

King County Democrats 2011 General Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name	Sylvester Cann
Position sought	State Representative Position. 1, 46 th LD
Residence Legislative, County Council and Congressional district	46 th Legislative District 1 st County Council 1 st Congressional District
Are you a Democrat? Are you known as a Democrat?	Yes Yes
Campaign Information	
Campaign Name	Sylvester Cann for State Representative Appointment
Web page	N/A
Campaign Email address	slycann@gmail.com
Manager	N/A
Campaign mailing address	14340 Lenora Place North, Unit B Seattle, WA 98133
Campaign phone number	206-251-7040
Campaign FAX	N/A

Candidate Background: Community service, education, employment and other relevant experience.

Describe your qualifications, education, employment, community and civic activity, Union affiliation and other relevant experience.

Educational Background: I am a proud graduate of the University of Washington, earning a degree in Applied and Computational Mathematical Sciences, with a focus in electrical engineering. My educational background highlights my strengths in analytical thinking and problem solving. These skills are essential when dealing with the complex challenges facing our state.

Strong Private and Public Sector Professional Experience: My work experience has been a dynamic mix of private and public sector. For five years I worked at an international commercial real estate company in the capital markets valuation division. My role was to analyze the value of commercial properties held by investment companies and individuals.

As we all witnessed the near collapse of global capital markets, I saw firsthand how risky speculation completely wiped out pension and retirement funds tied to these investments. It was

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devastating for me, but more so for the families who had lost everything due to unchecked greed. I went from working in real estate investments to managing a legislative campaign because I felt my talents were much better suited for the public sector where I could help to solve the problems of people.

I had the honor of working for Senator Scott White in the 2010 interim session and in the 2011 legislative session. When Scott he asked me to join him in Olympia as his legislative aide in the summer of 2010, there was no way I could pass up that opportunity. I wrote an article in the June 46th District *Demogram* about my time in Olympia. I was fortunate to work in one of the most productive and hardworking offices in Olympia last session. It is an experience I will keep with me forever, and a legacy I plan to carry on.

In my current role, I work for the Community Center for Education Results, an innovative non-profit organization that is implementing a “cradle-to-career” initiative to increase student achievement in South Seattle and South King County. Currently, approximately 22% of the students in our region obtain a post-secondary credential; we plan to double that number by the year 2020.

Social Justice and Community Service: I proudly serve on the board of the Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP) as the chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, and help set the direction of the organization through a real-time strategic planning process. As one of the first community action agencies in our state and the nation, CAMP has a mission of helping people out of poverty in the low income areas of our region. During my time on the board, CAMP has seen an increase in the number of people they serve, an increase in donors, and an increase in volunteers.

In college, I was a member of a community service fraternity known as Alpha Phi Alpha, which promotes the aims of “scholarship, manly deeds, and love for all mankind” within its membership and the communities it serves. I conducted voter registration drives on college campus, started mentorship programs for middle school youth, and organized scholarship fundraisers to help students of color pay for college. The ranks of this organization extend to some of the greatest civil rights leaders in our nation’s history. Men like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, W.E.B. Du Bois and Ambassador Andrew Young. Locally, we have men such as former King County Executive Ron Sims and Councilmember Bruce Harrell. I am proud to be associated with these men because of their deep commitment to education and service.

Education: I have been involved with various education organizations because I feel education is the key tool to fight poverty, build a healthy society, and support strong economy. The Alliance for Education played notable role in the collective bargaining process between the Seattle Education Association and Seattle Public Schools by bringing together parents and concerned community members to voice their priorities. I volunteered by facilitating discussions and organizing community groups. As it turns out, their voices were heard and the new contract reflected some of the issues we were advocating for.

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Environment: Being a member of the King County Conservation Voters Board, I have been fighting to keep environmental priorities in the forefront of the political discussion. This is especially important during difficult economic times. It can be easy for candidates in all levels of government to dismiss environmental stewardship as a non-pressing issue. Washington's pride is its beauty. We have a responsibility to keep it that way.

Public Policy: I have been a member of the Seattle City Light Review Panel since 2010 when the Seattle City Council passed the ordinance to create it. The panel was formed to play a critical role in advising the Council on strategic planning priorities and rate setting. I was appointed to serve on the panel to represent the voice of low-income Seattle City Light customers and make sure that the policies being set were just and fair.

