

2010 Candidate Questionnaire

SECTION I

BASIC CANDIDATE INFORMATION

1. Name as it will appear on the ballot

First Name	Middle Initial or Nickname	Last Name
Joe		Fitzgibbon

2. Office sought (include office, jurisdiction, position/district number):

State Representative, 34th Legislative District, Position 2

3. Are you the incumbent? Yes No

4. How long have you resided in this district/city?

11 years

5. How long have you resided in King County?

11 years

6. Is the office sought partisan or nonpartisan? Partisan Nonpartisan

7. If partisan, please indicate party: **Democratic**

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Campaign Name: Friends of Joe Fitzgibbon

Address: PO Box 66110

City/State/Zip: Burien/WA/98166

Campaign Phone: 206-949-5127

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Campaign Website: <http://www.joefitzgibbon.com>

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

1. Beginning with the most recent position, please list public offices you have held. Include positions on appointive boards or commissions.

Public Office	Elective or Appointive?	Dates Held	Leadership Role (if any)
Burien Planning Commission	Appointive	May 2008-present	Chair (August 2009-present)

2. If you ran for public office but were not elected, please list those races below:

Office Title	Year of Run

SECTION II

In this section, we are seeking responses that reflect the four ratings criteria: involvement, effectiveness, character, and knowledge. These are defined as follows:

- **Involvement:** What has the candidate done previously in family, neighborhood, community, volunteer work, employment or public life to suggest readiness to accomplish challenging objectives? How do these activities demonstrate readiness for the challenges unique to the office sought?
 - **Effectiveness:** Has the candidate demonstrated promise of being productive in the office sought? Has the candidate shown the ability to work with other people?
 - **Character:** Do the candidate's personal traits show the ability to take on the responsibilities of campaigning for and holding the public office she or he is seeking? Is the candidate a leader, participant or observer? Is the candidate trustworthy, reliable and candid?
 - **Knowledge:** Has the candidate demonstrated the willingness and ability to learn and adapt? Does the candidate understand the duties and challenges of the office sought? Does the candidate have a firm grasp of the issues important to his or her constituency and their potential effects?
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1. In one page or less, why are you running for this office? (Note: the interview committee will be given a copy of this statement before your interview; at the beginning of your interview you will have the opportunity to expand on this statement in any way you wish.)

I chose to run for state representative because after serving as a legislative assistant for three sessions in Olympia, it was abundantly clear that our Legislature and our state can do better. The Legislature has missed opportunity after opportunity to provide for a better future for our state and our kids and grandkids: opportunities such as reforming our broken tax structure; securing excellent, well-funded schools; building a 21st-century transit network; and cleaning up Puget Sound by making polluters pay for the damage they cause.

I am convinced that our state will not be one of which we can be proud in thirty years if we continue to miss opportunities such as these. Because of the persistent failure of the Legislature to deal with long-term problems in a long-term way, I became convinced that the Legislature would benefit from the perspective of younger voices—the voices of the citizens of our state who will be dealing with the consequences of these missed opportunities for decades to come. As one who has spent several years working in the Legislature and developing an understanding of the diverse, complicated issues that legislators must deal with, I felt well-prepared to take on this task.

In my experience, one of the biggest reasons that voters under the age of thirty have been at times reluctant to become involved in politics is their perception that the government is failing to act with the long-term interests of our state and our country at heart, due to an excessive focus on reelection and a lack of focus on the likely impacts of today's decisions on future generations. During my service in government so far, I have been disappointed to learn that more often than not, that perception is accurate. Both for the future of our state and for the sake of expanding the engagement of young people in the political process, I believe that our state would be well-served by sending at least a few individuals under thirty to the Legislature, where we are likely to make decisions with future generations at the forefront of our minds.

In addition, during my time as a legislative assistant, I came to deeply appreciate the important role that legislators and their offices play in helping their constituents navigate state and local government processes and in advocating for timely and fair treatment by state and local agencies when that is not forthcoming. I am proud of the role I played in helping constituents obtain unemployment, a drivers' license, or a business license, or ensuring that they were paying the correct tax or tuition rate. When I am a state representative, constituent service will continue to be a top priority for my office.

Finally, I have long observed that the most effective legislators are those who come into office with an understanding of the issues they are going to face and the office they are seeking to hold. From tax policy to environmental policy to education policy to criminal justice policy, I believe I have the fullest and broadest understanding of the weighty tasks facing the Legislature. My district and my state will be best-served by a legislator who does not need to spend his first term in office getting up to speed on the issues facing the policymakers of our state.

2. Describe your most important personal characteristics or traits as they relate to the office you seek.

Successful legislators tend to be those able to see multiple sides of an issue. While I am clear and up-front about my political values and goals for our state, I am very aware that there are a variety of ways to reach these goals, and that the route that I believe at first is the best way to achieve a goal is not always the right one. In any political dialogue, I am always interested in gathering all the facts and hearing from all stakeholders before determining the best way to move forward. Even once I have determined which policy course is wisest, I never close my mind to the possibility that more information or a new idea could bring me to support a better solution. I do not approach problems with a predetermined ideological agenda—I approach them with the goal of finding the best solution for all the stakeholders of the issue. This open-mindedness is in short supply in Olympia and I hope to bring a pragmatic approach to the table there.

The office of state representative also demands a legislator with the tenacity to persist in working towards goals even when the task at hand appears daunting. Our state faces many daunting challenges, including some that seem nearly impossible to solve, including our persistent budget shortfalls and the urgent challenge of addressing climate change. While I am not wedded to any one solution to any one of these challenges, I have never been one to give up in the face of a big hill to climb.

