



Riveters Collective

“We Are Doing It”

Civic Action in Whatcom, Skagit and San Juan
Counties

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2023 Platform

Adopted on 3/2/23 by the Riveters Collective Board of Directors.

Riveters Collective discovers, develops, and promotes effective progressive civic action in Whatcom County and neighboring communities. We envision a diverse society of informed and empowered community members engaged in progressive political activism to improve the lives of all. We engage our local governments and elected officials, challenging them to adopt and pursue this bold community vision, supporting them in taking calculated risks to achieve this vision of a more just future, and encouraging them to reflect openly on unintended outcomes.

Achieving our vision requires our self-reflection, critical dialogue, and awareness of the interconnectedness of systems, issues, and people. Toward these ends, we submit this platform statement, detailing both general and specific positions, to be revised annually.

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Commitment to Honoring Native Tribes and Nations of the Salish Sea

Riveters Collective honors the People of the Salish Sea with gratitude, and acknowledges with humility that the Salish Sea and the land surrounding it have been their territory since time immemorial. We believe in tribal sovereignty and self-governance, and commit to supporting the work and mission of our tribal neighbors and nations. We believe their voices should be included meaningfully in government decisions. We acknowledge Tribal Treaties as the supreme law of the land and call on the United States to fulfill its promises and obligations. We commit to raising our awareness by initiating and growing partnerships with our tribal neighbors in efforts to understand Indigenous perspectives and governance. We commit to using our power and influence to advocate for bold solutions and legislation to ensure the health, economic vitality, and longevity of future generations.

Human Rights

Riveters Collective acknowledges and respects each person's agency over their own humanity. We make space for the leadership of marginalized people and support the work of groups representing people oppressed for their race or ethnicity. We believe Black lives matter, and commit to countering systemic racism and white supremacy.

We support the civil rights of people facing barriers to legal immigration status and the Bellingham Immigration Advisory Board's call to establish and fund an Immigration Resource Center to provide legal services, health care, education and protection from discrimination and civil rights violations for immigrants in Whatcom County. We oppose for-profit detention centers, detaining families, separating children from their families, immigration raids, and retaliatory detentions, and call for closing the Tacoma Detention Center.

We value self-determination regarding gender and sexual orientation, including asexuality. People have the right to use the public facilities they choose. Gender equality for all people is central to Riveters Collective's work, and we call for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

We value the separation of church and state and respect the right to peacefully practice religious beliefs and customs.

We work toward an inclusive, barrier-free community that protects the fundamental basic rights of people with disabilities, in which dignity, self-determination, health, and quality of life are promoted.

We support the right to data privacy, and legislation, initiatives and lawsuits that protect people's data privacy over profit. This includes protecting whistleblowers, protection from government surveillance, and from data brokers. In all cases, people have the right to privacy in regard to their personal reproductive decisions and history.

Civic Engagement

Riveters Collective facilitates civic engagement and we believe that it is incumbent upon us all to participate in civics. Each individual has a responsibility to behave as a global citizen, as our actions impact not only our families and local communities, but also the world. We support transparent civic processes that overtly welcome and foster the community and that remove barriers that prevent people from participation. We support election reform, automatic voter registration, a national election day holiday, publicly funded elections, presidential elections by popular vote, and verifiable and publicly owned voting systems. We support ranked-choice voting and proportional representation systems to ensure that the proportion of seats matches the proportion of votes, and to guarantee that every vote counts.

We believe in holding elected officials accountable. Washington State legislator communications and schedules should be available for FOIA requests. Preparing and electing capable people with diverse experience, and serving in public office are essential tasks of citizens. Government best serves the people when elected and appointed officials reflect the demographics of the people they represent. We encourage people who possess qualities and experiences that are reflective of the multi-faceted diversity in our community to run for public office. This includes efforts to recruit and provide candidate training, as well as giving weight to people's diverse attributes in the endorsement of candidates.

