 30, 2018.** Your responses will be available to the public at www.ProgressiveMaryland.org

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| **Candidate Information** | | |
| Candidate Last Name:  Laskin\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| Candidate First Name:  Sheldon\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| Office Seeking:  Maryland Senate\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| District:  \_11\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
| Party:  \_Democrat\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| **Campaign Contact Information** | | |
| Committee Name:  Friends of Sheldon Laskin\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| Street Address:  \_2303 Farringdon Road\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
| City:  Baltimore\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| Zip Code:  \_21209\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| Business Phone:  \_(347) 623-8587\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| Fax:  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| Campaign Website:  \_Sheldonlaskin.com\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| **Candidate Contact Information** | | |
| Cell Phone:  (410) 979 - 6703\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
| Email Address:  \_shel030351@gmail.com\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| **Treasurer Contact Information** | | |
| Treasurer Name:  \_Sam Novey\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
| Street Address:  2303 Farringdon Road\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
| City:  \_Baltimore\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
| Zip Code:  \_\_21209\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| Phone:  \_\_(410) 903-6911\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| **Candidate History** | | |
| Previous Elected Offices:  None | | |
| Which Years Did You Serve:  N/A | | |
| Have you ever received an endorsement from Progressive Maryland? | YES\_\_\_\_\_ or NO\_\_X\_\_\_ | |
| If Yes, when: | | |
| Have you ever assisted Progressive Maryland in achieving its goals? | | YES\_\_X\_\_\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Describe:  As a member and co-chair of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation’s Social Justice Team, as a member of Jews United for Justice, and as a member of the Baltimore County Progressive Democrats, I have advocated for a number of Progressive Maryland’s goals. I have advocated for a $15 minimum wage, mandatory sick leave, the Home Act, the Maryland Trust Act, and laws to strengthen tenant rights in Baltimore City Rent Court, among other progressive legislative proposals. I have advocated against the Omnibus Crime Bill. | | |
| Major Endorsements (Elected Officials/Organizations/Opinion Leaders):  Working Families Maryland and the Baltimore County Progressive Democrats Club. | | |

**Issue Questions**

1. Do you support ending the money-based bail system?

Yes X No

Comments: Money based bail is inherently discriminatory against low income people who are faced with the choice of contracting with bail-bondsmen at usurious interest rates which effectively keep them indebted for life or remaining in jail pending trial, often for lengthy periods of time and before they have been adjudicated to be guilty. Furthermore, requiring bail if the defendant is deemed to be a public danger is inherently contradictory – those who can afford bail will be released even if they are a public danger and those who cannot will remain in jail even if they are not a public danger. There are proven ways of guaranteeing that the defendant appear in court (such as ROR or requiring a bond only if the defendant does not show for trial), which make cash bail unnecessary to assure the defendant’s appearance. While I support ending cash bail, my opponent, Bobby Zirkin, is the 2d largest recipient of campaign contributions from the bail bond industry in the country.

2. Will you support a $15 per hour minimum wage for all Maryland workers? If yes, over what time period would you suggest implementing it? Do you support including an indexing provision?

Yes X No

Comments: The minimum wage is no longer limited to teenagers working part-time during the school year and full-time during the summer. Single mothers who are the sole support of their families often work full-time in minimum wage jobs. Workers require a living wage and a $15 minimum, indexed to inflation, is a reasonable starting point for working towards that goal.

3. Do you support public financing of State Senate and Delegate races similar to systems enacted in Montgomery County and Howard County?

Yes X No

Comments:

Private money financing of political campaigns drowns out the voice of grass roots campaigns. Much of the money raised by mainstream candidates isn’t raised to cover the costs of the election. The large war chest of my opponent, for example, is designed both to intimidate opponents from running and to curry favor with other politicians in Annapolis by contributing to their campaign funds. It simply does not cost $500,000 to run for the Maryland Senate. Campaigns should be funded entirely by public financing and small money contributions.

4. Do you support increased protections for workers in terms of scheduling practices? In particular, will you support requiring employers to give 3 weeks’ notice to employees of their shift schedule, requiring employers who call employees into work only to send them home before the end of their shift to provide a certain percentage of the pay that the employee would have made that day, and prohibiting employers from scheduling an employee to work back-to-back shifts or shifts scheduled only a few hours apart without the employee’s consent?

