



## 20 Questions for Delaware General Assembly Candidates

**CANDIDATE NAME: LAURA STURGEON (D)**

**CANDIDATE DISTRICT: STATE SENATE DISTRICT 4**

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

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

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

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

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

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

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

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

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
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
10. Delaware should reinstate the death penalty for murder.
- Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
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?

We should continue with bail reform so that no one goes to prison for failing to post cash bail because that is unfair to people of more modest means. We should make the conditions of probation fair for the individual on probation, taking into account their ability to meet those conditions—it is fundamentally unfair to place obstacles in front of people that they cannot surmount due to lack of funds, transportation, or even a stable residence in which to live and then punish them for not complying with their probation conditions due to these obstacles. We place an undue burden on the poor while people with more resources are able to navigate the system with relative ease and this is an injustice. The question did not ask about economic means but black people in our state are disproportionately likely to experience economic hardship and make up a disproportionate percentage of our low-income population due to generational poverty and ongoing systemic and institutional racial discrimination due to conscious or unconscious bias.

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 am totally opposed to mandatory minimum sentences. Every case must be reviewed individually for mitigating and extenuating (and sometimes aggravating) circumstances.

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.

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, treating gun violence as the public health crisis that it is and funding CDC studies (or the equivalent at the state level) to track it so we can use the data to tackle the problem. We also need for all our agencies to be able to share data –schools should be talking with social services who should be talking with the criminal justice system, etc. People slip between the cracks because we have no seamless way to communicate among agencies that can help at-risk individuals. Early intervention is also key. We need to rely on schools to identify children who are most at risk for gun violence and make sure that information is disseminated appropriately to the proper agencies with due regard for privacy and with an eye to helping before it is too late. We know what life factors make a person at risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of gun violence and of crime in general. We just need to use that information to intervene as early as possible for prevention.

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

Yes.