Economic Equity and Access

Riveters Collective recognizes that economic inequality is growing and is a destabilizing and dehumanizing force in our community. Discriminatory and biased practices in hiring, compensation, housing, banking, education, and food systems must end. We oppose policies and zoning laws that perpetuate limited access to housing, that cause banking and food deserts, and limited access to infrastructure (such as transportation or broadband) which exacerbate economic inequity. We support pay equity, affirmative action, and reparations for communities harmed by historic and continuing systemic racism, such as redlining, slavery, and colonization. We support ending the marriage penalty for SSDI, SSI, and other disability and medical benefit recipients, allowing them to continue receiving benefits even if they marry. Additionally, we call on policy makers to design public assistance programs to mitigate the impact of the benefits cliff, a scenario that occurs when a pay raise results in a loss of public benefits, essentially trapping people in poverty by stalling progression in jobs and careers.

We believe in the dignity of workers. All people have the right to meaningful work that is safe, respected, and compensated with living wages and benefits. We support the right of workers to organize and collectively bargain with employers, and support minimum wage increases locally and nationally. Vocational opportunities that build a sustainable local economy and provide living wages must be expanded, including re-education for those displaced from the workforce.

Progressive reform including a capital gains tax and income tax will lead toward a more equitable state tax system that will allow the American middle class to thrive.

Ecosystem Health

Riveters Collective supports processes and decisions that minimize negative impacts on living systems and that restore integrity to those we have degraded. Authentic progress to address climate change and to ensure clean air and water, especially for those most vulnerable and least powerful, including future generations, will involve substantial change and personal and institutional collaboration. Solutions lie not in continuing on the same path at a slower rate, but rather in changing course entirely - restoration of ecosystem health, not merely slowing decline. This requires changes in every aspect of our current economic, regulatory, and legal system. We support environmental policies and laws that work toward environmental justice and equity, and that involve, engage, and elevate the voices of communities that are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation, and the specific environmental issues that affect them.

We support best-available science-based processes and solutions for the preservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity. Key elements of these solutions include native species; buffers, habitat connectivity, and movement corridors; and protection and restoration of riparian areas. Landscape-level planning is critical for healthy populations of native fish and wildlife.

Green infrastructure builds the resilience of human and natural systems to climate change. We support a rapid transition to fossil-free energy, active-transportation infrastructure and investment, and carbon neutral economies. Carbon pricing is a high-efficacy tool for incentivizing our transition, but must be implemented without disproportionately impacting low income people. We support carbon neutral public transportation infrastructure such as shared small-mobility, electric buses, streetcars, and high-speed rail within the Cascadia corridor.

Tribal treaty rights require protection and restoration of habitat, water quality, and instream flows for salmon and other species. We support fully funding water rights adjudication with local tribes to resolve conflict over water use in Whatcom County. Resolution of the conflict should not impair senior water rights, while providing sufficient instream flows to support salmon recovery and water quality goals.

Education

Riveters Collective believes free, equitable, safe, quality public education is essential for a healthy democracy. This should begin with childcare and preschool, and end with a bachelor's degree or other post-secondary certification. All people, regardless of immigration, disability, or economic status, should have equal access to an education that will prepare them for their roles in civic action, environmental responsibility, creating a just and equitable society, leadership, and 21st century careers.

To ensure all future citizens understand the possibilities of our democracy we support all high school students taking a US government and civics course, with ethnic studies and critical thinking integrated into curricula. We call for accountability and full implementation of the Since Time Immemorial (STI) curriculum in all Washington public schools.

Sustainable and equitable state funding must fully support all school districts in our community, including living wages and benefits for childcare workers and for preschool and public school teachers and personnel - including librarians, nurses, and counselors in every school. We support state-funded innovative, alternative schools that are held to high standards of transparency and accountability. We oppose inherently biased high stakes testing.