Yes X No

Comments:

Workers need to plan child care arrangements, school conferences, and medical appointments. More fundamentally, workers need to know they can schedule recreational and down time for themselves and their families. It is a matter of simple fairness to require employers to give reasonable notice of shift changes and to pay an employee who is sent home due to a shift cancellation. Back-to-back shifts are potentially unhealthy and unsafe and should require the employee’s consent, free of employer retaliation for refusing to consent.

5. Do you support workers’ rights to organize in the private and public sectors? Will you make it a priority that all public employees be covered by a public employees relations act, similar to the National Labor Relations Act, which has governed work in the private sector for over 80 years?

Yes X No

Comments:

All progress in worker wages, working conditions, health and safety in the United States is because of the right of workers to organize unions and engage in collective bargaining. Since at least the 1980s, union membership has shrunk dramatically. In 2013, there were 14.5 million members in the U.S., compared with 17.7 million in 1983. In 2013, the percentage of workers belonging to a union was 11.3%, compared to 20.1% in 1983. The rate for the private sector was 6.7%, and for the public sector 35.3%. It is no surprise that, with the erosion of unions, hard-fought victories over such issues as paid sick leave and a decent minimum wage are once again in jeopardy, even in blue states such as Maryland. Workers need legislative protection to support the right to organize and bargain with their employers. There can be no “free riders.” Non-union members benefit from collective bargaining and should be required to pay for that benefit

6. We believe that the financial security of women is integral to the health of our economy. Do you feel that legislation ensuring the equal treatment of men and women in the workplace is appropriate? If so, what legislation will you support as a member of the General Assembly to bring women to parity with their male colleagues?

Yes X No

Comments:

I was a trial attorney at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission during the Reagan Administration. The issue of equal treatment for male and female workers was a problem then, and it still is. Notwithstanding the Equal Pay Act and Title VII, there are still large wage disparities between male and female workers. This is exacerbated by continuing racial disparities in pay for minority women. In Maryland, women on average earn only 84% of men for full-time work. Legislation should require that employers conduct periodic pay equity audits, to be conducted by neutral auditors, to ensure that all women are being paid fairly based on their experience, skills, and responsibilities.

7. Do you believe that employers should be required to make reasonable accommodations for employees and applicants for employment who have known limitations due to conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth?

Yes X No

Comments:

Women cannot achieve parity in the workplace if pregnancy and childbirth can be used to block initial or continued employment or promotion. Pregnancy and childbirth sometimes temporarily limit an employee’s ability to perform certain job requirements without reasonable accommodation. Employers should be required to make those reasonable accomodations.

8. Are there any instances in which the state should place restrictions on a patient seeking abortion care, such as stage of pregnancy, access based on age, or the type of abortion care that state funding should cover?

Yes No X

Comments:

Roe v. Wade, while establishing a woman’s right to choose an abortion, also ruled that a state can impose reasonable health and safety restrictions on the practice of abortion after the first trimester and can bar an abortion outright after the 2d trimester. Right-to-life states have abused that ruling to impose onerous restrictions on the right to abortion that are simply not necessary for health and safety, such as requiring that abortions be performed in hospitals or by physicians who have admitting privileges at a local hospital. The courts have generally struck down these restrictions but the cumulative effects of 40 years of such laws has been to drastically reduce the availability of abortion to women who require or desire to terminate a pregnancy. Progressives must continue to resist these restrictions and to expand a woman’s access to safe abortions at a price she can afford.

9. Will you support single-payer health care in Maryland? If so, how would you pass it and how would you pay for it?

Yes X No

Comments:

Health care is a human right. Access to quality health care should not depend on ability to pay. For too long, the fight for affordable health care has focused on increasing people’s access to insurance, not to health care itself. The Affordable Care Act is a well-intentioned first step towards universal health care. But because the ACA is still based on for-profit health insurance, health insurers have a fiduciary obligation to their shareholders, not to their customers. As a result, health insurers are under constant pressure to maximize return to investors rather than to reduce premiums, deductibles and co-pays. Faced with a need to cut their costs, insurers raise premiums, deductibles and co-pays while reducing payments to providers. The only equitable way to finance universal health care is through a Medicare for all, publicly financed single payer system, with patients having total control over their choice of providers. The United States is the only advanced country in the world without some form of single payer system. Consumers in countries such as Canada, Great Britain and France report high levels of satisfaction with their systems. Until such time as the US is ready to move to single payer at the national level, states should form regional multistate compacts to offer a single payer health financing system through a regional network. A single-payer system confined to one state is unlikely to be economical and sustainable. By creating a regional network, the resulting economies of scale make the chances of success much greater.