Democratic Party Activism: Like the generation before me that was moved to political activism by John F. Kennedy, I was drawn by the hope and endless optimism of President Barack Obama. This transformational political figure opened for me an entirely new arena of public service that I previously had little connection with. This opened my eyes to all of the great work that could be done in politics. I understood that it was my time to get to work.

My first priority was to learn about political involvement on the most grassroots level possible. This is when I joined the 46th District Democrats in 2009, and familiarized myself with the issues most important to our Party. Becoming a PCO early on, I embraced the opportunity and privilege to represent my neighborhood and be a voice in our Party.

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What ratings and endorsements have you received?	
Legislative District Democrats	None sought for this appointment process
Union Endorsement	None sought for this appointment process
Municipal League	None sought for this appointment process
SEAMEC	None sought for this appointment process
Other Endorsements	None sought for this appointment process

Which groups do you plan to ask for an endorsement?
None

Please answer the following questions*		Yes	No	Qualified
1	Do you support the King County Democratic Platform?	X		
2	Do you support the right of workers (excluding military) to bargain and strike?	X		
3	Do you support government funding of Planned Parenthood and other family planning services, including abortion and contraception?	X		
4	Do you support majority votes by state and local governments to enact taxes for revenue and to repeal tax exemptions?	X		
5	Do you support the Affordable Health Care Act?	X		
6	Do you support school vouchers? Do you support charter schools?		X	
7	Do you support the Davis-Bacon Act?	X		
8	Do you support equal rights for women?	X		
9	Do you support Federal and State regulation of greenhouse gases that are contributing to climate change?	X		
10	Do you support a constitutional amendment to limit free speech rights to persons, not corporations?	X		
11	Do you support public financing of campaigns?	X		

Please answer the following questions *		Yes*	No
1	Have you ever failed to pay any taxes or court ordered judgments?		X
2	Have you ever been found in violation of a Public Disclosure Commission, Federal Election Commission or Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission regulation?		X
3	Have you ever been convicted of a felony?		X

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Are you a member of another political party? If so, which ones? Have you ever supported or given money to a candidate from another party in a partisan race? If so, whom and when?

No, I have been a Democrat all of my life.

Are you a member of your local Democratic District Party? Have you contributed financially to any Democratic Organization? Have you been a Precinct Committee Officer? When/Where?

Yes. Yes. Currently Precinct Committee Officer in 46-2153.

What are the main messages of your campaign? What is your campaign plan? How many doors have you knocked on to date, pieces of mail planned, budgeting, staffing? What is the fundraising goal for your campaign? How much have you raised to date? Why will you win?

Experience in Olympia matters as a special session of the legislature has been called to address a \$2 billion budget deficit. I have the legislative experience, the diverse professional background, and comfort with wide range of policy issues from education, social justice, and the environment that enables me to represent the 46th District and be an effective legislator.

I understand through firsthand experience the things that distinguish good legislators from great ones. I possess some of the qualities that I have seen in amazing elected officials, and I look forward to putting those skills to work for our district.

What are the single most pressing issues facing your jurisdiction? What actions would you take if elected?

Tax Structure: The primary method for the state to bring in revenue is fundamentally flawed, and it is damaging to our state in difficult economic times. We must figure out a solution to our revenue problems in this state. This is true for both the short term and long run. It will involve moving public will to demand a progressive tax system. I will be a tireless advocate for seeking revenue sources.

K-12 Education: Students in our state are not ready for the 21st century economy. Our students need to be proficient in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). We also need to support specialized career fields that train technicians, research assistants, building trades, and any other career that supports green manufacturing. Although the schools in our district statistically do better than other schools in the city, a closer look at the data suggests that we have a long way to go before our low-income, students of color, and refugee and immigrant populations are succeeding. When every child meets their potential, our state will thrive.

Higher Education: Access to higher education is critical if we hope to boost the economy of our state. We live in the backyard of one of the nation's finest higher education institutions, but less and less of the kids in our state are admitted to the University of Washington. Part of this issue is that students are not taking rigorous course loads in high school, and another reason is because college is not affordable. Programs like the State Need Grant and the College Bound Scholarship are valuable tools in keeping college within reach of low-income students.