School districts should be actively anti-discriminatory, anti-harassment, equitable, and inclusive both in their curriculum and in their treatment of staff, students, and families. Displays of hatred and overtly racist symbols such as swastikas, KKK symbols and confederate flags should not be allowed on school grounds. Schools should reflect and respond to the unique identities of the communities they serve in the classroom. We urge districts to hire staff that are reflective of their diverse communities and student populations. All students, families, and staff should feel represented,

“seen”, included, and physically and emotionally safe at school.

Legislators and school districts must center the needs of and seek direct feedback from students, families, and staff from marginalized groups to enact evidence-based policies, procedures, and programs based on these needs and feedback. Outcomes should be measured independently of the district and publicly reported. The state and schools should increase efforts to measure, report, evaluate and address racial and economic disparities in: suspension rates and other disciplinary measures, enrollment of students in all special programs and graduation rates. Additionally, legislators and districts should invest in infrastructure to support increasing equity in response to this data on an on-going basis.

Family and Child Welfare

Acknowledging that supporting families facilitates positive outcomes for children, we support paid parental leave and early parenthood support. We believe families belong together whenever possible. We recognize the power inequity in the court and child welfare systems. We advocate for increased funding for public defenders to reduce caseloads and provide parents with more effective representation. We advocate for family group homes as opposed to placing children in foster care away from their family. We believe addressing poverty would reduce most child removals and family separations and we support direct relief and anti-poverty measures. In the case of adoption or guardianship, we support retaining the original birth records, family and medical histories, and advocate for not changing the legal name of the adopted person without their consent before the age of understanding.

Health Care

We believe that healthcare is a human right, and we support universal healthcare efforts, including single-payer, at a state, regional, or national level. Solutions should not overly focus on cost at the expense of real quality. Programs should ensure that healthcare providers are not obstructed as they work to provide effective medical care for all. Local input and creativity in meeting the diverse health needs of our population is essential in planning and implementing healthcare for all.

We support reproductive freedom. Reproductive health decisions are best made by patients and their doctors. Access to full reproductive healthcare services should not be hindered by cost, distance to services, or the religious beliefs of employers. Reproductive rights are also transgender and intersex rights and related medical treatments for transgender and intersex people are a matter of self-determination and body autonomy. Gender transition health care is necessary and important, and should be controlled by patients and their doctors, not employers or legislators.

Public safety and public health are intertwined. We believe that mental health and substance use are health care issues and not criminal justice issues. Greater local and state funds must be appropriated to provide access to mental health and substance use resources and personnel across our community. Community investments must support community wellness, including infrastructure investments that facilitate health through community connectedness, active transportation, access to wild places, access to food and farms, and access to meaningful work. Safe and stable housing are absolute requirements for the physical, behavioral and mental health of all in our community.

Riveters Collective believes that racism is a public health crisis and supports community engagement and government action to remove all of its tangible forms from our public health, education, justice, economic, government, housing, environmental, and safety systems. We believe all Whatcom County leaders should review and implement recommendations from the [Racism as a Public Health Crisis resolution](#) adopted in November of 2020, and adhere to recommendations of the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission.

The dramatic surge of gunfire deaths must be stemmed. Washington State has recently enacted sensible gun safety legislation: universal background checks on gun sales, a ban on high-capacity magazines, raising the age to 21 to purchase semi-automatic weapons, a ban on untraceable “ghost guns,” and preventing persons who pose a danger to themselves or others from gun access. More is needed: banning the sale and transfer of military grade weapons, and holding gun manufacturers liable for sales and transfer of illegal weapons and ammunition, both nationally and in our state. In addition our leaders should explore and propose gun buy back options to reduce the number of guns on our streets.

Housing

Housing is a basic human right, providing the essential stability and foundation for human health and well being. We envision neighborhoods where housing types are mixed and price points allow neighbors of varying means to live side by side. We oppose the warehousing of low income people in too small apartments with no access to the outdoors and nature. We support expansion of tenants’ rights that shield residents from unfair rent hikes. We support diverse, affordable options of home ownership, and zoning policies that facilitate dense, low-impact living. Developers must bear the cost of protecting open space and farmland. We support policies that are innovative and community-based, such as community land trusts and limited equity cooperatives.