10. Will you support instituting transparency rules for Pharmacy Benefit Managers and drug corporations as well as creating a drug cost review commission for high cost drugs?

Yes X No

Comments:

Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBM), such as Express Scripts, are hired by employee health plans to reduce the cost of prescription drugs to the plan and to covered workers. The PBM charges the plan a fee for its services and in turn pays the pharmacy it selects to prescribe the medications. But the latter payment is usually not known on a per prescription basis, either to the employee or to the plan. Without transparency rules requiring the disclosure of the amount the PBM pays the pharmacy, it is impossible to know whether the spread between the two is excessive, with the result that the plan is still paying too much for drug coverage. The same is true for rebates paid by drug corporations to the PBMs. Furthermore, much of the cost of prescription drugs is really a cost recovery for purchasing the patent rights to drugs long after the R&D costs had been fully recovered by the previous patent holder. We cannot get a handle on excessive prescription drug costs without knowing precisely what the fees are for all parties to the drug distribution process.

11. In general, do you support or oppose charter schools?

Support Oppose X

Comments:

In general, charter schools undermine public school systems by diverting limited public resources from locally controlled school systems to private, often for profit, corporations that are not accountable to the taxpayers and voters at election time. While Maryland’s charter school law does provide greater accountability than is generally the case, the state’s public schools need substantial increased state funding, particularly in poorer jurisdictions such as Baltimore City. Charter schools should not be funded as long as public schools have antiquated heating and air conditioning systems, corroded plumbing, insufficient current textbooks and lack sufficient numbers of well-paid and well-trained teachers and teacher aides.

12. Do you support or oppose school vouchers that would allow public school students, K-12, to attend a private school instead of their local public school? Please explain your support or opposition.

Support Oppose X

Comments:

Vouchers undermine universal free public education, while subsidizing a personal decision to send one’s children to private school. Our public schools are seriously underfunded and limited public resources should not be used to subsidize that personal decision. The public schools have historically fostered a sense of shared community which is threatened if private schools are allowed to compete for public resources. My wife and I made a personal decision to send our daughter to a Reform Jewish day school through 8th grade. But we recognized that was a personal choice and would never have thought to ask the public to pay for that choice through its tax dollars.

13. Will you support making state colleges and universities free for all in-state students?

Yes x No

Comments:

I support free tuition at state colleges and universities, to be paid for through new taxation on those sectors that profit most from an educated workforce. This country has greatly benefitted from the educations provided for free to noted Americans such as Herman Badillo, a civil rights activist and the first Puerto Rican elected to the Congress; Guillermo Linares, the first Dominican American elected to the New York City Council and a former Commissioner of the New York Mayor’s office of Immigrant Affairs, and Jonas Salk, the inventor of the original polio vaccine. All three are graduates of the City University of New York, which they attended without charge. Tuition free higher education has enriched this nation’s diversity and enhanced its position in science, the arts, politics and in many other professional fields. Tax-financed vocational education should also be widely available. In Finland, vocational education is free and low-income students receive government grants. Students receive training in a wide range of vocations, including policing and air traffic control. Currently, higher education in this country is priced out of the reach of far too many Americans. And student debt loads burden too many graduates for decades. My daughter’s friend owes over $100,000 in student loans. A debt burden that high frequently postpones decisions to marry, have children or purchase a home. And graduates wind up settling for more lucrative careers rather than careers such as teaching or social work, which pay far less but offer more benefits to the community and to individual self-worth. As a matter of social justice, educational costs should be spread among the entire community that benefits from those programs. And those parts of the economy that benefit most from a highly educated workforce, such as the technology industry and the financial services industry, must contribute their fair share to the costs of educating the workers who create their profits.

14. Will you support the Trust Act?

Yes X No

Comments

I testified in opposition to a proposed 287(g) agreement before the Baltimore County Council. My testimony was published in the Sun. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/readersrespond/bs-ed-immigrants-letter-20170601-story.html> I have written letters to the editor in defense of immigrants. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/readersrespond/bs-ed-rr-immigration-letter-20180201-story.html> I have attended several CASA rallies, witnessed at one ICE immigrant interview and completed CASA observer and legal volunteer training at BHC, where I served as co-chair of the BHC Justice team.

