

# 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](http://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.

# Maggie Yates

## Candidate for Spokane County Commissioner District 5

### Overall

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

Racial disparities manifest across sector in Spokane County. For instance, even though Black people make up only 2% of the County population, they comprise ~14% of our local jail population. Meanwhile, roughly 64% of our County's homeowners are white compared to 43% of all people of color. Equity must be centered at the outset of policymaking in order to ensure that we are proactively pursuing equitable outcomes, rather than reacting to emerging racial disparities. I would use the same strategies I previously employed when working as the Regional Law & Justice Administrator to champion racial equity as a County Commissioner. This includes: 1) working closely with impacted individuals when identifying challenges and designing solutions; 2) leveraging quantitative data to better understand where disparities have previously emerged, and 3) utilizing a racial equity impact assessment, which helps policymakers ask and answer questions at the earliest stages of planning to make sure equitable outcomes are built into the project.

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

In Spokane County roughly two thirds of those released from jail come back into contact with the local jail in the future. This is an unfortunate and clear indication that our current legal system fails to disrupt cycles of arrest, stabilize our community, and make everyone safer. Based on my experience and work at the County, I know there are currently available investments that commissioners can make to improve safety and outcomes. These include immediate violence prevention interventions, in addition to upstream investments (e.g. early childhood education, housing) proven to increase safety and well-being in the long-run.

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

I am committed to engaging with community members as a County Commissioner. This includes attending community events, embracing community-based expertise in policymaking, and ensuring public comment during public meetings. All of these strategies will allow for formal and informal feedback and accountability. Additionally, I would immediately improve transparency at the County by publishing detailed agendas, appropriately limiting the use of executive session, and holding meetings outside of regular business hours whenever possible to facilitate community participation. This level of transparency will ensure improved information sharing with the public, which will in turn enhance the community's ability to hold me and others accountable.

### 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 would work with the newly elected County sheriff to ensure that we have adequate data analytics to monitor racial disparities in law enforcement stops and arrests, and if necessary, work to leverage budgetary power to ensure the such data is being accurately recorded and reported.

#### 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?

With proper training and resources, law enforcement can play a critical role in maintaining public safety.

Today, however, law enforcement is often relied upon to respond to challenging public health emergencies like the fentanyl epidemic and serious mental illness. The County should use budget resources thoughtfully to ensure evidence-based de-escalation, crisis intervention, and trauma-informed training, while tying allocations for additional equipment to data metrics and performance indicators.

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

Based on my experience as a public education advocate, I know how difficult it can be for students to find success academically after contact with law enforcement and the juvenile justice system. I applaud the strong leadership of our educators, families and school boards prioritizing the education along with the social and emotional development of our students. For instance, Spokane Public Schools has made impressive strides to reduce suspensions, expulsions, and champion the use of restorative justice in local classrooms to ensure that our students have the opportunity to thrive.

**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?**

My opponent, the incumbent, has publicly supported the full repeal of the State's Reproductive Privacy Act. I would support the passage of a law prohibiting County law enforcement and County resources to investigate or prosecute individuals seeking reproductive care in Spokane County, or health workers for providing reproductive care, regardless of a patient's place of residence.

**Incarceration**

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

Building a new jail is an expensive burden on taxpayers that does little to reduce crime. There are efforts that the County can and should implement immediately to improve the conditions for individuals held in the County jail. There are also clear investments that can be made within the County's current resources that can and will reduce crime.

**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?**

In my previous role as the County's Regional Law & Justice Administrator, I led the Justice Task Force and am proud of each of the recommendations we put forward, which were informed by research, data, and national experts. Each recommendation was designed to improve safety and responsibly steward limited taxpayer resources, including Supported Release. Supported Release was originally proposed as a pilot program in district court (misdemeanor population only) and would provide judges with the option of setting bail, releasing someone on their own recognizance, or referring them to Supported Release where they would receive voluntary supportive services from a case manager. The pilot program would be grant funded and allow us to evaluate the impact and efficacy of such an approach locally before deciding whether to sustainably fund or expand the program.

**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 have built my career on ensuring that the criminal justice system operates fairly, effectively and equitably – a system that accounts for about 70% of our County's general fund. This work includes my time at the Southern Poverty Law Center and MacArthur Justice Center in New Orleans, legal studies focusing on the public interest at UCLA, and nearly four years as the County's Regional Law & Justice Administrator. In each of these roles, I have worked closely with individuals who were currently or formerly incarcerated, their families, jail leadership and staff, and victims. These relationships have allowed me to develop a nuanced understanding of systems, preventative investments and

opportunities for innovative partnerships with diverse constituencies to improve everyone's health and safety across Spokane County.

**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.)?**

One of the recommendations considered by the Justice Task Force was rolling out trauma-informed training for all court personnel. This effort, along with adequate investments tied to performance measures for the County Prosecutor's Victim Services unit, would improve customer service for the public and reduce the occurrence of re-traumatizing victims.

**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?**

I was impressed by the letter issued by the State Supreme Court explaining structural racism and calling on the legal profession to redouble efforts to address racial injustice. It is critical to have leadership recognize and tackle racial disparities if we are to pursue equitable outcomes. That's why as County Commissioner, I would champion the use of a racial equity impact assessment (described above), center data disaggregated by race, and welcome feedback and research that better informs the County's efforts for racial equity.

**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?**

I have several years of experience working with incarcerated individuals experiencing mental illness, including serious mental illness.

I would partner with local providers, including Frontier Behavioral Health, to understand the needs and performance of 988 and determine how the County can best support access to critical resources and treatment.

**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 support the concept of ensuring public health issues like Substance Use Disorders are addressed by public health experts and systems, rather than through the criminal justice system.

**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?**

Spokane County is fortunate to have many community partners leading the way on domestic and sexual violence. As one example, there is a local effort to pilot a domestic violence therapeutic court. The County could also partner with local non-profits to ensure that victim's services and resources are widely available to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

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

I would begin by leveraging ARPA dollars to invest in affordable, quality childcare locally. An estimated 10% of providers closed during the pandemic, further constricting the market and the ability of caregivers to access early learning. We know that investments in early learning education and childcare not only support working families, our kids, and the workforce, but are also effective

investments for public safety in the long-term.

## 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?**

Individuals may experience acute or chronic homelessness for a variety of reasons including but not limited to unemployment, behavioral health crises, periods of incarceration, and the rising cost of living. The County should take a strong leadership role to develop a regional strategy to address the growing homelessness population across the County. This would require partnering with cities across the County, leveraging resources, working with the State and prioritizing investments in research-based solutions.

### **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?**

Spokane County needs to work closely with cities across the County to leverage available funding streams to increase attainable housing stock. Additional housing should be centered along infrastructure already available to support the growth (roads, sewers, transit, schools, etc.). The County could achieve this in part by working with developers to ensure a certain percentage of new housing units are set aside for individuals making less than 80% of the local median income. Additionally, the County should explore using ARPA funds to continue rental assistance, establish a program to support first-time home-buyers, and expand the eligibility criteria for senior citizen's property tax exemptions.

### **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?**

I would work closely with organizations like Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington, the AARP Washington and unions to better understand how the County can meaningfully address the needs of our elderly and community members living with disabilities in order to implement a comprehensive and effective housing policy.



## **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