

31st Legislative District Democrats Candidate Questionnaire

1. Your name: Ryan Calkins
2. Candidate for: Port of Seattle Commission, Position 1 Party Affiliation: Democrat
3. Campaign information:
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4. If elected, what positive changes will you champion that will benefit the 31st LD?

The 31st District, with its close proximity to both the seaport and the airport, is a key community for the long term viability of the Port of Seattle. The principal duty of the Port of Seattle Commission is the financial well-being of the Port. The role of the Port in crafting and approving a responsible, future-facing budget is essential to the long term viability of the Port. Having served on various boards with budget oversight responsibilities, I am very familiar with how to serve that fiduciary role for one of our region's most important economic assets. And as a business owner, I have a real sense of the need to balance prudence and risk.

As mentioned above, the current Port Commission has a special duty to transition the Port leadership to a more transparent model that demands the highest of ethics from Port commissioners, executive leadership, and staff.

The Port Commission also serves a critical business development role for the Port of Seattle, particularly as it relates to international trade. For our maritime sector, there is a desperate need to increase trade partnerships around the Pacific Rim. While the relationship with China is unlikely to be surpassed, we also need to be strengthening our ties to Latin America, which has experienced robust economic growth over the past two decades and has become a viable consumer of our state's manufacturing and agricultural production.

5. What are the three most critical issues you expect to encounter in the office you are seeking?

I'm running for the Port of Seattle Commission to make an impact on three issues. Economic opportunity, environmental sustainability, and effective leadership. As a former small business owner that operated an import business in the Georgetown neighborhood, a nonprofit professional working with economically disadvantaged communities in our region, and a father of three children, I'm uniquely qualified to carry out the responsibilities of the Port Commission.

The economic boom we are experiencing is both an opportunity for our region and a source of conflict. We need civic leaders who ensure that economic prosperity reaches all members of our community. Currently South Seattle, home to most of the Port of Seattle's assets, is experiencing increasing rates of

poverty as the cost of living skyrockets while wages stagnate. The Port of Seattle has the economic power and the responsibility, as outlined in its mission, to address this disparity. The Port Commission should expand the already successful apprentice programs such as the collaboration between Seattle College and Vigor industries that trains hundreds of maritime welders and places them in family-wage jobs. The Commission should also expand outreach to South Seattle neighborhoods, taking into account cultural and language barriers, to engage new Americans who are seeking well-paying jobs.

At a time when the Port of Seattle is struggling to keep up with demand at SeaTac while also advocating for the continued viability of the seaport, environmental sustainability must be at the forefront of every discussion about Port management and expansion. We can no longer make decisions that sacrifice our long term economic and environmental well-being for short term economic benefit. Forty percent of the landed catch of the domestic fishing industry comes from the commercial fishing fleet based here in Seattle (principally moored at the Port of Seattle's Fishermen's Terminal). The livelihood of the thousands of men and women who work in the fishing industry is at stake as a result of ocean acidification caused by global warming. Our response as a Port Commission ought to be both local and global. Locally, we need to electrify the vehicles and equipment that serve the airport and the seaport. While the upfront investment would be high, the benefits for local air quality, for Port competitiveness and for the indirect effects of reducing emissions would far outweigh the costs. Globally, the Port of Seattle needs to take a stand against further extraction and transport of fossil fuels. Specifically, the Port of Seattle should block the transport of coal and oil through its facilities.

Finally, the Port Commission needs to improve its oversight and leadership of the Port staff. Since I first became a close Port watcher in 2005, I have witnessed instance after instance of the Port Commission being asleep at the switch as the executive leadership engaged in ethically questionable practices. The search is on for a new CEO which gives the incoming Port Commission a rare chance to set a new tone. One of my first roles as Port Commissioner would be to ensure that the new CEO is someone with a sterling ethical record, ample experience in the management of a public entity, and with local roots. In addition, the new Commission should initiate an evaluation of the Commission itself for consideration by the State Legislature. Possible reform should ensure independence from Port staff and a composition that reflects the community. The current composition of the Port - five at large commissioners elected by the entirety of King County - may not result in the most representative body.

6. Please give us an example of when you had to make a critical decision that, due to its impact on others, was difficult. Tell us why you made your decision and what, if any, actions you took to mitigate any negative results.

In a previous management role, I was asked to turn a blind eye by a supervisor to a decision that I felt to be unethical. I refused to comply. It's hard to ascertain whether I suffered any consequences as a result, such as missed advancement opportunities, but it's an example of the kind of ethical demands that will be placed on me as a Port Commissioner, and I take them very seriously.

7. What methods will you employ to communicate with your constituency on a regular basis?

The electorate of the Port of Seattle Commission is the entirety of King County, and so traditional mail is prohibitively expensive as a means of communicating to the public. However, digital media (websites, blogs, and social media) are increasingly reaching every sector of our

society, including senior citizens and new immigrants. I have run sophisticated public information campaigns for my businesses, and I would do the same as Port Commissioner.

8. What other information would you like us to consider?

As a lifetime Democrat, I sincerely hope the 31st District Democrats will endorse me as their candidate for the Port Commission, Position 1. As a solid progressive on issues related to the environment, to family wage jobs, to equity, and to transparency in Port leadership, I am a reliable voice for the issues that matter to our community.

I declare under penalty of perjury the foregoing is true and correct.

Signed at Seattle, WA, 5/22/17

Signature 

Please return to:

Mark Boswell, Chair
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Or email to: webmaster@31stdistrictdemocrats.org