15. Will​ ​you​ ​support​ ​closing​ ​corporate​ ​tax ​ ​loopholes​  by​ ​ requiring​ ​ combined​ ​ reporting,​ ​as​ most​ ​other​ states​​ have​ ​ done?​ ​ Will​  ​you​ ​​support​ ​bringing ​​back​ ​Maryland’s​ 6.25​ %​ tax​ ​rate​ ​on​ ​ income​ of​ ​more​ than​ ​$1​ ​million​ ​to​ ​allow​ ​upper​ ​income​ residents​ ​to​​ ​contribute​ ​more​ ​to​ ​Maryland?

Yes X No

Comments:

I have worked as a tax attorney since 1990, specializing in state and local tax. A state that does not use the combined reporting method of apportioning corporate income simply does not control its tax base. In separate reporting states such as Maryland, it is ridiculously easy for corporations to source income from intangible property, such as trademarks, to states that do not tax that income. As a result, retail stores in Maryland get a tax deduction for the royalties they pay to a trademark holding company in a state such as Delaware, and Maryland cannot tax the royalty income. While separate reporting states have found various ways to work around the problem, the only real solution is combined reporting. In addition, the elimination of the 6.25 % tax rate on income over $1 million was a major blow to the principle of progressive taxation, whereby the tax burden increases proportionately to one’s income. The reduction in the rate increases the social effects of income inequality by allowing more of the income of the very wealthy to escape taxation. Higher taxes on the wealthy has historically been used to somewhat mitigate income inequality by providing funding programs for the less advantaged.

16. Do you plan to introduce or support legislation to provide protection for the Potomac, Chesapeake or other shared environments that have had federal funding for protection removed?

Yes X No

Comments:

Historically, the states have been the pioneers in fostering progressive laws. Much of the New Deal was adopted from labor laws previously adopted in New York. States gave women the right to vote long before the federal government did. As the federal government retreats from environmental protection, the states must fill the gap. The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a huge and ecologically vulnerable area. Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, the District of Columbia and Pennsylvania have a shared interest in protecting and preserving the Chesapeake and the rivers and streams that feed it. As a senator, I would explore the formation of a multistate compact to protect the Chesapeake from further environmental harm, such as by banning pipelines to carry fracked natural gas.

17. What legislation and regulations can Maryland state government enact to protect our residents from the damage inflicted by Trump’s federal government?

Comments:

The order of the following provisions is not meant to indicate a priority ranking. All are important.

1. The Trust Act.
2. Requiring candidates for President in Maryland to disclose their income tax returns.
3. Single payer health insurance.
4. Higher renewable energy standards.
5. Increased protections for LGBTQ persons in employment, housing and the provision of social services.
6. Rigid enforcement of hate crime laws.

18. Do​ ​you​ ​support​ ​the​ ​creation​ ​of​ ​a​ ​progressive​ ​caucus​ ​in​ ​the​ ​state​ ​legislature?

Yes X No

Comments:

There is strength in numbers. Women, African Americans and Latinos have benefitted by speaking with a collective voice in the state legislature. A caucus can turn a microphone into a megaphone.

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| 19. For the measures above that you have agreed to support would you be willing to: | |
|  | |
| * Co-sponsor legislation? * Work with our Policy and Legislative Director to help pass a bill? * Testify at a hearing in support of legislation? * Speak at public events in support of legislation? * Write a letter in support of legislation? * Write an op-ed in support of legislation? | YES\_\_X\_\_\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_  YES\_\_X\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_  YES\_\_X\_\_\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_  YES\_\_X\_\_\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_  YES\_\_\_X\_\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_  YES\_\_\_X\_\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_ |
| 20. Would you be willing to engage with Progressive Maryland members and their communities by: | |
|  |  |
| * Speaking at Progressive Maryland events? * Meeting with our membership annually to report on the progress of our shared priorities and answer questions from our members? * Writing a letter to unorganized workers endorsing an organizing drive by a labor union? | YES\_\_X\_\_\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_  YES\_\_X\_\_\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_  YES\_\_X\_\_\_ or NO\_\_\_\_\_ |
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