Lastly, I feel deeply that we all have a duty to serve our communities, our society, and our world in whatever way we can best do so. My father served in the Navy and my mother was a schoolteacher, and both of them reinforced to me throughout my life that nothing we do in our lives is meaningful unless it is intended to serve. Neither running for office nor serving as an elected official is an easy thing to do, but I believe that it is the way I am best suited to serve my community and state—and that value of service will guide my decisionmaking throughout my time in elected office.

3. Please describe, in sufficient detail, one to three accomplishments or contributions of which you are most proud. These examples should illustrate skills and capabilities you think apply to the office you are seeking. These accomplishments may have occurred at any time in your personal, professional, or public life.

I chaired the Burien Planning Commission through the adoption of a very controversial policy program: the state-required update of our Shoreline Master Program (SMP). Many of our meetings were contentious and saw crowds well in excess of 100 come to testify, often angrily. Our role as the Planning Commission was to balance the legitimate concerns of shoreline property owners, the mandates of the state Shoreline Management Act and the Department of Ecology, and the desire to protect and restore shoreline ecological function as much as possible. While the meetings were very contentious, I was able to calm the frayed nerves of many of the homeowners by demonstrating to them that the Planning Commission was listening and was incorporating many of the changes they sought. I worked with staff and with the other commissioners to ensure that we understood the implications of the proposed document and to build consensus. Ultimately, the draft SMP was recommended to the City Council by the Planning Commission with a unanimous vote by the five commissioners, including some very liberal and some very conservative members. I am proud of my role in ensuring an open and inclusive public process, taking a tough stand by moving ahead with the update despite efforts to delay it, and building consensus among the commissioners such that we were able to recommend the update unanimously.

As a legislative assistant, I was frequently in the position to provide assistance to constituents who were having difficulties with state agencies. Many aspects of providing this service were difficult, including the fact that sometimes a constituent may not have realized she was being mistreated, sometimes an agency was actually in the right, and sometimes, the constituent just needed to know with whom to talk. I am proud of all of the interactions in which I was able to help constituents obtain services they need, but I am particularly proud of one instance in which two constituents were trying to obtain a business license but had been led into a dead end by the state agency (the Department of Health) from which they needed the license. We were all frustrated by the situation, but instead of giving up, I persisted in talking to the Department, the business owners, and other legislative assistants until we discovered that the problem was a simple but obscure bottleneck that we were able to overcome, enabling the business to open and create jobs. I am proud that my persistence was able to obtain a solution, and I will always remember that apparent dead-ends can often be overcome through creative thinking and hard work.

4. Please list or describe current and past activities in the community in which you have acquired skills that relate to the office you seek. Include your role in the activity and the year(s) in which you were involved. Involvement consists of many areas such as family, neighborhood, community, employment, or public life.

I spent nearly three years as Rep. Sharon Nelson's legislative assistant, serving the 34th District both in Olympia and out of a district office in West Seattle. In this capacity, I became intimately familiar with the legislative process, I assisted constituents in obtaining necessary help from state agencies, I managed and responded in a timely way to a heavy stream of constituent correspondence regarding legislative issues, and I developed skills in organizing teams around common agendas, whether those teams were legislators looking to advance a policy agenda or legislative assistants seeking to ensure that our voices were heard by the House of Representatives' administration regarding workplace issues.

For more than two years, I have served on the Burien Planning Commission, a volunteer board that advises the Burien City Council on land use matters. For the last year, I have chaired the Planning Commission, having been elected by my fellow commissioners. I developed an appreciation for and a commitment to open, inclusive, and collaborative public processes there that have led to more consensus-based decisionmaking in that body.

Before working with Rep. Nelson, I served as a legislative intern for King County Councilmember Bob Ferguson. In that role, I first developed my understanding of the importance of strong constituent service and timely responses to constituent mail. I learned from the staff and elected officials at the county about the difficult issues facing local government and the importance of building coalitions to secure policy advances.

I have been an active member of several community groups, including the 34th District Democrats and Sustainable Burien. These groups have highlighted for me the tremendous value of grassroots work to make our communities a better place. Sustainable Burien has been responsible for tangible improvements in our community, including the development of Burien's first community gardens and an upcoming bike fair to highlight sustainable transportation and its role in our city.

5. Please describe the duties of the office you seek. Which are the most important duties and why?

The most important duty of a state representative is to carry to Olympia the values and priorities of my district's residents and, with those values and priorities in mind, to seek policies that will improve their quality of life. That includes working on behalf of tax policy that enables more of my district's residents to be financially secure, economic policy that ensures that they will have access to jobs, transportation policy that enables them to get to work and around our region conveniently, environmental policy that ensures that future generations will enjoy a healthy state, and education policy that ensures that today's children will be ready for tomorrow's workforce. The voters of my district have been very clear that these are their priorities and I will fight on their behalf to see that the Legislature delivers tangible results.

Another critical duty is to provide help to constituents when they are running into difficulties with state agencies. A state representative can be a vocal and powerful advocate with state agencies to ensure that they are dealing with constituents in a timely, responsive, and fair way. Constituent service will be a top priority for me and my legislative office.

As legislation comes before the Legislature, thousands of constituents contact their legislators in very short time frames to express their views on the positions they would like to see their legislators take. My duty as a state representative will be to stay as informed by the positions of my constituents and ensure that they receive responses from me detailing my positions in a timely, straightforward, and detailed manner. This regular exchange of views was an important piece of my role as a legislative assistant and it will be as well if I serve as a state representative.

Finally, a state representative can advocate for the needs of our community to other governments, including federal, county, and city governments. I will regularly communicate with other elected leaders at all levels of government to ensure that the needs of my district are being taken into account.