

Spokane Candidate Questionnaire

The member organizations of Smart Justice Spokane and Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR) Platform for Change coalitions asked candidates running for Sheriff, County Commissioner, Prosecutor, Judge, Washington State Representative, and Washington State Senator to respond to 20 questions about racial justice, policing, housing, incarceration, services, and community.

See them all at spokanecandidates.org



Smart Justice Spokane is a broad coalition of over 30 organizations working together to end mass incarceration and eliminate racial disparities in our local criminal justice system. We organize and mobilize together for effective, restorative solutions that are driven by the experiences and needs of those impacted by the criminal justice system. The recovery and integration of those caught up in the criminal justice process is essential for a strong, healthy, and just community.



Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR) Platform for Change is a coalition advancing a vision of systemic change for the Spokane community that embraces a holistic vision of public safety. This vision reexamines what is considered crime, accounts for its root causes, and recognizes that shared prosperity and community care are at the heart of a healthy society.

Marcus Riccelli

Candidate for State Representative Pos 1 Legislative District 3

1. What racial equity problems exist in Spokane and how will you use this position to fix them?

Serving in the legislature is a privilege, and I consider it my responsibility to use that privilege in service of people who have been systematically oppressed. I support policies that work to promote dignity and justice for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, ability, religion, gender identity/expression, or sexual orientation. I'm a grassroots person at heart, and I believe in being accessible and accountable, so I also consider being an active, engaged member of my community part of the job. I have supported and strongly advocated for policies like paycheck fairness, significant expansion of access to health care, paid sick and safe leave, and evidence-based restorative justice practices.

2. You have an opportunity to re-envision law enforcement and the criminal legal system in Spokane County - what should it look like?

It should look like a broad inclusive community driven conversation and empowered initiatives around evidence-based restorative justice practices. Everyone deserves to not only be safe but feel safe in their communities. Law enforcement officers deserve to feel safe and supported in their work. Police must have the necessary tools to investigate and stop crime. But law enforcement must be held accountable for their actions when they violate that trust. We must provide more tools for law enforcement and change lives through providing support. I think we should continue to support workforce development including peer to peer, and other initiatives to focus on substance use disorder prevention and long-term recovery. Warehousing people with mental health and substance abuse issues in jail is inefficient, ineffective and immoral.

3. How can the community hold you accountable day-to-day in-between elections?

Through communication (collective and individual), regular stakeholder check ins, and providing opportunities for me to listen and answer questions. I will continue to offer virtual, phone and in person ways for people to engage directly through things like tele- town halls, in person town halls, coffee house meetings and online forums. I truly feel that constituents I represent are my employers and I need to regularly be offered feedback directly.

Policing

1. What is your role in ending racial disparities in law enforcement stops and arrests, and in advancing meaningful oversight and investigation of law enforcement?

I think my role is to help through policy interventions, community discussions and listening to help rebuild trust between law enforcement and the community. To do this police must have the necessary tools to investigate and stop crime. But law enforcement must be held accountable for their actions when they violate that trust. The Legislature has listened to the voters, who passed Initiative 940, to set clear expectations for officers' behavior, set a baseline for acceptable use of force, tactics, and equipment, and ensure accountability and transparency. We need to continue the hard work on striking the right balance to keep communities safe without jeopardizing the voter-approved reforms to de-escalate and reduce the use of force.

2. What is your assessment and position regarding the militarized culture of law enforcement, lack of appropriate norms and requirements for de-escalation, and continued use and purchase of military equipment by law enforcement?

I think police officers should embrace an ethos of relating to fellow personkind. We need to support them with training for success for interactions with the community and dealing with difficult situations

including those in behavioral health crisis. Research has shown that militarizing police has been ineffective in reducing crime and actually protecting law enforcement. We really need to look at how and why federal military equipment is surplussed as it seems like a counter productive incentive.

3. What are your thoughts about police presence in our schools and how juveniles are impacted by the legal system?

We need to focus on primary prevention and alternatives to arrest, and alternatives to juvenile court. I support the presence of non-commissioned safety personnel in schools. Those safety personnel should focus on de-escalation, mediation etc. If a police presence is needed then that call should be made and schools and school districts should work to have positive relationships with police departments. We know many low-income students and particularly students of color could have an uncomfortable sociological dynamic with law enforcement because of witnessing interactions with community members, maybe family members, possibly their own interactions or other triggers. That is why I support a safety presence but having them non-commissioned.

