**Seattle Fire Fighters Union Local 27**

**2022 King County Candidate** **Endorsement Questionnaire**

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***Please fill out this questionnaire, save as a PDF, and send it back info@iaff27.org.***

***Only candidates who complete this questionnaire will be considered for an endorsement from the Seattle Fire Fighters Union, IAFF Local 27.***

**Contact information**

Candidate name:

Candidate cell phone:

Position sought:

Campaign committee name:

Campaign committee address:

Candidate email address:

Campaign website address:

Facebook page:

Twitter handle:

Key campaign staff & contact info:

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**Campaign Information**

1. Have you ever run for or held an elected office? Yes No
2. If so, did you receive the endorsement of Local 27 or another IAFF affiliate? Yes No

1. If so, did you receive the endorsement of any labor organizations? Yes No

If yes, please list them here:

1. Have you received the endorsement of any labor organization(s) for your current campaign?

Yes No If yes, please list them here:

1. Please describe your campaign manager’s experience.
2. Please identify your campaign consultant(s).
3. Do you have a written campaign plan?
4. What is your campaign fundraising goal?
5. Please briefly describe your campaign budget.
6. If endorsed by Seattle Fire Fighters, how will you utilize a financial contribution from us?
7. What other endorsements have you received to date?
8. What other endorsements do you expect/want to receive?
9. What role will public safety issues play in your campaign? Please provide details.
10. What is your union and labor background?
11. Describe how you have supported the labor movement.

**Priorities**

1. What will your priorities be if elected?
2. What committees are you interested in serving on?
3. What public safety issues will you focus on if elected?
4. What are the most significant issues facing King County?
5. What are your long term goals?
6. What labor issues will you focus on if elected?

**Seattle Fire Fighter Issues**

* 1. The Covid-19 Pandemic has caused a multitude of significant impacts to everyone in our community. Not only are people getting sick and dying, but the economic and social impacts have been unprecedented. In addition, fear and anxiety are prevalent. Throughout this crisis, Seattle Fire Fighters have not wavered. The commitment and dedication of fire fighters to serve, in spite of the significant health and safety risks, has been tested. The continuing and ever-present fire fighters, with sirens blaring on the way to an emergency, not only demonstrates their deep resolve to serve amidst this crisis, but it also relieves the fear and anxiety of our community because they know help is still ready, prepared, and on the way.

**If elected, will you support maintaining the service levels and staffing for the fire department?**

**If elected, will you ensure that the health, safety, and security of fire fighters and their families is maintained?**

* 1. *Working on a fire engine places extreme physical demands on members and exposes them to many different hazardous conditions and substances. Seattle Fire Fighters undergo thorough medical examinations prior to being hired to ensure there are no pre-existing medical conditions.*  
     **If elected, what will you do to ensure that King County and other jurisdictions around the state live up to their responsibilities for the health and safety of fire fighters?**
  2. *Fire fighting is a dangerous, labor-intensive, and physically demanding job that requires a high degree of skill and efficiency. Fire fighters are typically unable to work effectively beyond their mid-fifties. Furthermore, fire fighters are more susceptible to certain types of cancers. More than 1/3 of fire fighters hired in Seattle before 1977 have developed cancer. Fire fighters are also 10-100 times as likely as the general public to have a heart attack.*

*Medicare coverage does not begin until 65. Thus, after many years of dedicated service most Seattle Fire Fighters must provide their own medical coverage for up to 14 years after retirement creating a significant financial impact at a time when fire fighter’s health is at risk.*

**If elected, will you support efforts to provide for the safety and security of fire fighters before and after retirement?**

* 1. *Seattle Fire Fighters devote much of their lives to the citizens of Seattle. Almost 100% of Seattle Fire Fighters spend their entire professional career here in this job and only leave when they retire. The LEOFF 1 pension plan, which was a much more appropriate plan for fire fighters, was terminated in 1977 and was replaced with the LEOFF 2 pension plan which reduced benefits significantly. This plan is currently funded by approximately 8% of a fire fighter’s salary with fire fighters contributing 50% themselves. The city adds 30% and the state gives 20%. LEOEFF 2 is currently 100% funded because it has been well-managed and fire fighters have been significantly involved through the LEOFF 2 Board.*

