

**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** Chris Stearns

**Position Sought** 47th LD State Rep., Pos. 2

#### **Campaign Contact Information**

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#### **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**

**No**

#### **Additional Comments**

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.

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

Yes

No

**Additional Comments** As an attorney, I understand the importance of fair and just criminal proceedings. Establishing an Independent Prosecutor in these cases is one of the many steps we can take to ensure these tragedies are addressed fairly.

**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**

**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**

**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**

We must protect our communities by holding officers accountable for violence and misconduct.

**6. Do you support ending long term solitary confinement?**

Yes

No

**Additional Comments**

Solitary confinement is a human rights violation. It is inhumane, often results in PTSD, and does not reduce incidents of violence in prisons. I support ending it.

## **Part II – Free Response Questions**

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

Public safety means that everyone enjoys the human right to be safe in their homes and community. Police accountability is crucial for this. Law enforcement must be accountable to all citizens so that there is a transparent but fair process for investigations and discipline of law enforcement officers. Policing must be carried out on a constitutional and non-biased basis, and I fully support initiatives to promote de-escalation and non-violent methods.

Tangible ways to measure progress towards this goal are metrics of community satisfaction with law enforcement performance, sense of safety, and the strength of the relationship between law enforcement and the community.

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

As a state legislator I will further my idea of public safety by supporting legislation that has the safety of all Washingtonians at heart. As a Native American, I have seen firsthand the impact of systemic police violence against communities of color. I believe that it is critical to hold law enforcement accountable to protect communities of color. I will support policies that ensure this process of accountability is just and fair. I also support policies that increase training for local and state law enforcement. To me, well trained officers are wanted by law enforcement themselves and the communities they serve.

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

I have worked directly with Native American tribes for a number of years. During that time I was charged with the responsibility of representing our interests, fighting for fairer treatment and self-determination. That experience really opened my eyes to the realities of the social injustice crisis we are currently facing in Washington, and how easy it is for so many people to be taken advantage of by the system. If I win my election, I will fight for investments that lift up every community in Washington, including investments in housing, healthcare, and education as essential infrastructure for combatting inequities in our state. These investments along with increased police accountability measures will help to combat the systematic oppression of communities of color. I also believe that some crime can be traced to behavioral health issues and that our state can do more to provide treatment and services to those who suffer from disorders, and are in stress, without routing them through the criminal justice system. I would

like to see the legislature take an informed and helpful response to the Blake decision in 2023 prior to the current law expiring.

**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 *Chris Stearns*

Date: 6/21/22

Printed Name Chris Stearns