Additionally, focusing on primary prevention and alternatives to arrest and juvenile court are important because it is evident that the more young people get involved in the court system the more likely a downward cycle occurs. We need to remain focused on a safe learning environment for all students, and it is clear that we need to continue to give more focus to how communities of color are impacted and how those interactions can be improved upon.

4. With the fall of Roe v. Wade and the resulting projected increase of nearly 400% in people coming to Spokane County for abortion care, what will you do to protect pregnant people's right to abortion care without being criminalized, especially if they are traveling to Spokane County for that purpose? How will you protect medical personnel and clinics in the same context?

Washington is and will remain pro-choice. And we will not slow down in the fight to ensure safe, affordable access to every person who needs it. Essential health care is just that essential no matter the reason. I will work to protect provider confidentiality in licensing documents, Department of Health websites etc. I think we should create and fund a grant program for abortion training for providers serving medically underserved populations and improve the education pipeline by creating a Reproductive Scholarship Corps. I think we should provide legal shields that will ensure protection in our judicial processes for any person that may have a judgement entered against them from a hostile out-of-state jurisdiction for seeking reproductive health care. We should prevent disclosure of communication or information related to reproductive care even through out of state subpoenas, and prevent extradition to another state.

Incarceration

1. What is your position on Spokane County building a new jail?

There are initiatives and practices that would lead to Spokane County eliminating the need for over 160 jail beds a year and get people into the treatment they need. I support this type of course of action. Warehousing people with mental health and substance abuse issues in jail is inefficient, ineffective and immoral. We need to continue to enact evidence based restorative justice practices. I fully support giving people the tools they need to turn their lives around – access to housing, treatment and job training.

2. Which of the recommendations of the Spokane County Justice Task Force to reduce the jail population, as outlined in the below documents, do you support or oppose and why?

I fully support giving people the tools they need to turn their lives around – access to housing, treatment and job training. I think there are a number of target recommendations that deserve significant discussion. Locally I worked with FUSE and other community members to find capital dollars for the Spokane Regional Stabilization Center. We need to make serious investments in our behavioral health workforce though to help expand the reach. Warehousing people with mental health and substance abuse issues in jail is inefficient, ineffective and immoral.

3. What experience do you have with the criminal justice system and what have you done to engage the voices of the justice- involved or formerly incarcerated in your work?

I worked closely with I Did The Time and other advocates to help get rid of Ban the Box, work on Legal Financial Obligations reform and many other things. Ensuring those recently released have access to healthcare has been another policy I have been working on. I met consistently when working on these policies with impacted individuals and advocates in Spokane and statewide to help get truly informed and move these policies forward.

4. Our courts continue to lack trauma-informed training and responses, culturally appropriate responses, and interpreter services and training around the immigrant community. People describe being shamed, ignored, and frustrated by our current system. How can you, in your role, help change this (including funding, training, increased staffing etc.)?

Our budget is a reflection of our values as a state and our collective values. Funding for increased staffing, training and a workforce that is more reflective of our state is critical and something I will continue to call attention to and support.

5. The Washington State Supreme Court issued a letter acknowledging that our court system is racist and asked every member of the legal community to work on this. What are your thoughts on this statement and what are you doing about it?

Recognizing that systemic racial injustice against black Americans as individuals and collectively as we develop complex public policy interventions is something I am committed to and fully supportive of. I will look to community members, thought leaders in the judicial system, my colleagues in the Legislative Black Caucus to help inform my actions and decisions around policy and funding. It is important to not all only recognize the injustices, and develop the policies that can help achieve justice – but provide the means to fund what is need to bring things to fruition.

Services and community

1. What experience do you have with persons experiencing mental illness and how will you use your position to ensure there is an effective rollout of the recently authorized 988 crisis response system?

Washington is leading 988 roll out amongst states, particularly by identifying a sustainable funding source. I do think we should also look at how we can connect first responders to those in crisis in a timely manner. I am tracking this and will continue to be heavily engaged as a member of the Health Care Committee. I also am informed by my day job working at CHAS Health with providers that serve our population struggling with behavioral health issues.

2. With the goal of addressing the root causes of substance use disorder, what is your position on legislation to partially redirect state cannabis revenues to local prevention, outreach, and recovery support services and end arrests and prosecutions of people for possessing drugs for their personal use?

I have focused on funding, support for workforce development including peer to peer, and other initiatives to focus on substance use disorder prevention and long term recovery. As a member of the Healthcare Committee I have consistently supported these efforts and initiatives. Locally I worked with FUSE and others to find capital dollars for the Spokane Regional Stabilization Center. Warehousing people with mental health and substance abuse issues in jail is inefficient, ineffective and immoral. We must provide more tools for us all to change lives through providing support.