We support the decriminalization of homelessness. Diverse solutions are needed to address this crisis. Housing solutions for people experiencing homelessness should be based on the input and established needs of these community members. Accessible transitional shelter options should be expedited to promptly and appropriately house all community members, along with immediate

efforts to employ sufficient social workers and mental, behavioral, and physical health experts to address emergent needs of those who are unsheltered and in crisis. We support safe parking initiatives, public restrooms and showers, as well as community kitchens. Families should be allowed to live together as separation causes unnecessary trauma. Concurrent work on long-term solutions is required to eliminate the systemic drivers of homelessness to provide affordable permanent homes for everyone. We strongly oppose forced evictions and sweeps. Cleaning and providing sanitation can happen without displacing people and destroying belongings.

Information Access

Riveters Collective believes equitable access to accurate, unbiased information is central to rebuilding trust and is a foundation of democracy. To counteract the digital divide impacting rural and low income communities there must be increased access to information through low-cost or free broadband. Public libraries are access points for information and digital services in our communities. We advocate for adequate funding for public libraries. We seek to foster a culture that values facts based on documentation and research, and which counters misinformation and challenges reporting and media sources that contribute to misinformation. Accurate, fact-based information is essential to ensuring the ability of our democratic process to function and our officials to perform their duties without threats of violence from constituents.

Justice System

Reimagining the Justice System: We believe that a shared vision of *community policing* is essential for public safety and trust in the justice system. Meaningful, ongoing collaboration between community members, police, policy makers, and those most impacted by the police, creates shared responsibility for decision-making and priorities to assure fairness, equity and justice for all. We believe victims should be supported, those who commit crimes held accountable, and **all people** protected from harassment and assault.

Preventing Encounters with Law Enforcement: We believe that investing in social services will reduce arrests, the need for incarceration, and lower jail costs. Social services that support incarceration reduction include affordable housing, food security, education, and behavioral and medical health care.

Alternatives to Armed Response: We believe police presence should be reserved for criminal activity, not all 911 calls. Our cities and counties should permanently fund unarmed teams of professional specialists, when an armed officer or use of force is not needed to maintain public safety. (See <https://www.vera.org/publications/gatekeepers-police-and-mass-incarceration>)

We support Bellingham's ART Program, launched in January 2023, as an alternative to police response to 911 non-violent mental health and substance use crises, or people who need immediate care for basic needs. The program must be extended in cooperation with the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office to offer similar co-responder and follow up services to people outside of Bellingham.

Permanent funding of Whatcom County's GRACE and LEAD Programs will continue to offer coordinated, intensive care assistance to those who have committed low-level crimes and regularly use the 911-police-hospital-jail system.

Accountability through Data: We believe in prioritizing transparency and accessibility of police data. Data should be collected regarding the names of law enforcement officers, type of call, police response, use of force details, outcome of police contact, body cam videos, and demographic data of persons interacting with police. Raw and processed data (maps, charts, graphs, etc.) on a public facing dashboard will help all to identify concerning practices by officers or agencies. Locally, we can meet this objective with a significant investment in databases and systems.

We call for data availability (current jail data, including demographic information on custody, booking and release) for all entities within the justice system - from law enforcement, the courts, public defenders, and prosecutors - to make critical decisions and to process individual cases fairly and in a timely manner.

Replacing antiquated and siloed information systems with a universal repository for cross jurisdictional information sharing among users is critical for achieving transparency and accountability for our justice system.

