



**Metropolitan Washington Council  
AFL-CIO**

**2018 Prince Georges/Montgomery Counties  
PRIMARY ELECTIONS**

**CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Overview:**

The Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO, is comprised of 180 local unions representing working people in all public industry sectors. The Metropolitan Washington Council AFL-CIO's priorities are outlined below:

- creating family sustaining jobs for all;
- investing in education, infrastructure, healthcare and transportation;
- improving the lives of workers through education, quality job training, career advancement and livable wages with good benefits;
- ensuring fair, progressive tax policies;
- making high-quality, affordable healthcare available to everyone;
- holding corporations and government more accountable to ensure that the public good is served by taxpayer dollars; and
- ensuring that a worker's universal right to organize and to bargain collectively for wages, hours and conditions of work are maintained and enforced.

**Metropolitan Washington Council AFL-CIO  
2018 CANDIDATE'S QUESTIONNAIRE**

**GENERAL INFORMATION:**

Name **Seth Grimes**

Address **7300 Willow Avenue**

City / County **Takoma Park, Montgomery** Zip **20912**

Phone: **301-873-8225** Email **seth@sethgrimes.org**

Candidate for: **Montgomery County Council, at large**

Campaign Committee Name and Address: **Seth Grimes for Montgomery County  
226 Park Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912**

Campaign Committee Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email / Web **http://sethgrimes.org**

Campaign Manager: **Katie Stauss + Field Director Attia Little**

Campaign Treasurer: **Kenneth Firestone**

Does your campaign accept PAC contributions? **No**

Previously elected / appointed office: **Takoma Park City Council** Term **2011-3, 2013-5**

Have you ever received labor's endorsement? **No**

**PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY YOU SEEK LABOR'S ENDORSEMENT:**

**I value unions and wish to support them and their members. I would therefore value labor's endorsement as recognition of my experience and effectiveness - working in support of labor and for social and economic justice - and the skills I will bring to the Montgomery County Council as an advocate and legislator. Labor's endorsement will help me win, and it will win labor an additional strong voice in Rockville, the community, and the state.**

SIGNATURE: 

DATE: **April 24, 2018**

**Please return your signed questionnaire by Wednesday, April 25, 2018 to the below address:**

**Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO**

**Attn.: David Dzidzienyo**

**815 16<sup>th</sup> St NW, Washington, DC, 20006**

**Submissions can also be e-mail to [ddzidzienyo@dclabor.org](mailto:ddzidzienyo@dclabor.org)**

## 2018 Candidate Questionnaire

### A. Workplace Rights: (Please answer by checking the box)

There are certain basic workplace rights that the unions and members of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO believe are fundamental and absolutely essential. Collective bargaining elections and representation are permitted for private sector employees, whereas for public sector employees in Maryland, legislation is required in order to have those same rights. Over the past decade, these rights have been given to many state, higher education and K-12 public school education employees and some county employees. However, thousands of public sector employees are still denied these rights.

1. Would you support comprehensive collective bargaining legislation that would provide collective bargaining rights (including exclusivity, binding arbitration and an independent labor board) for all public employees-local, county, school boards and state?

**Support**

What is your position on each of these fundamental rights?

2. The right of workers to organize and have union representation

**Support**

3. The right to freely exercise workplace rights free from harassment, intimidation and/or delays

**Support**

4. The right to bargain collectively with a legal obligation on both sides to negotiate in good faith

**Support**

5. The right to resolve differences in a fair, impartial and timely manner, including binding arbitration

**Support**

The National Labor Relations Act grants private sector workers the right to organize themselves and be represented by a union in collective bargaining negotiations. From time to time, opponents of collective bargaining propose legislation to curtail workers' bargaining strength and effectiveness. Under the innocuous sounding name of "Right-to-Work," this legislation purports to protect the rights of workers and improve the state's economic development climate. But the net result in Right-to-Work states is that workers earn less, have fewer health care benefits and have higher job fatality rates. Right to Work laws prohibit workers from negotiating a "union shop" or "union security" clause in their contracts. Such a clause obligates those in the bargaining unit to pay their fair share of the collective bargaining representation costs. By wiping out that protection, Right to Work actually weakens the rights of working people.

6. Would you support Right to Work in Maryland?

**No**

Opponents of the labor movement have tried in recent years to stifle labor's political and legislative voice through a friendly sounding proposal called "paycheck protection." It proposes to give rank and file members more control over how their dues money is spent. It does so by requiring unions to spend an incalculable amount of time and money jumping through bureaucratic hoops. The net effect is that it would make it virtually impossible for unions to represent their members in the political and legislative arenas.