3. Domestic violence continues to be a great concern in our community, with too few shelter beds. How do you plan to address this issue?

I have championed local efforts to get funding for Hope House and increase shelter beds. Through the Capital Budget I will continue to work with partners to expand shelter access and transitional housing. I

also have been working to open up access to a fund I created that would allow victims of domestic violence to access funding for first and last month's rent. I was a co-sponsor of HB 1593 but the original prime sponsor.

4. How would you address the early learning gap in our community?

The third district is one of the lowest-income districts in the state, and communities of color are disproportionately affected by generational poverty. Public resources should work to reverse the inequities, such as providing additional resources for early learning and smaller class sizes to help close the opportunity gap. Students of color are also blocked from long-term financial success due to the college opportunity gap. I think we also need to provide increased wages and career ladder opportunities for those who work in the field. Finally, one of the biggest barriers to kids succeeding is being able to show up and be healthy – I will continue with initiatives I have led to end childhood hunger and address oral health access. Improving oral disease prevention and access to oral health care for people with significant disparities is a key initiative of mine as well as working to end childhood hunger.

Housing

1. Why do you think people become homeless in Spokane County and what will you do to address that? For example, what do you see as the County's responsibility to provide shelter and transitional housing as well as partnering with the City of Spokane?

I believe people become houseless for all kinds of reasons. Loss of job, behavioral health crisis, a financial crisis, medical debt and on and on. Absolutely, the County should be a good partner with the City of Spokane. This is a regional issue that will only get solved working together.

2. What is your vision for dealing with the lack of housing in our community? What funding (such as using ARPA for rental assistance), tenant rights and protections, affordable housing and infill are needed to keep people housed?

I have consistently supported and advocated for increasing funding for the Housing Trust Fund in order to provide more state support for local efforts to end chronic homelessness. I have championed local efforts to get funding for Hope House to expand capacity and for the new Crosswalk, and money for the St. Agnes proposal. I have been working with local non-profit housing providers and will continue to do so to ensure we do not miss out on state funding like rapid capital acquisition dollars. I am part of a statewide workgroup focusing on access to new funding for permanent supportive housing under the Apple Health and Homes initiative. I am part of a local group trying to lead on a continuum of housing investment. I want to support housing policy that increases density and was a co-sponsor of HB 1782 and will continue to support policies akin to that.

3. People who once had stable housing are often put at risk due to inadequate aging- and disability-related personal care and supports. How do public and private funded in-home services fit into your plan to address our housing crisis?

If people can live or age in place in their own homes we should make that happen. Not only are there likely better health outcomes (mental health, physical health etc) it will cost the state much less. We need to invest much more in the workforce and pay home care workers a fair and livable wage. We helped with increased wages during Covid but we need to go farther. These are tough and important jobs and the individuals (many whom are people of color and/or immigrants) need to be compensated fairly.

Spokane Community Against Racism Platform for Change Coalition Partners:

Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR)

Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) -
Spokane Chapter

Eastern Washington Progressives

Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience

FUSE Washington

Greater Spokane Progress

Hispanic Business/Professional Association

Latinos en Spokane

MAC Movement

Muslims for Community Action And Support

Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane
(PJALS)

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Greater
Washington and North Idaho

Progressives of Spokane County

RAIZ of Planned Parenthood

Red Skirt Society

SHAWL Society

Smart Justice Spokane

Spectrum Center Spokane

Spokane Alliance

Spokane Ministers' Fellowship

Tenants Union of Washington State

Smart Justice Spokane Coalition Partners:

ACLU of Washington

All Saints Lutheran Church

Carl Maxey Center

Chihak & Associates – Disability Attorneys

Disability Rights Washington

Community Building Foundation

Community-Minded Enterprises

Freedom Project East

Fuse Washington

Fulcrum Institute Dispute Resolution Clinic

Greater Spokane Progress

I Did The Time / Revive Center for Returning
Citizens

KYRS Thin Air Community Radio

League of Women Voters Spokane Area

Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center

NAMI Spokane – National Alliance on Mental
Illness

Neighborhood Alliance of Spokane

Northwest Fair Housing Alliance

Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane

River Warrior Society

SEIU Healthcare 775 NW

Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund

Spokane Branch Unit 1137 NAACP

Spokane Community Against Racism

Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium

Spokane Tribe of Indians

Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane

University Legal Assistance, Gonzaga Law
School

Washington Community Action Network

Washington Education Association, Eastern
Washington

Washington State Council of City & County
Employees – Local 270 AFSCME