

Don't Fall for the Bullshit Attacks on Pramila Jayapal

ANSEL HERZ · FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2016

I originally wrote this for Slog, *The Stranger's* blog.

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On Wednesday, a friend messaged me to ask who to vote for in the 7th District Congressional race. He said *The Stranger* had endorsed Brady Walkinshaw, but he wasn't sure what to do.

Let's be clear: The eight-member *Stranger* Election Control Board [voted to endorse Pramila Jayapal](#). SECB member Dan Savage, representing himself, [dissented](#) and decided to back Walkinshaw on Monday.

The attacks on Jayapal are bogus. Don't fall for them.

1. **Jayapal doesn't live in the 7th Congressional District.** SCANDAL! Not. Here's an advertisement that's part of the negative campaign now being run against Jayapal:

the scandal
was how
Jayapal acted!

Actually true. She led the movement to redistrict, including the line that separated her home from CD 7. The stated intent was to create a "majority minority district" by merging the African American part of Seattle with the immigrant communities of Rainer Valley. By running in CD 9 Pramila abandoned the district SHE created!

Jayapal has also made a Trump like statement that she will only move into CD7 IF SHE IS ELECTED!

~~True!~~

**Guess who's *not* voting
for Pramila Jayapal?**



Pramila Jayapal.

Because she can't.

**Jayapal doesn't live in the
7th Congressional District.**



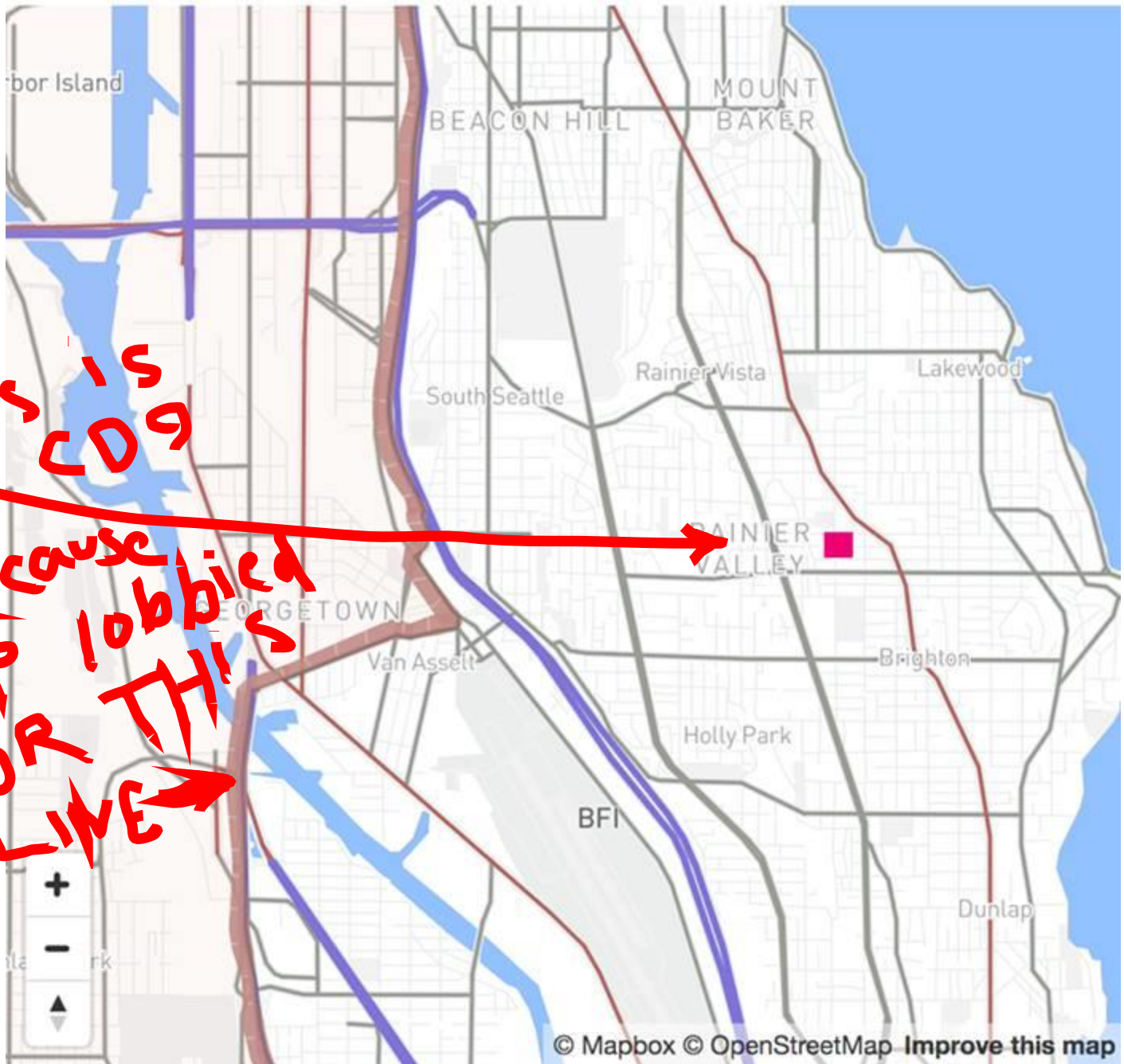
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This is misleading.

