What is your name?
Debora Juarez

1. For which position are you running?
Seattle City Council District 5

2. What do you know about the unmet basic human needs in the district you would represent?
Seattle needs more affordable housing, better access to mental health and substance abuse treatment, and funding for navigation and homelessness prevention services.

3. What has afforded you the privilege and power to run for office, and how will it impact your role in this position?
As a Native American and Latinx woman, pursuing racial equity has always been a personal and professional commitment and sacrifice because I did not have a choice in working to improve conditions for myself and others like me. These perspectives continually inform my work and positively impact my role as a Councilmember.

4. What experience do you have in listening to and amplifying community voices? In what ways do you base your policies and priorities on the needs of those who will be most impacted by them?
I represented tribes throughout my legal career, helped establish both the Washington State Hispanic Bar Association and Native American Bar Association, served as an adviser to two governors on Native issues, and more. I have continued this work at City Hall and added “Native Communities” to my committee’s name--Civic Development,
Public Assets, and Native Communities—to make sure that we have a voice at Seattle City Hall and to include a focus on native issues. I specifically did this to facilitate government to government relationships between the City and the sovereign tribal nations within our state. Additionally, I am the first and only Seattle City Councilmember to open a physical district office and hire a District Director to ensure that my constituents are listened to and feel heard. Their concerns and issues guide my policy at City Hall. For example, when I heard that the community center in Lake City needed to be rebuilt, I fought for funding and a feasibility study to build a new community center.

5. The cost of health care increases every year. Recent federal policy changes have threatened the long-term sustainability of Medicaid — such as attempts to reduce funding or turn the program into a block grant — and have aimed to undermine the viability of private health insurance markets — such as eliminating the individual insurance mandate from the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or not defending the ACA in court. Given so many barriers being placed at the federal level, how would you work to improve health care access at the local level to ensure stronger and more vibrant communities?

Yes. I am currently addressing this issue in my role on the King County Board of Health. As a person who has survived breast cancer three times and lives with MS every day, I know better than most the need for more affordable health care. I’ve been lucky to have had good, employer provided health insurance, but I have seen first-hand what happens when people lack health care. The City can support the efforts of the State and County governments in their work.

6. Federal policies over the last few years have created a climate of fear for immigrant and refugee communities across the country. Even Washington State, long a welcoming environment, is no stranger to these challenges, as the recent Department of Licensing scandal showed. This climate of fear impacts immigrants and refugees of all statuses, and new research shows this fear is driving immigrants away
from health and human services programs they are legally eligible to participate in. What would you do to leverage local systems and resources to bring immigrant and refugee communities back out of the shadows?

The federal government has failed for years to come up with a plan for comprehensive immigration reform. But there are things we can do locally to increase economic and educational access to opportunity for our newest neighbors and make our communities more welcoming and inclusive. Chiefly among those is protecting immigrants and refugees from the harsh crackdown by ICE and other federal agencies, promoting affordability, and preventing displacement. I support our Attorney General and the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in all of their efforts to right this shameful history we are living. Additionally, I have voted to fund an immigrant legal rights fund and upheld Seattle’s status as a welcoming city.

7. Over half Seattleites and over 40% of people in King County are renters. Currently in most of Washington State tenants can be forced to move with only 20 days’ notice and even within the city of Seattle, there is no guarantee that a landlord will renew a tenant’s lease. [For King County Candidates] As part of the King County Council, will you enact just cause protections to give tenants stability? [For Seattle Candidates] As part of Seattle City Council, will you expand just cause protections for renters with fixed term leases who are up for a lease renewal? [For both] What are your plans and strategies to protect renters?

The landmark eviction reform passed in the legislature is an important first step. We should look into additional protections for families facing eviction, rent stabilization and preventions for rental price gouging. We need better legal assistance for low income people facing violations, disputes, and the threat of eviction, funding for enforcement for renter protections and transitional housing for families and victims of domestic violence. We should be committed to creating a path to rental-ship, affordability, and home ownership.
8. In 2018, the consulting firm McKinsey and Company conducted an extensive analysis of the current crisis response and homeless housing programs in Seattle and King County. They found that our region dramatically under-invests in housing and other system-wide responses, while the numbers of people experiencing homelessness grows. They found that between 2014 and 2017, the number of households accessing homelessness services grew by an average 11 percent a year, while funding grew by an average 2.4 percent a year. The McKinsey analysis estimated an additional investment of between $360 and $410 million per year for at least ten years is required to make and maintain progress in solving homelessness. Such added resources would bring our community in line with sister cities and counties addressing homelessness and affordable housing crises. What are three specific revenue options (local, regional, and state) you would use to generate the necessary funds to fill the gap between current local, state, and federal dollars, and the housing and service system investments required to do the job for Seattle and King County residents experiencing homelessness?

