

King County candidates

AAPI candidates on the primary election ballot



Compiled by Staff
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

In the upcoming primary election, King County voters will have the opportunity to weigh in on four ballot measures and 56 races for a total of 218 candidates, including those running for city and county council, mayor, school board, and in special districts across the county.

Here's a look at all the AAPI candidates on the ballot.

PORT

Port of Seattle, Commissioner Position 2

PREETI SHRIDHAR

Shridhar is a 27-year resident of King County and helped launch the City of Seattle's Climate Protection Initiative, along with other recycling and conservation programs. She worked with former Vice President Al Gore to launch his movement to stop climate change, won an Emmy for promoting water conservation, and received awards from the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities for inclusion and equity.

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SAM CHO

Cho is a lifelong Washingtonian and son of South Korean immigrants. He is the founder of an international export company that works directly with the Port of Seattle.

He served under President Barack Obama as a political appointee at the U.S. General Services Administration and working as a Legislative Assistant in both Congress and the Washington State Legislature.

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From top to bottom, left to right: Preeti Shridhar, Sam Cho, Janice Zahn, JD Yu, Holly Zhang, Marguerite Ye, Elizabeth Peang, Sofia Aragon, Hira Singh Bhullar, Tracy Furutani, Kshama Sawant, Ami Nguyen, Naveed Jamali, David Chen, Doris McConnell, Linhui Hao, Tam Dinh, and Jay Fathi

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Woman of color leads King County's Democrats to a better future

By Janice Nesamani
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

Destiny seems to have groomed Shasti Conrad for a political career, specifically at a time in history when women and people of color are finding their voices on the social and political stage in the United States. Conrad, the current chair of the King County Democrats and first woman of color to ever hold the position, has an impressive resume—campaigning for Barack Obama and then being a part of the Obama administration, being on the National Advance for Senator Bernie Sanders' campaign in 2016, and working with Nobel Laureates Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi.



Shasti Conrad and President Obama

Conrad was born in Calcutta and adopted at two months by a single mother living in a small Oregon town. Her identity as a person of color raised in a predominantly white world gives her a unique perspective, allowing her to straddle two worlds and playing the role of a translator.

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Seattle city elections

OFFICIALS: YOUR VOTE REALLY DOES MATTER



Eric Liu



Julie Wise



Markham McIntyre

By Ruth Bayang
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

"Voters have a huge say in local politics."

Eric Liu, the co-founder and CEO of Citizen University, said the upcoming primary election is a big opportunity for Seattle voters. A total of 55 candidates are

running for seven district seats on the Seattle City Council, including incumbents.

"This is a moment where people who live in the city can actually try to register their dissatisfaction in a concrete way. Turnout in local elections is not as high as in federal elections, so you have a

see VOTE on 15

VOTE from 1

disproportionate voice when you do show up,” Liu said.

The King County Elections office said it mailed ballots and voters’ pamphlets on July 17 to over 1.3 million registered voters for the Aug. 6 primary.

Markham McIntyre, executive director of CASE, the political arm of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, said, “Some of the big, scary things that are happening at the national level turn people away from thinking they can make a difference. But here locally is really where you can have a positive impact.”



Jeff Wei

So many choices

“The main challenge of this primary is how to choose from the 10 different people running in my district,” said Jeff Wei, who lives in District 4. “In such a large field, it’s tough to distinguish the different candidates based on their positions. Unlike state and national elections, the issues here are more likely to affect me directly. Yet it’s hard

to find much information on the candidates, and most of my friends don’t even seem to care about local elections.”

“When we’ve surveyed voters, over 80 percent of voters indicate that the voters’ pamphlet is their number one go-to place to learn more about issues and candidates,” said Julie Wise, King County Elections Director. It’s the easiest place to compare candidates, said Wise, as they are literally side-by-side from each other. But there is one caveat.

“The pamphlet is candidate-driven. It’s not something we here at the elections office are able to verify or validate (candidate statements).”

Similar to the voters’ pamphlet, but in video format, is the Video Voters’ Guide, which can be accessed at seattlechannel.org/elections.

“Candidates for Seattle and King County races who choose to participate ... you can hear what their priorities are in their own words,” said Wise. The Video Voters’ Guide is a collaboration of Seattle Channel and King County TV.



Diana Hsu

“Before the ballot arrives, I don’t hear much about the candidates except through local events like festivals and through friends who are more engaged with local politics, including one friend who volunteers with city council campaigns,” said Seattle voter Diana Hsu.

Both Wise and McIntyre strongly urge attending candidate forums, where you get to interact with a candidate face-to-face.