Police Oversight: Civilian oversight is critical to restoring public trust in law enforcement. Campaign Zero's ten policy solutions for police reform (<https://www.joincampaignzero.org/solutions#solutionsoverview>), including the enactment of use of force recommendations, underscore the need for independent police oversight. Civilian oversight must be independent and funded to conduct robust investigations with the authority to discipline police misconduct. With community and political support, civilian oversight can make systemic changes to improve law enforcement and its relations with the community. Union contracts should not create delays prior to investigations, allow for overturning disciplinary decisions, or provide qualified immunity to officers who violate people's civil rights.

Advocacy: We commit to supporting community justice system reform organizations and working with local government policy makers and state legislators to develop and implement policy solutions that includes input from impacted communities and individuals. We reject the idea that police and policy makers alone can solve systemic problems within law enforcement. Meaningful community involvement is the foundation for building positive relationships with those in the justice system and

the communities they serve. We support a multi-lingual advocacy program to provide confidential support to individuals where legal representation is not required or affordable.

Militias: We oppose civilians “deputizing” themselves as the police, intimidating public servants while at their workplaces or homes. Support for violence, or organizations that support domestic extremism, should disqualify or decertify a public safety officer. We oppose any effort at local, state, or national levels to treat the police as an extension of the military.

Incarceration, Prevention, and Reduction: We support Whatcom County’s Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) on Public Health, Safety, and Justice Initiative’s 2022 needs assessment outlining the urgent need to fund behavioral health and social services that prevent incarceration and recidivism.

We need stable funding and policies to enact the SAC’s recommendations: increasing the availability of behavioral health and substance use services, diversion programs, a crisis stabilization facility to avert incarceration, improving jail facilities, and providing re-entry services.

We support diversion over jail, treatment over incarceration, and believe dollars are better spent on treatment, educational, and reentry services for those who must serve time.

We ask for an end to jailing people for mental, behavioral, or substance use issues. People should not be arrested for crimes associated with a lack of housing, poverty, fines, or minor offenses. We recognize the impact of trauma in creating a cycle of self-harm and hurtful behavior toward others, and we seek to stop this cycle. The criminal justice system and its associated costs, fines, and loss of community and family function only lead to increased poverty, which causes a disproportionate burden on those in lower financial brackets.

Bail: We call for an end to the use of cash bail or substitutes that act as bail (i.e., electronic monitoring devices). We should reserve jail for those who are a danger to others, pose a true flight risk, or have been convicted and sentenced, rather than as a holding place for people who cannot afford to pay for bail.

Stand with Survivors

We support survivors. Sexual harassment, abuse, and assault, along with other abuses of power are embedded in cultures. Riveters Collective endeavors to eradicate abuse of power. We do not work with anyone who has harassed, abused and/or assaulted others. We affirmatively stand with survivors who are willing to come forward and share their stories, and when we know the perpetrator, we support engagement toward true restorative justice beyond atonement - to educate, and to mitigate the impact of trauma and to support the resilience of survivors. Coercive control is

abuse. Loopholes that prevent survivors from accessing basic needs like housing due to previous abuse must be eliminated.

We require that all campaigns endorsed by Riveters Collective adopt codes of conduct and designate external advisors for reporting. We support the Washington State Legislature's Respectful Workplace Policy and their addition of a human resources officer to handle reports of improper behavior. Further, we ask the Legislature to revise the policy to specify that no member with credible pending allegations of improper behavior be eligible for leadership positions such as committee chairs.

Global Engagement

As part of a global community, Riveters Collective acknowledges that our values transcend borders. We support the use of local resources for refugee aid programs, family planning/health care/vaccine programs in developing countries, aid for natural disasters, AIDS medication, girls' education, access to clean water and sanitation, and other types of international support. We also support action to raise awareness to counteract global human rights abuses, including genocide, persecution of minorities, and violations of international law by both the US and other regimes. We support democratic processes, autonomy, and self-determination of other countries. Riveters Collective believes that the most effective way to promote peace is through diplomacy, humanitarian intervention, and fair trade policies. We believe that military action should be used as a last resort only. We support nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament.