

20 Questions for Delaware General Assembly Candidates

CANDIDATE NAME: DEBBIE HARRINGTON (D)

CANDIDATE DISTRICT: STATE REP. DISTRICT 9

The Coalition for Smart Justice is committed to cutting the number of prisoners in Delaware in half and eliminating racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Elected officials are essential to achieving those goals. We have launched a campaign to communicate with voters about candidates' positions on issues related to criminal justice reform. This questionnaire is the focus of that effort. If you choose not to respond, we will indicate that in our public communications.

Scale Questions

1. Delaware sends too many people to prison with sentences that are too long.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

This is a true statement and the General Assembly could be redirecting funds to education instead of incarceration.

2. Communities of color are over-policed and underserved.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I firmly believe this dynamic can be used in a favorable manner resulting in desirable community-policing models in neighborhoods. This can ultimately lead to strong relationships with law enforcement and safer communities.

3. Prison time is an effective deterrent to crime. Longer sentences mean less crime.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

This belief is oxymoronic. Prison is not a deterrent to crime yet job training is.

4. It is important to invest more state resources into diversion programs such as drug treatment and community supervision so that fewer people go to prison.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

There are constituents who are serving jail time for their illness, also known as addiction. The State could be redirecting funds to diversion programs, versus incarcerating people with drug problems.

5. It is important to invest more state resources into services that will assist people coming out of prison to find a job and be successful as they re-enter the community.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Preparing those who are returning to the community would be a best practice. It could lead to a reduction in recidivism and safer neighborhoods.

6. When an especially egregious crime happens in Delaware, it is important to pass a law to make sentences harsher.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

It has been proven that harsher sentences are not a deterrent to crime. However, getting constituents engaged with unions or other apprenticeship programs can help reduce crime.

7. The state should retain the power to seize people's assets under current civil asset forfeiture laws even though no crime has been proven.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. People of color are treated more harshly by the police and prosecutors than white people.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I have had the advantage of working with outstanding law enforcement officers in my community. For that, I am truly grateful. There are communities who have had disturbing interactions with the police. I firmly believe that gaining an understanding through cultural competency with the constituents and the police can help break down many of the barriers that currently exist.

9. Probation sentences are too long and there are too many obstacles to meeting the terms of probation.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Upon release from prison, there are many insurmountable obstacles to overcome. Probation is one of them. The system needs to be less cumbersome. The system should be working toward helping people recidivate back into society, without the threat of returning back to prison for miniscule situations.

10. Delaware should reinstate the death penalty for murder.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

As the Spokeswoman for Delaware Repeal, I do not support state-sanctioned murder.

11. Delaware should reinstate the death penalty only for murder of a police officer, prison guard or other first responder.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. The state should establish a civilian oversight board that would review incidences such as serious police brutality or when a police officer kills someone while on duty.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. Bail reform is important so that a person's ability to access money does not determine who stays in prison awaiting trial and who goes home.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. Juveniles should not be tried as adults no matter what crime they are accused of.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. People with a felony record should be able to have that record expunged by a judge, even for serious crimes, after a period of 5-10 years has elapsed with no further criminal activity.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Open-Ended Questions

16. African Americans are 22 percent of Delaware's population and 51 percent of our prison population. What should the General Assembly do to reduce the racial disparities at various stages of our criminal process?

Community Policing works. The General Assembly can assist with the reduction in racial disparities at various stages, by directing funds to community policing efforts, especially in Wilmington and Dover.

There are excellent examples showing the correlation between the reduction in crime and community policing. While serving as a City Councilwoman, I literally walked the streets with members of the Wilmington Police Department. We built strong relationships and communities along the way. This is an initiative that can go statewide and find positive results, with the proper funding.

17. The average length of stay in prison in Delaware is 50 percent longer than the national average. Will you pledge to advocate for the elimination of all mandatory minimum sentences? Please give a yes or no answer and any explanation you think is necessary. If there are mandatory minimums you support, please identify them specifically.

Yes, I can wholeheartedly support the elimination of mandatory minimum sentences except for gun crimes. I was raised on the West Side of Wilmington, where I still reside, and those who commit crimes with guns have made some community members prisoners in their own homes. I am willing to work with the Smart Justice Coalition to find ways to help stop the violence. Gun crimes are keeping Our Seniors indoors on beautiful days.

18. Do you support legislation and appropriation of funds requiring the collection, analysis and publication of statistical data in order to track prosecutorial decisions, evaluate the effectiveness policies and assess racial bias in the criminal

justice system? Please give a yes or no answer and any explanation you think is necessary.

Yes, institutional racism is rampant in the criminal justice system. One of the best ways to work toward the elimination of racial bias is to expose it. It cannot be dealt with until it is recognized. I absolutely would support legislation and appropriations of funds requiring the collection, analysis and publication of statistical data.

19. Other than gun control legislation. how can Delaware fight our gun violence problem? Are there specific proposals that you would offer as a member of the General Assembly to reduce gun violence in the state?

Yes, the gun violence problem is the direct result of people living in impoverished conditions, with very little hope. As a member of the General Assembly, I would sponsor and support legislation that promotes apprenticeship programs and work with unions, and other entities, to provide second chances for those with felony records. This course of action will help restore hope and promise in desperate communities, while enhancing economic development.

20. Do you support diversion for people accused of some violent crimes such as offensive touching and assault in the third degree?

Yes, I support diversion programs for first-time offenders such as offensive touching and assault in the third degree. These programs, upon successful completion, may be the one element that was needed to help the offender make positive changes in his/her life.