

[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	Leah Griffin
Position Sought	State Representative 34th LD Pos. 1
Campaign Contact Information	Website: www.voteleahgriffin.com Email: info@voteleahgriffin.com

Part I – Yes/No Questions

- 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	YES
No	
Additional Comments	Traffic stops have inherent racial impacts, as people of color are disproportionately stopped for low-level violations. Prohibiting traffic stops is a clear step towards addressing the implicit racial biases within all criminal justice officials, and especially throughout our police infrastructure.

- 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.

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

Yes	YES
No	
Additional Comments	Because local prosecutors face inherent conflicts of interest, it is crucial that an Independent Prosecutor is established for police use of deadly force. This is another policy that has inherent racial impacts and biases- as people of color are much more likely to be victims of police

	deadly use of force, and those officers are rarely held accountable. Establishing an Independent Prosecutor for these cases is one of my campaign priorities within my public safety platform.
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- 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.

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	YES
No	
Additional Comments	It is past time that we removed qualified immunity in Washington- especially as we continue to hear story after story about the extreme lack of police accountability within our state. This is a jurisdiction which must be removed, in partnership with the establishment of an Independent Prosecutor, in order for police accountability to be realized within our communities- and is especially crucial for communities of color statewide.

- 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.

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	YES
No	
Additional Comments	The authorization of the AG’s Civil Rights Division to investigate and oversee law enforcement departments is a necessary step to provide oversight and accountability to our police infrastructure and institutions at the state level and ensure that individual rights established by the Washington Constitution are maintained.

- 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.

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

Yes	YES
No	
Additional Comments	It is crucial that police departments or sheriff’s offices maintain similar protocols statewide to ensure that all police in Washington are held to the same degree of accountability.

- 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.

6. Do you support ending long term solitary confinement?

Yes	YES
No	
Additional Comments	Solitary confinement is one of the most inhumane elements of our prison system, and is entirely ineffective. It is beyond time that solitary confinement (especially long-term confinement) is ended within our jails.

- 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.

Part II – Free Response Questions

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

In 2014, I was raped by a man in my neighborhood and entered into a series of broken systems. I've worked with incredible lawmakers to pass multiple laws, both at the state and federal level, to fundamentally reform how survivors interact with the systems which failed me.

Over the course of my activism and healing from the trauma of being the victim of a violent crime, I have confronted an upsetting truth: our approach to public safety both fails to hold perpetrators of crime accountable and fails to help victims of crime, particularly victims of hate crimes. I had to plead with the police and other authorities to even investigate my assault. In the legislature, I will build off my and many others' work to create a more modern, effective criminal justice and public safety system which centers accountability and rehabilitation and combats the systemic racism within its institutions. For imprisonment to be effective, it must return people to the community who are better than when they went in and must provide access to behavioral health services and job training.

Far too often, survivors of crimes are lost in the process, and they never receive the support they need. I want to create systems that provide survivors with access to emotional and supportive healing so that they can move past their experience and be made whole.

We will know that we have made progress to achieve these goals once we have crafted and implemented legislation which establishes reforms such as an Independent Prosecutor, ends qualified immunity, tests all of our rape kits, and requires the oversight of the AG's Civil Rights Division within departments and sheriff's offices statewide. We must make sure that the goals listed above are not only implemented in Washington, but we will know that progress has been made when these policies are successfully enforced. If elected, I will make sure that the implementation of these policies is carried out and maintained throughout our state.

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

Police accountability must be a priority in our legislature, and if elected I will work to craft policies like the appointment of an independent prosecutor in cases of police use of deadly force, creation of standards for police contracts, and formation of a civil right of action by victims for excessive use of force. We must implement policies which address implicit racial bias within all criminal justice officials, strike down laws and policies which maintain inherent racial impacts and biases, and redistribute resources and wealth to Black and Indigenous communities statewide. We must also fund mental and behavioral health specialists who can be called to situations that don't require armed police officers.

We currently ask too much of law enforcement. They are expected to serve too many roles in which they don't have the specialized training to deal with, so we must work together to build support systems that allow police to maintain public safety and that ensure greater equity and safety for the public. I have worked for years to build better support systems for victims of violent crime, and have worked with police to ensure they have the training they need to support survivors. While representing survivors on the Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE) Task Force, I passed bills that require rape kits be tested, tracked, and stored. By the end of this year, we will have tested the entire 10,000 rape kit backlog. We redefined rape in the 3rd degree to hold rapists accountable, and required training in trauma informed interviewing techniques for police investigators, and developed new protocols for hospitals. As a result of my work with Senator Patty Murray on the Survivor's Access to Supportive Care Act, \$150 million federal funds have been allocated to train sexual assault nurse examiners. I know how our legislative system works, and I have seen first hand the continued failures of our public safety system. I cannot wait to begin work to dramatically reshape the way our public safety institutions interact with our communities, and I know that reform must begin immediately. Our communities deserve victim-centered services, access to behavioral healthcare, and a public safety system which they can trust.

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

Beyond the policies listed above which I will prioritize if elected, recent reports of Seattle Police failing to take timely sexual assault reports have been extremely disappointing and discouraging especially as my work on the Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Taskforce sought to end just that in Washington. Legislation, once passed, must be enforced. We must make sure that not only we are passing legislation which establishes Independent Prosecutors, ends traffic stops, and abolishes qualified immunity, but it is crucial that we ensure that legislation is enforced within the institutions we seek to hold accountable.

If elected, I will work tirelessly to not only pass the reforms and programs above- but I will ensure that they are enforced and maintained throughout our public safety system.

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		Date: 6/14/22
Printed Name	Leah Griffin	