

People Power Washington – Police Accountability strives to bring just and equitable public safety to our local communities through relationship building, education and policy reform. We champion policies that divest from police and reinvest in community-based solutions and alternate crisis response, decriminalize non-serious offenses, and implement accountability and enforceable standards for police officers and agencies. Our vision is for public safety in Washington to be community-driven and to meet the needs of all people equitably.

Our group’s work advocating for police accountability in our local communities has made us well aware of the important role our local government and elected officials play in driving policy around this issue. Appreciating the impact the Washington State Legislature has on our day-to-day lives, our hope is to empower voters with a non-partisan resource to understand how to vote their values through a lens of police reform and re-imagining of public safety.

Candidate Information

Candidate Name Bill Ramos
Position Sought State House of Representatives, 5th LD
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Part I – Yes/No Questions

- Traffic stops are one of the most common ways members of the general public interact with police. For decades, there have been significant racial disparities in traffic stops, particularly for low-level violations, unjustified by the crime-fighting value. This undermines community trust, fairness, and wastes law enforcement resources.
- While there’s a perception that traffic stops are dangerous for police, the reality is that they are far more dangerous for those being stopped, especially if they are people of color.
- As a result, Seattle and other jurisdictions, including Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and the State of Virginia, have restricted or banned traffic stops for low-level traffic violations.

1. Do you support prohibiting traffic stops by armed law enforcement officers for low-level, non-moving violations such as vehicle registration violations and equipment failure?

Yes

No

Additional Comments

- Police investigating themselves present an inherent conflict of interest. County Prosecutors work closely with law enforcement and rely on law enforcement for gathering evidence, interviewing witnesses, and providing defense to law enforcement.

- Prosecutors, exercising prosecutorial discretion, often fail to file criminal charges even when unarmed citizens are killed at the hands of law enforcement.

2. Do you support establishing an Independent Prosecutor for cases of criminal conduct arising from police killings?

Yes

No

Additional Comments

- Today when someone's constitutional rights have been violated or they are seriously injured or killed by the police, victims or victims' families can only sue police or the department under federal law 42 USC 1983.

- This federal law includes the legal principle of qualified immunity, which protects government officials performing discretionary immunity from civil suits unless the plaintiff shows that the official violated "clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known."

- In essence, there are little to no consequences for when law enforcement commits the above actions.

- State legislation could give individuals a legal remedy under state law that does not currently exist.

3. Do you support a state law that would remove obstacles, like qualified immunity, when suing police officers for violating a person's civil rights?

Yes

No

Additional Comments

- Today, in order to hold a law enforcement department accountable for patterns and practices of misconduct such as discriminatory policing, the US Department of Justice is the only entity that can investigate the department and bring a lawsuit or consent decree to effect change.

- State legislation could authorize the AG's Civil Rights Division to investigate systemic practices that deprive individuals of rights protected by the Washington Constitution, to address the most harmful practices in a department and ensure a minimum quality of policing across Washington.

4. Do you support a state law that would authorize the Attorney General's (AG's) Civil Rights Division to investigate a law enforcement department where there are patterns of misconduct?

Yes

No

Additional Comments

- Holding officers accountable through termination or suspension for serious misconduct at the department-level is important for maintaining public trust and confidence in law enforcement.
- Currently, procedures for administrative accountability are determined separately for each police department or sheriff's office across the state resulting in inconsistencies and lack of public trust.

5. Do you support strengthening law enforcement accountability by establishing statewide protocols for complaints, investigations, discipline, and disciplinary appeals for serious misconduct?

Yes

No

Additional Comments

- The UN Mandela Rules define long term solitary confinement as torture.
- Human beings have a basic biological need to establish and maintain contact with others. The deprivation of human contact causes severe psychological consequences including depression, anxiety, paranoia, PTSD, psychosis, self-harm and even suicide, which interfere with rehabilitation of incarcerated people.
- The use of solitary confinement does not reduce violence or staff assaults in prisons.

6. Do you support ending long term solitary confinement?

Yes

No

Additional Comments

Part II – Free Response Questions

What is your idea of public safety? What are tangible ways to measure progress toward this goal?

I believe that every Washingtonian should feel safe in the community where they live. This goal is as nuanced as it is important – as a legislature we must address public safety from many perspectives. I believe we must begin by addressing the root causes of crime to prevent its occurrence in the first place. This includes support for scarcity, addiction, and mental health crises. As part of the public safety committee I have worked on just that – I am proud to have helped pass a measure to invest nearly \$800 million in substance-use and mental-health providers, recovery and treatment; housing and employment; and funding for crisis, outreach, and diversion programs.

I also believe that our public safety is benefited by police accountability. We have the intelligence and the resources to keep our communities safe from crime and police misconduct and I will continue to support legislation that works to do both.

What would you do, as a state legislator, to further your idea of public safety?

I am glad to be doing important work on this issue as a member of both the Members of Color Caucus and the Public Safety Committee. I will continue to champion police accountability – an urgent need in our state – as I did in 2021 and 2022 when I was the prime sponsor for HB 1089 (law-enforcement audits). I also helped lead other bills in the comprehensive package for police reform, such as HB 1054 (police tactics/equipment) and HB 1267 (investigations of police use of force). These bills add consistency, transparency, and accountability to our state's law-enforcement policies, as well as the clarification bills in 2022 that put our public safety in a better position.

I'll also champion affordability, housing, healthcare, and education to address the root causes of crime. Public safety requires addressing the scarcity and suffering so many families in our state are facing in this late stage of the pandemic.

Are there police reform/accountability measures that are not addressed here that you think would be productive to pursue?

I support the above mentioned measures, and look forward to continuing to learn from those who are thinking about how to improve the safety of every community in our state.

I affirm that all the information provided in response to this questionnaire is true, complete, and correct to the best of my ability, and that no relevant matter has been omitted.

Signature *Bill Ramos* Date: 9/1/2022

Printed Name Bill Ramos