

SEN. REBECCA SALDAÑA SUSPENDS PUBLIC LANDS CAMPAIGN

It's with so much gratitude to you — my community, supporters, family, friends, and team — that I am suspending my campaign to become Washington State's next Commissioner of Public Lands.

I decided to run for Commissioner of Public Lands (CPL) because I care so deeply about this beautiful place I get to call home. I believe that our greatest resources are the people of Washington. I was called and recruited by environmentalists who know me and know my work — which held the “grand bargain” together in the state senate and gave Washington the Climate Commitment Act, the Healthy Environment for All Act, the Clean Fuels policy, Move Ahead Washington and revenue to support natural climate solutions and clean energy investments.

I know that when we center racial, social, environmental, and economic justice and create organized space for the voices of historically and presently excluded communities — we can find innovative solutions that expand what is possible for all of us. I want to uplift endorsements from organizations and labor unions that truly act on their values, including the Latino Victory Fund, Progreso: Latino Progress, Washington CAN, OneAmerica Votes, Washington Machinists Council, and Win With Women. I wholly believe I am still the best candidate in the CPL race to take on the Republican candidate, win, and govern for long-term success. However, I had cancer, underwent six months of chemotherapy while serving all Washingtonians in the state legislature, and faced a three-month fundraising freeze. These hurdles impacted our campaign in finances only. I've never felt stronger or more clear-headed about my priorities and mission. At the end of the day, money in the hands of too few people continues to undermine representative democracy in Washington.

It doesn't matter who is the next CPL: If we don't beat the initiatives on the ballot, we won't have the revenue to fight climate change with natural climate solutions. Motivating people to participate in an unraveling democracy that continues to overlook people of color, Tribal Nations, and other overburdened communities in favor of the status quo is a tall ask. People's livelihoods depend on us taking bold, fearless action; and it's discouraging that despite our work, we have to fight twice as hard and still not get the support our communities need in the face of a climate crisis.

So, I will be the leader who will put my ego aside to focus on what I believe is most important right now:

- My health and well-being: giving my body the time to celebrate and recover from overcoming cancer and completing chemo;
- Leading the Washington State Senate Democratic Caucus Kennedy Fund and partnering to defend voting rights and a truly representative democracy;
- Defeating the initiatives — with No's on I-2109, I-2117, and I-2124 — and being part of the state legislature that will hold the next CPL, corporations, and big timber accountable.

What I've heard from campaigning across the state is people are frustrated. Frustrated by the lack of investments in community organizations doing wildfire resilience and preparedness work as we face worsening wildfires; by not having access to clean groundwater as communities across Yakima County continue to have water contaminated by “forever chemicals”; by a lack of support in the office of Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which has found themselves beholden to big monied interests; and so much more. The work ahead of us all is intersectional, and DNR needs a leader who can take on those challenges with integrity.

The future of our state's natural resources has national and global impacts. Out-of-control wildfires, heat waves, and the continuing COVID-19 pandemic have reminded us all that every one of us depends on each other and Mother Earth. Modernizing and right-sizing our relationship with one another and our land is essential to strengthen and preserve our natural resources and environment for the wealth, health, and well-being of Washingtonians today and for the generations to come.

These times require a theologian turned organizer, an intuitive person, a community builder, and someone who will listen and advocate for the needs of all Washingtonians; I will continue to be that leader.

Adelante.