Environment: We must be diligent stewards of our environment. Land use planning, protecting our rural lands and keeping Puget Sound clean are areas of the environment we must be sure to be thoughtful about.

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Transportation: Building a smart transportation system makes our region more competitive and helps our economy by moving people and goods faster. Access and ease to transportation grows our job market as employers look to relocate their businesses to a place that has made the right investments in transportation. Building walkable communities also plays a role in efficient transportation systems.

Economy and Jobs: Small businesses are the greatest economic driver we have, they should be supported the best we can.

If you are a candidate in a contested primary race, what record of performance, ability, experience, personal qualities, and positions on issues distinguish you from your opponent(s)? If you do not receive the nomination, is there any reason you could not support your Democratic opponent in the general election? Please explain.

We are fortunate to live in a district where we have so many progressive Democrats committed to public service. However, I am the only candidate for appointment with the recent legislative experience, the diverse professional background, and comfort with wide range of policy issues from education, social justice, and the environment to effectively fight for the 46th District.

Experience in Olympia: I am the only candidate that has served the 46th District in Olympia. During my time in the state legislature in 2010 and 2011, I learned that effective legislators are the ones who can fundamentally disagree with another member, but literally be willing to walk over to their office and discuss an issue with the purpose of finding respect and common ground.

Effective Leadership: Even with outstanding policy ideas, a member of the legislature is only as strong as their leadership ability. I am known to be a deliberative problem solver who is willing to work hard to tackle the big issues. I have a temperament that is well suited for intense negotiations and finding a common ground in fundamental disagreements. This is a style of leadership that our district has voted for time and time again.

Diverse Professional Background: Working in both the private and public sectors, I can use that experience to build strong coalitions that strive for the best solution. My private sector experience has shown me that government has a responsibility to protect the best interest of the citizens.

Public Policy: I have a strong analytical background and problem solving is one of my core strengths. Because I've worked on a wide variety of policy issues, I am extremely comfortable with advocating for issues that are important to our community.

Do you believe the current structure of taxes and/or fees that generate funds in your area are fair? If not, how would you change it?

I definitely do not. We have one of the most regressive tax structures in the country. I want to be a leader on this issue. The case has to be made to citizens around the state that an income tax is necessary in Washington. We are feeling the pain of being one of nine states that does not have an income tax. What it takes is strong leaders who can build coalitions across the entire state the advocate for an income tax. There are Democrats all over this great state that supports a new tax structure; we just have to make the case to them.

King County has a ten year plan to end homelessness. What ideas do you have to increase low income and affordable housing/?

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Creating public-private partnerships is key way to increase access to affordable housing. In addition to supporting an increase in the Housing Trust Fund, I will work with housing advocates to identify the most effective and appropriate incentives to encourage more private investment in low income and affordable housing. In order to reach the goal of 9,500 units by 2014, it will be imperative to involve the private sector in this worthy social initiative.

What role should government play in the healthcare system?

Healthcare is a right, not a privilege. It is the responsibility of our society to look after the health and welfare of our citizens. Large scale change of our healthcare system will be difficult and until we institute a single-payer system, government must make sure the most vulnerable populations have access to healthcare.

What is your position on civil rights for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered people? What is your position on equal rights for same-sex couples when it comes to benefits, civil unions, marriage and parental rights?

I am proud to be a part of the Washington United for Marriage campaign. Marriage equality is a civil rights issue and no one should be denied the benefits of marriage. I personally know too many same-sex couples who are being discriminated against by not being afforded the same rights as heterosexual couples.

What creative solutions can you offer to address the problems of the economically disadvantaged?

Coming from a lower middle-class family, I understand the perilous feeling of being on the brink of poverty. In the face of the \$2 billion budget crisis, our state must continue to protect critical social safety net programs. We also need to find new ways to help working families to escape poverty. I will support innovative training programs that combine vital social services for working, low-income adults as they pursue "career-ladder" opportunities in high-demand fields such as healthcare and manufacturing.

I have read this questionnaire and understand and approve the content and all provided information.

Printed Name	Sylvester Cann	Date
Signature	Submitted Electronically	11-16-2011