“Ask candidates questions that are specific to your community—hold them accountable. They’re out there, talking about these issues that are important to your community, making promises—these forums are witnessed by many and often times captured on video,” said Wise.

McIntyre suggested going a step further—by reaching out to candidates directly.

“Ideally, these candidates should be very responsive to anyone who has an inquiry. Either they or their staff should be following up,” said McIntyre. “That’s a great way to get direct information if you’ve got a particular issue or particular thing you’re curious about.”

You can find a complete list of all City of Seattle candidates and their contact information at web6.seattle.gov/ethics/elections/campaigns.aspx?cycle=2019.

Many organizations like the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce release endorsement lists. The Chamber is endorsing nine candidates for the seven district seats. In Districts 6 and 7, there are dual endorsements in each.



Denise Mark

“I choose the candidate whose policy positions I think will do the greatest good for the greatest number of people,” said Seattle voter Denise Mark. “For the city council election, I prefer candidates who are for a better city, not just a better neighborhood or a better backyard.”

“Seek out organizations that you trust to help figure out which candidates might share your similar values and vision,” said Wise.

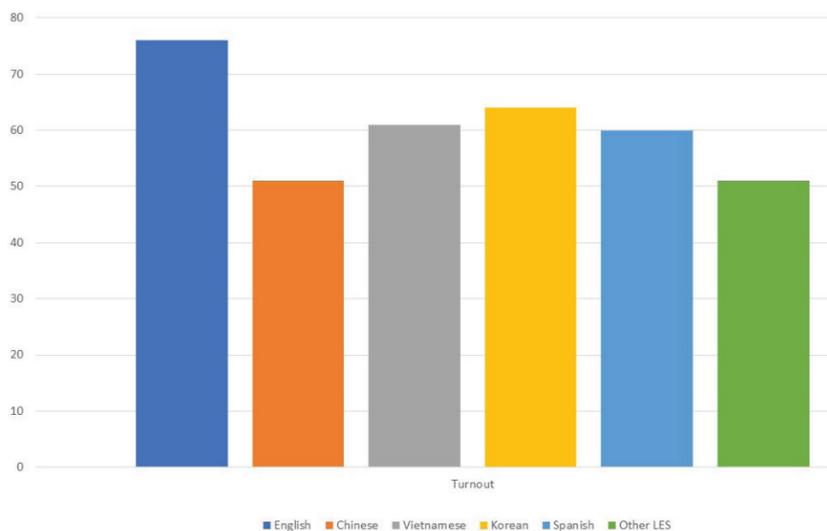
Use your power

“We need to stop treating voting like, ‘Eat your vegetables, do your duty,’ and more like, ‘This is a party—this is a social activity—let’s get some people over here,’” Liu said.

Voting should not be done in isolation, he said, like sitting in front of a computer and doing Google searches.

“You can and should be talking to neighbors, friends, coworkers, fellow worshippers, about the issues that matter to you. [Voting] is best done in a community context.”

November 2018 Voter Turnout by Language



Liu suggested making the filling out of your ballots a fun activity.

“One of the programs we do at Citizen University is the Joy of Voting. ... Make it a potluck, do it over drinks. People can come with their knowledge and research, come with their own favorite candidates ... talk it through as a group over food and drinks ... it becomes a much more meaningful way to situate the act of voting into the life of the community.”

When asked about voter apathy, Liu said there’s no such thing as not voting.

“Not voting is voting,” said Liu. “It is an active choice to hand your power over to somebody else, so that they can use it against you.”

Some people don’t like to talk about politics in social settings, but Liu said we need to rethink that.

“It’s OK to disagree,” said Liu. “It’s not to avoid having arguments—it’s to have less stupid arguments ... [it’s] to have better arguments.”

The best way to begin a conversation, Liu said, is to find out another person’s values.

Ask how their values are formed, why a certain topic or issue is so important to them. “Learn where people are coming from ... it brings us to a greater understanding of each other even if we still disagree.”

Voter concerns

“The top issues I care about and base my vote on are climate change, homelessness—I support homeless encampment sweeps in cases where residents have been offered shelter—housing density to drive down rent, increases in low and middle income housing, and better public transportation,” said Hsu.

The latter three are the same top three issues uncovered by a recent telephone survey done by CASE of likely November 2019 voters in Seattle.

“People are particularly frustrated about the issue of homelessness and the lack of progress they see made on that issue,” said McIntyre. “They are also frustrated about transportation and congestion and how the city is increasingly unaffordable for many.”