I supported the Seattle City Council’s attempt to create a citywide income tax, knowing that it faces significant legal hurdles. I am pleased that the county and city will create a Regional Governance Authority (RGA), set to be in place in August 2019. The RGA may be in the form of a Public Development Authority (PDA). King County will propose a charter to create the RGA and the city and county will negotiate an inter-local agreement to determine Seattle’s participation. We know this is a regional issue and need Seattle and King County to work together to improve services. I currently serve on the City’s Select Committee on Homelessness and the King County Regional Policy Committee where this is being developed.

9. Seattle and King County are in the midst of a child care crisis because child care is expensive and unaffordable for many working
families. At the same time, some child care providers cannot afford to pay workers a living wage and stay in business. What ideas do you have for solutions?

High-quality, affordable childcare ought to be considered required infrastructure just like schools, roads, hospitals, and other institutions our city needs. I have coined the term “transit-oriented childcare” as I am collaborating with a few for-profit developers to add a childcare facility to the area before the arrival of light rail. Having accessible childcare is crucial to for families to thrive in Seattle.

10. Survivors of gender-based violence frequently enter the criminal justice system due to their victimization, but criminal justice responses are woefully inadequate and problematic for most survivors for a variety of reasons, especially Black, indigenous, and other survivors of color, refugee and immigrant survivors; and gender non-conforming survivors. What specific solutions will you bring forward for addressing issues of gender-based violence in our city? What mechanisms would you employ to shift the structural oppression and racism, specifically in criminal justice institutions?

I secured hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding for Aurora Commons, which works to support sex workers and help them if they indicate they want to transition out of that field. Additionally, I secured nearly $200,000 in funding for Mother Nation, a local non-profit that supports Native Women experiencing homelessness and domestic violence, because Native Americans make up 1 percent of the population but 10 percent of the homeless population.

11. Describe how you would represent your constituents to ensure there is a pathway to emergency food services for all who need it. What policies and investments would you support so that residents across Seattle and King County have equal access to adequate, culturally appropriate, healthy food?
I know what it’s like to be hungry and bring that experience with me to Seattle City Hall every day. I would continue to build on the strong relationships I have built with service providers like North Helpline. I worked to get hundreds of thousands of dollars of funding so that North Helpline could provide more resources and food and be a cornerstone of food security infrastructure in North Seattle. The $18 million in funding I secured for a new Lake City Community Center (LCCC) includes bringing the kitchen up to Commercial Grade standards. This upgrade will ensure that the LCCC is better able to support senior meal programs and supporting kids who don’t have access to free or reduced cost lunch during their summer vacation. Lastly, I voted for a soda tax and ensured that the revenue went toward food banks to provide healthy, culturally appropriate food for our neighbors in need.

12. According to a 2017 FBI report, nationwide reports of hate crimes increased by 17% from 2016 to 2017; by 32% in Washington State, and 198% in Seattle. Within Washington State, 38% of reported hate crimes were in Seattle. The City Auditor analyzed data that reported hate crimes doubled from 2014 to 2016 and doubled again from 2016 to 2018. 54% of the crimes related to race/ethnicity and 32% sexual orientation. What are your ideas for responding to hate crime in our region without criminalizing communities of color?

It’s terrible that in 2019 people of color, the LGBTQ community, women, and our Jewish and Muslim neighbors are facing more hate and violence. The FBI has reported an increase bias crimes at the same time as racism and nationalism are on the rise across the country since the election of Donald Trump. The City Council is currently crafting legislation to combat and address the spike in bias crimes. I want to make sure that this legislation is done correctly and all voices are at the table, especially the LGBTQ community. Since 2016, I supported the efforts of our previous Mayor to implement the recommendations of the Seattle LGBT Task Force to address the rise in hate crimes on Capitol Hill targeting LGBTQ neighbors. Additionally, Seattle had the highest number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2) in the country. I held a committee meeting on the report co-written by Abigail Echo-Hawk of the Urban Indian Health Institute and I am working on legislation to address the
gap in data collection by law enforcement when crimes are committed against Native Americans. I recognize there is a multi-generational lack of trust and rapport between the marginalized communities (especially LGBT folks and Native Americans) and law enforcement and government. I hope to continue the work I have started to listen to the needs of the LGBTQ community and find real solutions for the problems they face.

13. As a city, we have moved to district representation. However, the needs of our residents are not necessarily most efficiently and effectively addressed by district. Nonprofit services most often cross multiple districts and people who make use of the services interact with providers throughout the city. How will you work to represent both the needs of your district as well as Seattle as a whole?

I serve the City of Seattle, but honor the needs of my district. I hired a dedicated District Director as well as securing funding for other Councilmembers to be able to hire District Directors. I have a District office on the campus of North Seattle College with dedicated office hours every Friday to ensure the people of D5 have easy access to their Councilmember. My work on the Key Arena renovation project is a clear example of how I work on issues affecting the city as a whole. I worked with stakeholders including business, labor, and government to find consensus solutions that benefited the whole city by minimizing the cost to taxpayers while bringing an NHL team to Seattle.

14. Will you support an automatic annual inflation adjustment tied to the CPI-W for the City's human services contracts so providers can maintain current levels of service as costs of doing business increase?

Yes.