**If elected, will you support efforts to protect LEOFF 2 funding and preserve defined benefit pension plans?**

* 1. *Demands on the Seattle Fire Department continue to increase. Seattle’s population continues to grow and has actually accelerated since 1999. Meanwhile, fire department resources have been reduced. In 2002 it was projected that 10,963 housing units would be added to South Lake Union by 2020. Between 2004 and 2010, 1.78 million square feet of biotech space was constructed, 2.2 million square feet of office space was constructed, and a total of 257,679 square feet of retail space was constructed. So far, actual development has exceeded the highest projected growth by 10 percent. An economic study has projected up to $154 million in new direct tax revenue may be generated by redevelopment between 2005 and 2025, with as many as 23,000 jobs created in South Lake Union by 2020. Currently, in South Lake Union Seattle Fire Fighters provide fire and life safety services to over 50,000 additional citizens with the same level of resources we had ten years ago. We must provide the necessary resources to keep pace with the growing demands of our thriving city. We cannot allow a desire for budgetary reductions to put public safety at risk. Emergency services must be properly prioritized and maintained at the required minimum levels.*

**If elected, will you oppose any reductions and support necessary increases to fire department services?**

* 1. *Seattle has one the best and most responsive 911 operations in the nation. One significant reason for this is that Seattle has experienced uniformed fire fighters answering 911 calls and dispatching aid. Having experienced fire fighters as 911 Dispatchers allows the fire fighters on scene and those they are helping get the proper resources. Having experienced fire fighters as 911 Dispatchers is also important because their experience is critical in the allocation of the City’s finite fire protection and life safety resources. In other words, making sure that the proper apparatus and personnel are dispatched to the most serious aid calls.*

**If elected, will you oppose elimination of uniformed fire fighters as Dispatchers at the Seattle 911 call center?**

* 1. *The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) sets national standards for the fire service to protect the public and make fire fighters as safe as possible when they do their job. NFPA 1710 sets staffing standards which includes at least four fire fighters on every engine and truck and five fire fighters on trucks in high density areas.*

*These staffing standards are based on studies and determined by a consortium of participants including members of the fire service, municipalities business, and industry professionals. These staffing standards are minimum standards that ensure timely, safe, effective, and appropriate service levels for communities.*

*Seattle Fire Fighters negotiated minimum four-person staffing in 2005 for every fire engine and truck in Seattle. Seattle Fire Fighters even agreed to work extra shifts to help pay for it because it is so critical to public safety and fire fighter safety.*  
 **If elected, will you support five-person trucks where indicated and preserve four-person staffing on every fire engine and fire truck in King County?**

* 1. *The unique structure of Seattle Fire Department resource deployment provides for rapid and efficient responses for both fire and medical emergencies using a combination of fire apparatus and medical units. The fire department has a layered response system that uses fire engines for medical emergencies thereby reducing costs for additional medical units and the associated staffing. This system maintains the minimum level of fire protection while doing double duty by providing a medical response capability that is the envy of the nation.*

**If elected, will you support layered response systems utilizing fire apparatus and medical units together and protect our fire protection resources?**

* 1. **If elected, will you represent your constituents in Seattle by always ensuring that emergency services are maintained at safe and appropriate levels?**
  2. **If elected, will you represent your constituents in King County by ensuring that emergency services are maintained at safe and appropriate levels?**
  3. **If elected, please describe what you feel are the most pressing public safety issues facing King County and how you would address these issues as an elected official.**
  4. **If elected, will you meet or respond to Seattle Fire Fighters in a timely manner when we request it due to a concern or question?**
  5. **If elected, in these difficult economic times will you represent your constituents in King County by doing what you can to ensure that emergency services are maintained at safe and appropriate levels?**
  6. *Collective Bargaining is a critical element of positive and effective labor relations. Public Employee Unions are a great asset in dealing with critical issues such as the severe government budget shortfalls we recently experienced. For example, in their 2008 contract negotiations Seattle Fire Fighters proposed and agreed to forego the minimum 2% cost of living increase for their entire 3 year contract to help the City of Seattle during the economic downturn. Then again, in the their current contract, Seattle Fire Fighters agreed to take significantly less than the cost of living for 2012 and 2013. These acts of leadership saved the City millions of dollars and demonstrated the value of a good relationship with workers. In other parts of the country we have seen more aggressive and antagonistic approaches to dealing with public employee unions that may save some money in the short term, but ultimately will destroy morale, decrease productivity, and set a poor example for all employers.*  
       
     **If elected, will you support the collective bargaining rights of Seattle Fire Fighters and all King County union employees?**

