

42nd Legislative District Position 1: General Election, Nov. 3, 2020

Candidates for 42nd Legislative District Representative Position 1 were invited by *Salish Current* to answer questions on ten topics: coronavirus, state budget, local economy, policing, climate, education, health care, housing, transportation and border closure.



Rep. Luanne Van Werven (R-Lynden) is running for re-election to Position 1.



Alicia Rule (D-Blaine) is a candidate for Position 1.

Coronavirus. *In the future would you advocate more than voluntary stay-at-home, masking and social distancing directives to contain the coronavirus pandemic?*

Van Werven: Voluntary stay-at-home, masking and physical distancing for vulnerable persons is entirely appropriate. The Center for Disease Control's data through Aug. 29 shows that deaths have moved below the threshold for excess deaths. Lesser impacted areas like Whatcom County should resume re-opening and moving to Phases 3 and 4 while encouraging safety and precautions at every opportunity, especially for our vulnerable populations.

Rule: We must follow data and facts to keep our communities safe. As we understand more about the virus and a vaccine is being developed, we will learn more about what activities are more risky. I believe in listening to our public health experts.

State budget. *When you work to balance the budget, what would you specifically cut? What would you save? How would you raise revenue?*

Van Werven: Current state spending far outpaces population growth and cost of living. We must scrutinize every part of the budget, fund our priorities and make targeted reductions where there is waste. Washington state has a Budget Stabilization Account ("rainy day" fund) for times of emergency, as we now face. Surprisingly, sales tax revenues increased during the most recent fiscal quarter which has lessened the projected budget shortfall. Additional taxation on already hurting families and businesses trying to recover

Rule: The current revenue forecast that came out in September was significantly more optimistic than the previous forecast in June. There are a lot of unknowns as part of the budget as well, for example, we also don't know if there will be any federal aid to the states as has been proposed. Given the recession caused by the pandemic it is almost certain that there will be budget cuts. My priorities are to protect K-12 education, and jump start our economy by investing in small businesses which provide over half of our jobs. I

from the pandemic should not be a consideration.

do NOT support increasing taxes on working families and do NOT support an income tax.

Local economy. *If you think your district's economy should be more diversified, what specifically will you do to make that happen?*

Van Werven: I am a member of the Competitiveness Caucus, which is a coalition of business, labor, agriculture and trade groups working to highlight regulatory and trade issues essential to our state's (and district's) long-term future. Our goals include: a timely regulatory review process for proposals meeting Washington state's high environmental standards; an environmental framework that is predictable and obtainable, focusing on the needs of communities where projects are to be built, rather than speculative impacts; and a commitment to promoting trade growth and the diversity of employment opportunities that sustain Washington's middle class.

Rule: We must invest in our small businesses to create and grow family wage jobs in Whatcom County. We cannot rely on foreign countries for essential medical supplies. I will invest in medical supply manufacturing here in Whatcom County, to grow manufacturing jobs and ensure we have the health supplies we need.

We need to expand our manufacturing sector with incentives to locate or expand locally. We need to preserve, protect and expand opportunities for our Cherry Point industries which provide generous family wage jobs for local families.

I will fight for economic vitality with more job opportunities, because the health of our community is dependent on a strong and functional economy.

Police. *If you think police reform is necessary to prevent discrimination against people of color, what specifically will you do to improve policing and police accountability?*

Van Werven: First, an acknowledgement that the majority of police are good, decent and in it for the right reasons. Law enforcement provides community protection and societal stability. Second, as a member of the Public Safety Committee in 2017 I was involved in the passage of House Bill 3003. It was the effort of impacted families, law enforcement and legislators. The result was negotiated legislation, agreed upon by all parties. It is a model for law enforcement de-escalation and mental health training. This law

Rule: On the Blaine City Council, I helped hire our new police chief, Donnell Tanksley, and have voted for our city budget which funds the department. Blaine police officers are trained in de-escalation techniques, effective use of force, crisis intervention and the unjustness of bias-based policing. Chief Tank has led our department in training designed to recognize our own implicit biases, understand how biased policing impacts community members and have developed skills and tactics to reduce the

was followed by voter passage of Initiative 940, which increased police training and accountability. Our state is on the forefront of police reforms. We can still make improvements, but much is already being done.

influence of bias. At the state level, I would like to make sure that these types of resources are available to departments throughout our state.

Climate. *If you agree that forest fires, extreme weather and changing ocean conditions are caused by changing climate, what will you specifically do to address climate change?*

Van Werven: We start where we can have the most immediate impact and that is managing our forest lands to limit the danger of wildfires. We can lower the fuel load (the amount of dead wood and underbrush on the forest floor).

Using the most reliable data available we need to address the link between urban heat and warming streams and how this impacts the decline of our salmon population.