7. What is your position on the so-called paycheck protection idea?

**Oppose**

Maryland's community colleges were established by state law and receive part of their funding from the state. Yet, unlike K-12 public school employees in each county, community college workers do not have the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining.

8. What is your position on granting collective bargaining rights to community college employees?

**Support**

When workers choose an exclusive collective bargaining representative, that union is legally obligated to represent every worker in the unit. Even when some people choose to be non-members, the union must represent them fully and fairly. In other words, those who pay dues are obligated to subsidize those who don't.

9. In your opinion, should a union be permitted to collect a service fee from non-members for the cost of union representation as long as there are protections for those who object on religious grounds?

**Yes**

**B. Health Care:** (Please answer by checking the box)

The financial imperatives transforming the health care industry increasingly undermine the ability of clinicians to make health care decisions based strictly on the needs of their patients. This includes a pervasive practice by hospital corporations not to have on shift at all times a sufficient number of registered nurses taking care of patients, a practice which is dangerous for patients and studies show increases morbidity and mortality rates among hospital patients. Another manifestation of this problem is that Maryland has the longest emergency room wait times in the country, according to the US federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; one clear cause of this is understaffing in the ERs and other units of the hospitals. What steps would you pursue to protect and improve the quality of patient care in county hospitals and clinics? Do you support mandatory, minimum nurse-to-patient ratios in acute-care hospitals? Do you support measures to limit unsafe, premature discharges of patients or transfers from acute care hospitals to nursing homes or other sub-acute facilities? Do you support legislation to enact new protections for hospital patients warehoused in “observation status” with fewer protections accorded other patients?

Currently 28 million Americans, including 389,000 Marylanders, have no health insurance and tens of millions more across the country have inadequate insurance with high co-pays and deductibles that prevent them from seeking care. While this is an improvement from the number of uninsured people in the state before the passage of the Affordable Care Act and the expansion of Medicaid in Maryland, it is still unacceptable to the state’s registered nurses. Over 10% of Maryland’s population (i.e., over 600,000 people) still cannot afford to see a doctor.[1] This situation will get worse if CareFirst, the state’s dominant health insurance carrier, obtains its requested 52% rate hike from the Maryland Insurance Administration. President Trump and Congressional Republicans have sought to make a bad situation much worse by attempting to pass (unsuccessfully thus far) new federal legislation that will deny care to an additional 22 million people, including those in Maryland dependent on Medicaid and the ACA exchanges. But even without these Republican proposed changes, the US still ranks poorly among industrial nations in a large number of health indicators, despite paying more per capita than most other OECD countries.

1. Do you believe that health care is a human right? Are you in favor of a publicly-administered, single-payer universal health care system? Will you champion legislation to implement such a plan in the State of Maryland?

**Yes; Yes; Yes**

2. Nurses have some of the highest rates of work-related, musculoskeletal injuries of any occupation. Do you support legislation that would require that hospitals institute and utilize lift teams and lift equipment, and that also protects the rights of nurses to speak out regarding unsafe patient care practices?

**Yes**

3. The rates of workplace violence in health care settings have risen to epidemic proportions. The Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that 48% of all non-fatal injuries from occupational assaults and violent acts occurred in healthcare and social service

settings. Healthcare workers specifically are five times more likely, than all other major industries combined, to be the victim of assault. Thus far, California is the only state to have passed comprehensive workplace violence prevention legislation to protect registered nurses and other healthcare workers. In order to be effective, such a standard must mandate that every hospital develops a workplace violence prevention plan in conjunction with registered nurses that is unique to the needs of each unit, and is in effect at all times in every unit. It must include hazard identification and correction procedures, annual program evaluation, in-person training for all employees and sufficient staffing to respond to workplace violence incidents. Do you support the creation of a comprehensive workplace violence prevention standard for healthcare workers in Maryland?

**Yes**

As health care costs continue to escalate, many Marylanders do not have access to affordable quality health care services.

4. What should the next Administration and General Assembly do to solve this problem?

**Either: Adopt a state universal health care system OR Provide coverage to the uninsured but leave private insurance plans in place**

**D. Education:** (Please answer by checking the box)

1. Would you support returning to an all-elected Board of Education for PGCPS?

NA

2. Would you support removing all authority of the Country Executive from PGCPS? Including returning the CEO position to that of Superintendent as outlined by the State.