Forty-six percent of people surveyed feel Seattle is headed in the wrong direction (40 percent for in the right direction), and 52 percent disapprove of the job the Seattle City Council is doing. The majority of survey respondents also expressed feeling less safe in their own neighborhood and in downtown Seattle.

“There seems to be a governing ideology on the city council right now that’s driving a lot of that dissatisfaction. It’s important to note that this election is not about ideology, it’s about results.”

McIntyre said the current city council tends to be fairly one-minded. “They listen to a narrow group of stakeholders when they’re making their decisions, and that’s not really delivering results for districts or for the entire city.”

Wei said, “I look for a candidate whose beliefs align with my own. Experience matters, but so does a platform that highlights the issues that I believe are most important right now. I want someone who will improve the city and address the critical issues affecting Seattle today.”

McIntyre said that aside from The Seattle Times, neighborhood blogs and periodicals are a great way to get educated on the issues affecting your community and how candidates are responding to them.

Wise said the Municipal League—a nonpartisan, volunteer organization—created a Ready, Set, Vote app where you can select an organization or media outlet to see their endorsements and if it lines up with what you agree with.

Your vote does matter

People are polarized, feeling helpless, and tempted to check out because they feel like the whole game is rigged, said Liu.

“The only way the game gets unrigged and our democracy gets renewed in the United States is from the bottom up. From

the local level, outward and upward,” said Liu. “All citizenship is local. All politics is local.”

Make voiced frustration with the current voting system.

“Wouldn’t it be better if voters could choose all the candidates that agree with them on the issues they care about, and then the winner is the candidate with the most approval votes? I also think that a voting system that may make voters suppress their true preference in favor of electability is broken. In the future, I hope we will have election reform that allows voters to choose all the candidates that they approve of, instead of just one,” she said.

“People get disillusioned with the political process and feel like it’s a foregone conclusion and somebody

else has already made the decision, so they think, ‘Why would I choose to participate?’” said McIntyre.

In 2015, McIntyre said a candidate needed just under 9,000 votes to win a primary election.

And in that same year in the general election, the District 1 race was decided by only 39 votes (Lisa Herbold versus Shannon Braddock).

Your voice and your vote really does matter, stressed McIntyre.

“District elections are a better opportunity for representation, particularly on district-specific issues,” McIntyre said. “If you vote, we can get a better city council, and we can solve some of these problems together.”

Convenience

This Aug. 6 primary will mark the first election in which people will be able to register to vote at any one of five voting centers (locations: kingcounty.gov/depts/elections/how-to-vote/ballots/returning-my-ballot/vote-centers.aspx). You will be issued a ballot in that same visit, so you can vote right then and there.

If you still haven’t received your ballot, contact the elections office at 206-296-VOTE (8683). You can choose your language preference and be connected immediately to a live operator.

If you are returning your ballot by mail, Wise urges that you do so before Aug. 2—the Friday before Election Day. No stamp is needed.

After Aug. 2, Wise said you can drop off your ballot at any of the 68 ballot drop boxes, which are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“Ninety-five percent of voters have a drop box within a three-mile radius of their home,” said Wise.

Voter engagement

When Wise ran for office five years ago, she attended a candidate forum specifically for the Vietnamese community. There were between 200 to 300 people there.

“I asked by a show of hands who knew that we have election materials in Vietnamese. Only one hand went up,” said Wise.

Since then came the creation of the Voter Education Fund, a partnership between King County Elections and Seattle Foundation to reach and inform underrepresented and limited-English speaking voters.

“We are putting half a million dollars each year into community-based organizations for civic engagement, groups such as APACE, ACRS, OneAmerica, etc.,” said Wise. “In our first year, we really wanted to make sure that voters were aware that we provide materials in four different languages (Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish).”

Wise said there was a 62 percent increase that year in requests for in-language materials. From 2016 through 2018, there was more than a 2,000 percent increase in requests for Korean materials. “The Korean community turned out more than any other language community in King County for the last presidential election, at 83 percent.”

In the November 2018 general election, a midterm election which generally sees lower voter turnout, Wise said the turnout for English-speaking voters was 76 percent, Chinese 51 percent, Vietnamese 61 percent, Korean 64 percent, and Spanish 60 percent.

Liu said that it’s especially important for young people and people of color not to throw away their vote.

“With what’s going on in the country and the fact that we’re having so much anxiety, anger, hate, and politics around race and generational differences ... this is the time for young people and people of color to make a commitment to organize, to get our voices heard, and to vote. Don’t throw away your voice, your vote, or your power.” ■

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