All efforts to address climate change must prioritize a human-centered perspective where we incentivize private sector solutions to balance the environment and measure the full context of what meets the basic needs of humans — like heating and cooling homes and cooking food. Globally, we are spending trillions to mitigate the damage of climate change. I would like to see reliable metrics on the effectiveness of this level of spending.

Rule: Major corporate polluters remain part of the problem and we need to continue to tackle that challenge. Polluters need to pay for the damage that they cause to the environment, but we also need to work on the transportation sector, which contributes nearly half of carbon emissions in Washington. Providing clean alternatives through tax incentives and targeted investments will continue to improve our environment. In Whatcom County, we have an incredible opportunity to grow clean energy jobs that will reduce our carbon emissions as well as provide family wage jobs for our friends, families and neighbors. My district is home to refineries, and many of my constituents work in carbon-intensive industries. These are my friends, neighbors and the backbone of our local economy. We can assist these workers and communities by providing targeted trade programs, apprenticeships and work-force degrees through our existing technical and community college system.

Education. *What will you specifically do to ensure that every K-12 student has a computer and high-speed internet to attend remote schooling?*

Van Werven: As a legislative member of the Innovation, Technology and Economic Development Committee, our priority issue is helping to secure access to reliable internet connection for rural and underserved communities. The Office of Superintendent is mandated to compile the data on how many students are without devices and reliable internet. Initial news reports of the OSPI data show tens of thousands of students don't have access to devices or connectivity. I have requested access to the district-by-district data set in order to know the full scope of the

Rule: COVID-19 and remote learning have brought to light a challenge rural communities have struggled with for too long. I will work to increase access to high-speed broadband to close the digital divide so that kids in every corner of our district can access high-speed internet to attend remote schooling.

problem. Once we can determine which students are disproportionately impacted, we can zero in on additional solutions. I am preparing legislation to help close the connectivity gap. At the same time, the private sector is stepping up their efforts to provide devices and internet options for students.

Health care. *What will you do to improve access to affordable health care in the state and in your district?*

Van Werven: Individuals should be in charge of their own healthcare decisions, and they should have a variety of medical insurance options to choose from. Currently those options are very limited in our state. I will work to provide more options for individuals and businesses that provide medical benefits for their employees. More options will bring down the cost and will provide greater access to affordable health care.

Rule: Everyone deserves access to high-quality, affordable health care. I will fight to reduce the cost of prescription drugs and limit out-of-pocket costs on all health insurance programs. It is also critical that we protect coverage for people with pre-existing conditions.

Housing. *What will you do to improve access to affordable housing in the state and in your district?*

Van Werven: I support legislation that provides affordable housing solutions including plans for affordable housing under the Growth Management Act; reducing the real estate excise tax for multiple-use housing and modifying zoning regulations related to accessory dwelling units. We need to combat double-digit property tax increases because it raises the cost of rent and housing. I support policies that provide a range of housing options for all income levels.

Rule: We must build more housing. On Blaine City Council, I worked collaboratively to build more new houses than any other part of the County and in places that continue to protect what makes our area special, our natural beauty. In Olympia, I will make sure that investments in the Housing Trust Fund also benefit rural Whatcom County. We need affordable housing, connected to transit and services directly in our communities.

Transportation. *How will you pay for our state transportation needs, including ferry service?*

Van Werven: I support reforming the transportation system before raising taxes for transportation improvements. I support specific reforms such as keeping the sales tax revenues collected from transportation projects in the transportation budget, reducing redundant regulations and keeping costs under control through prevailing-wage reform. Reform and accountability are needed in our state transportation system.

Rule: In Washington state, our transportation budget is largely dependent on the gas tax, with critical supplements from the federal government, tolls and fees such as car tabs and ferry fares. As more hybrid and electric vehicles are purchased, traditional gas-fueled cars become more efficient and people stay at home during the pandemic, this will lead to a significant reduction in money available for infrastructure investments. Government can't do everything, but we have to do the things we commit to well.

Investing in infrastructure not only takes care of the transportation needs we all share, but it creates the good, living-wage jobs that our area so desperately needs.

Border. *What conditions do you think need to be met for the border between Washington and British Columbia to be reopened?*

Van Werven: Data suggests that conditions have been met and the border can be reopened. The negative economic and social fallout of the continued closure has created a hardship that should be taken into account. It is especially problematic for the community of Point Roberts who have not seen a single COVID case but yet are cut off from cross border travel.

Rule: Many small businesses, particularly in the northern part of the county, rely on cross-border traffic to survive. It's essential that the border be opened as soon as possible; however, making that determination will be up to the Canadian and U.S. governments, not up to the state legislature. Unfortunately, this pandemic has proved to be unpredictable and I am not optimistic about a reopening until next year. This is detrimental to the entirety of Whatcom County, not just the small towns directly on the border. I will continue to push for more federal aid for border communities like ours who have been hit so hard. In addition to the economic toll, we have families who cannot see their loved ones due to the border closure. It's critical in every way that we get a handle on this pandemic, but this one is particularly significant to our region.