NA

3. Will you as an elected official commit to providing a budget that will fully support the Prince George's public school system and the necessary resources needed?

NA

4. Do you support collective bargaining for teachers in Charter Schools?

**Yes**

Maryland continues to have one of the best public education systems in the country. Much progress has been made since 1999 and the establishment of the Thornton Commission and the passage of legislation based on the commission's recommendations.

5. Do you support Full Funding for Thornton?

**Yes**

**C. Accountability/Economic Development:** (Please answer by checking the box)

Good Jobs First has developed model legislation aimed at improving government transparency and accountability for subsidized economic development projects. Many states and municipalities have adopted the model legislation.

**As an elected County official, will you introduce and support legislation to** (Please check all that apply):

- Require company-specific reporting for each subsidy deal as originally granted, and annual reporting for each deal's actual outcomes with regard to jobs created, wages and benefits paid, capital invested, and other public benefits.
- Establish job creation standards for economic development projects receiving County subsidies, such as the number of new full-time jobs that must be created for a specified level of financial assistance
- Establish job quality standards for economic development projects receiving County subsidies, such as the number of hours that must be worked per week, provision of paid leave, provision of health insurance, apprenticeship participation, and wage standards
- Recapture or rescind subsidies if a recipient fails to achieve its job creation, wage and healthcare requirements
- Require annual reporting of companies receiving County property tax abatements and reductions
- Require a publicly accessible unified economic development budget that provides a comprehensive accounting of economic development spending all in one place

**E. Standing with the Democratic Party:** (Please check all that apply)

Every four years, the Democratic Party establishes its party platform—the ideas and beliefs that govern the party as a whole. In 2016, the platform included the following tenets related to workers. As a Prince George's County councilmember and member of the Democratic Party, please indicate which of the following you support.

- Make it easier for workers to exercise their right to organize and join unions



- ✓ Bring companies to the negotiating table
- ✓ Support binding arbitration to help workers who have voted to join a union reach a first contract
- ✓ Oppose so-called “right to work” laws
- ✓ Vigorously oppose any efforts to roll-back prevailing wage standards
- ✓ Defend the right of workers to collect their defined benefit pensions and ensure workers get priority and protection when pension plans fail
- ✓ Make investments to spur the creation of jobs for our young people
- ✓ Fight to ensure every American has access to quality, affordable health care
- ✓ Push for more educational benefits and job training for veterans

**THIS SECTION APPLIES ONLY TO MONTGOMERY COUNTY CANDIDATES**

**F. Extending Montgomery County’s Prevailing Wage Law to Include School Construction:**  
(Please answer by checking the box)

Prevailing wage laws assure that workers on public works projects are paid a wage that is most common or “prevailing” for a specific job in a specific geographic location. They prevent contractors from undermining local employment by low bidding or bringing in workers at lower wages.

MCPS is budgeting its school construction projects to avoid paying prevailing wages—seeking to achieve cost savings by paying construction workers as little as possible in a county with a high cost of living.

Maryland enacted its prevailing wage legislation in 1945. Montgomery County enacted its prevailing wage law in 2008, but excluded school construction projects. Consequently, MCPS construction is governed solely by the State’s prevailing wage law. The threshold for applying the State’s prevailing wage law occurs when the state funds 75% or more of total project costs.

According to OLO Report 2017-4, “New School Construction Costs,” by Stephanie Bryant, to avoid paying prevailing wages on its school construction projects, MCPS does not request more than 24.9 percent of state funding for any school projects.

1. As a Montgomery County elected official, will you introduce and support legislation to close the loophole and extend the County’s prevailing wage law to cover County school construction projects?

**Yes**

**G. Establishing a Montgomery County PLA Ordinance:** (Please answer by checking the box)

Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) have been proven to bring in projects on time and on budget. They also have the added benefit of building community partnerships with contractors and unions to hire locally, provide family healthcare, pensions, and a career path for residents.

Across the DMV area, LiUNA has been successful securing PLAs on a wide range of projects, including the DC United Soccer Stadium, the Wizards Practice Facility, the Northeast Boundary Tunnel, and the South Capitol Street Bridge in Washington, DC; the Purple Line in suburban Maryland; and the 395 HOT Lanes in Virginia, among others. This pipeline of projects enables laborer apprentices to move from project to project as one ends and another begins, accumulating the hours they need to graduate and become journey workers earning family-supporting wages.