**If elected, will you oppose any and all legislation at the City, County, or State level that reduces the rights and abilities of workers to collectively bargain with their employer?**

* 1. *Seattle Fire Fighters depend on the LEOFF (Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters) pension plan for their retirement. To be eligible for retirement benefits fire fighters in the LEOFF system must be at least 53. The average retirement age for LEOFF Plan 2 Seattle Fire Fighters is over 56 and trending upwards because the LEOFF 2 pension does not provide any medical benefits and Medicare coverage is not available until age 65.*

*LEOFF is a state sponsored defined benefit pension plan. The LEOFF system is extremely important to Seattle Fire Fighters because they are excluded from participating in Social Security under the Social Security Act and they depend solely on LEOFF and personal savings for their retirement income. LEOFF Plan 2 is well-managed by the LEOFF Plan 2 Board and is fully funded. Fire Fighters contribute 50% of the funding while the city contributes only 30% and the state 20%. More than three-fourths of all funds in the pension system are contributed ether by the employees or earned through investments. The employer, hence the taxpayer, contributes less than 25 percent of the total cost of funding retirement benefits for Seattle Fire Fighters. Defined benefit pension plans are the most appropriate model for the public sector, and indeed, for all workers, especially public safety employees. Fire Fighters also depend on the disability portions of the LEOFF plan when injured in the line of duty. The LEOFF Pension Plan is a promise between the citizens of Washington and their fire fighters to ensure that in return for their sacrifice and commitment fire fighters will have a secure financial future.*

**Will you oppose any pension reform that would reduce or eliminate traditional defined benefit pension plans for public employees, especially LEOFF?**

* 1. *Defined benefit pensions are being attacked as unsustainable and a burden on corporations and tax payers.  Yet, the main reason for the unfunded liabilities is a direct result of corporations and the Government under-funding these plans, then placing the blame on the employee.*

**If elected, will you work to protect existing defined benefit pension plans and strive to make these plans available to all workers?**

* 1. *The Seattle Fire Department’s 911 call volume continues to rise each year and our ability to respond quickly and effectively to all emergencies is being compromised. The growing number of vulnerable Seattle residents including the elderly, people with mental health issues, people with drug and alcohol addictions, and the homeless, are inundating Seattle’s fire fighters with 911 calls that are not acute emergencies although they are in need of help. 911 is oftentimes the primary source of medical care for some of these populations. When fire fighters respond to these calls they are no longer available for more time-sensitive critical emergencies.*

**If elected, will you ensure that King County works with Seattle and provides resources for a regional approach to address elder care, the opiate crisis, and homelessness to ensure that our city's most vulnerable are cared for while our ability to respond effectively to life-threatening, time-sensitive incidents, such as fires, vehicle accidents, or heart attacks, is not compromised?**

* 1. *On the job stresses have a direct link to a high rate of PTSD and suicide for firefighters and EMTs. The Seattle Fire Department has actually experienced two suicides within the last 12 months. Research has shown that fire fighters have a higher rate of PTSD than the general population. According to the American Psychiatric Association, the rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the general population ranges from seven percent to nine percent. Various research studies pertaining specifically to firefighters have cited PTSD rates for firefighters ranging from 16 percent to as high as 24 percent. Most people associate PTSD with the military (combat veterans). It has been referred to as “shell shock” and “battle fatigue.” The use of these terms has been slowly fading as public awareness of PTSD has increased. What has also changed is that there is an increased willingness to seek professional help for PTSD. It is difficult to determine the number of fire fighters who have PTSD. Many firefighters will not admit they have PTSD due to the social and professional stigma attached to psychological issues. In addition, fire fighters are typically concerned that seeking help for mental health issues could negatively impact their careers.*

**If elected, will you support efforts, resources, and funding for programs to ensure the mental and emotional health of fire fighters?**

* 1. *Seattle Fire Fighters Union, Local 27 has multiple fire fighters who have sustained injuries due to being assaulted by citizens while providing emergency care. Assaults on fire fighters and paramedics have been escalating over the last couple of years. One of the fire fighters who was assaulted during an EMS response may not even be able to return to work due to the injuries he sustained. In addition, citizens who assault a fire fighter or paramedic are not held accountable and charged appropriately for this crime.*

**If elected, what will you do to reduce assaults on fire fighters?**

**Can we count on you to enact legislation that sends a strong message that assaulting fire fighters will be not be tolerated in King County?**