Other jurisdictions have also adopted PLA ordinances. For example, in Prince George's County, the County Executive has had express authority since 2011 to execute PLAs on County-funded projects of \$1 million or more. In the District of Columbia, a law was passed in 2016 requiring PLAs on city-funded construction projects valued at \$75 million or more, unless the Mayor indicates in writing that such an agreement is not in the best interest of the District.

1. As a Montgomery County elected official, will you introduce and support legislation to require PLAs on County construction projects valued at \$20 million or more unless the County Executive indicates in writing why a PLA on a particular project would not be in the best interest of residents?

**Yes**

2. Will you sign PLA's per Current county law?

**Yes**

3. Will you adopt apprenticeship readiness programs with RFP's on County projects?

**Yes**

**H. Transportation:** (Please provide your response on a separate sheet).

1. Going into WMATA's FY2019 budget season, politicians, community groups, labor, and business groups have weighed in on the dedicated funding debate. If you are elected, what would you propose to provide WMATA dedicated funding, and how would you navigate the politics of the situation and unite the jurisdictions around your proposal?

**The Maryland General Assembly has approved Maryland dedicated WMATA funding. I support this and have no further steps in mind.**

**I'll add that I'm a frequent Metrorail and Metrobus rider.**

2. In the last few months, there have been several major safety concerns that have been raised publicly by ATU Local 689 leadership and members. From operator assaults to issues with the 7000 series trains, the public has seen that WMATA management doesn't seem to be able to create a true safety culture at WMATA. How would you work with and support employees who raise safety concerns and are ignored?

**Advocate will be a core part of my job as a Montgomery County Councilmember – for residents, workers, and business-owners. If a WMATA employee comes to me with safety concerns, I will pursue the concerns with WMATA management and the WMATA board and if necessary with oversight bodies and within the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Rider and employee safety is essential.**

3. In addition, how would you work with labor to help tackle the larger issue of establishing a safety culture at WMATA and solving some of the recent safety issues, like operator assault, that have been brought to the forefront?

**I will meet with labor representatives periodically and as needed to agree on ways to pursue safety issues and to establish a safety culture at WMATA.**

4. With the recent revelation that WMATA and ATU Local 689 have reached an impasse in negotiations due to their inability to agree regarding the employee's defined benefit pension, many politicians and advocates for privatization have tried to make a case for lowering "labor costs" by eliminating hard earned, very basic worker protections. How would you champion worker protections and change the narrative surrounding "labor costs" and defined benefit pension costs?

**I will meet with ATU Local 689 as soon as possible after the June 26 primary to discuss pension concerns and worker protections and see how I can publicly support union positions as soon as I take office in December, 2018.**

5. In the last six months, there has been a lot of discussion surrounding the possibility of the establishment of a federal control board to run WMATA. If that happened, the possibility of eliminating legally binding labor contracts would become a reality, endangering thousands of workers. What are your thoughts regarding the takeover of a federal control board and would you be open to adding a labor seat to the WMATA Board?

**Calls for establishment of a federal financial control board for WMATA have died down in the last year, yet I can say that I oppose them. The federal government under the Trump Administration is a cesspool, anti-labor of course, and such a step would likely be yet another Trump disaster.**

**I am open to adding a labor seat to the WMATA Board. That's a great idea!**

**I. Bail Reform:** (Please provide your response on a separate sheet).

Under the current money bail system, judges in Maryland typically set financial conditions of release, with little consideration as to whether the defendant can meet them. Defendants must then either pay the court or a commercial bail bondsman to get out of jail. Those who can't afford bond often remain incarcerated until their cases go to trial, sometimes for periods of weeks or longer.

1. Maryland's highest court approved key changes to the state's bail system, setting into motion a reform designed to keep defendants from languishing in jail before trial simply because they're poor, do you support Bail Reform Efforts?

**Yes.**

**J. Confederate Monuments and Memorials:** (Please provide your response on a separate sheet).

At the federal level, legislation is being proposed that would prohibit the use of taxpayer funds for the creation, maintenance, or display of any Confederate symbols on Federal property. The Federal proposal defines “Confederate symbol” as a Confederate battle flag, any symbol or other signage that honors the Confederacy, any monument or statue that honors a Confederate leader or soldier or the Confederate States of America. Localities across the nation are having this debate.

1. What is your position on this matter?

**I support this position.**

2. Should there be legislation removing Confederate symbols from libraries, parks, streets, and public buildings?

**Yes, if necessary.**

Candidate (Please Print Legibly): **Seth Grimes**

Signature: 

Date: **April 24, 2018**

Thank you.