This is an attempt to otherize Jayapal, to imply to uninformed voters that she's some kind of foreigner or usurper from outside Seattle. The reality is she's originally an immigrant from India who has made Seattle her home. She moved here in 1991 and has been here ever since. Jayapal has lived in Capitol Hill,

Wallingford, Fremont, and Madrona. Now she lives in Columbia City, 1.5 miles from the Eastern border of the 7th District.

Here's a map of her neighborhood (bright pink box) compared to the district borders (pale pinkish line). Jayapal gave me permission to post this in order to help people visualize where she's now living:



There's no rule against running to represent a congressional district when you live outside its borders. If Jayapal lived far away, on Mercer Island or in Bellevue or something, one could take this argument more seriously. But because Jayapal is and has long been a Seattle resident, it's complete bullshit. Dan accuses Jayapal of "gutless opportunism" for running in the 7th District instead of the 9th:

If Jayapal had challenged [Adam] Smith—if Jayapal had Walkinshaw's guts—the SECB probably would've endorsed her and Washington's [sic] might've sent two people of color to Congress next year."

JARGON!

This is essentialist and reductive. The fact that Jayapal is a person of color doesn't obligate her to run against a white dude instead of against another person of color. Jayapal wants to represent Seattle, where she's lived and worked. And there are real differences between Jayapal and Walkinshaw on the issues.

2. Jayapal is "ineffective."

The one and only piece of evidence presented for this claim is an "analysis" by a private firm called FiscalNote, which gave Jayapal a purely numerical ranking—not taking into account anything about the political dynamics of Washington State—based on the number of bills she'd passed out of committee or got enacted into law. If she'd passed some terrible legislation banning gay sex into law, she'd have a higher rating. Here's what Jorge Barón, Director of the Northwest Immigrants Rights Project, said about the FiscalNote ranking on Facebook:

Those of us who care about justice and social equity should always be wary of these types of "analyses": we see this in the nonprofit sector where too many funders focus on how many people are served and it all becomes about the numbers. And so communities that are hard to reach or that require interpretation or that are experiencing mental illness or that face other obstacles don't get served because the "cost" is too high. Better to serve the

this is trumpism ---
to hell with data!

What
Issues?

easy cases because you'll get your numbers up. And the result is that marginalized communities get further marginalized.

Yes and she did stuff
not get passed

So if you look at the bills for which Pramila was a prime sponsor in the last two years, you'll see that many focus on issues that disproportionately affect communities of color and which were unlikely to be popular in a chamber controlled by Republicans: improving access to higher education for undocumented students, higher minimum wage, improving contraceptive access for Medicaid patients, etc. (I encourage you to look for yourselves at www.leg.wa.gov).

? so getting stuff
passed does not matter?

Is it surprising that Republican state senators did not rush to approve these measures? Of course not. But do we really want legislators who will just want to run up their "FiscalNote score" by sponsoring bills that are safe and uncontroversial but will not address serious inequities in our society? Is this the kind of "effectiveness" we want?

The issue was (and is) that PJ has been ineffective as Senator. No one doubts her achievements in organizing poor immigrants

Read the rest [here](#). This is to say nothing of her record of registering unprecedented numbers of immigrants to vote, founding OneAmerica, suing the Bush administration, and getting rid of [racist landmarks](#) in Washington. The idea that Jayapal hasn't been active or effective is laughable.

3. It was unfair of Jayapal's supporters to slam Walkinshaw the way they did after he attacked her, according to Seattle Times columnist [Danny Westneat](#), and this raises questions about her judgment.

Here's how Seattle City Council Member Lorena González, who condemned Walkinshaw's attacks, responds:

The use of coded language that has the impact of making women and people of color feel like their qualifications are being judged based on their race or

Somebody tell Ms Gonzalez that
Brady is Cabano!

gender is a real phenomenon. The concept that a person of color is per se incapable of subjecting another person of color to the impact of coded language is simply not true. As communities of color, we too can fall into the trappings of using language that can be received, even if not intended, as a micro-aggression based on your sex or race.

Is this racism?

Negativity comes in many forms. I believe that Brady is a good person and that he wants to represent us to the best of his ability, if he wins. We must ask ourselves whether going negative when you're behind is aligned with our values. The Walkinshaw campaign's ads and messages may not rise to the Trump-level, but what does it say about American politics if that is now the new standard by which we measure negativity and micro-aggressions. Seattle should not adopt that as the standard.

so WTF does it mean to say Brady is not Trump?

So: Is this all that Walkinshaw and his consultant Christian Sinderman, who are clearly worried they're going to lose, have got Jayapal lives in the wrong neighborhood? Her stats aren't high enough? Then use these points to imply, without coming out and saying it, that she's not as qualified to represent Seattle in Congress?

Even Dan tries to have it both ways: He admits these arguments are "pretty weak tea, thin gruel," but also uses them to attack Jayapal's character. If we're talking about "gutless opportunism," it's where these candidates have staked out courageous positions on the issues that matter that really counts.

Jayapal has done this on three big occasions: She was an early endorser of Bernie Sanders (making her views in line, it turned out, with most Seattle Democrats), she stood up to more senior members of her own party in the Washington State Senate to fight against a giveaway to predatory payday lenders, and perhaps most tellingly, she was a rare Democratic endorser of Socialist city council member Kshama Sawant.

→ AGAINST AN OUTSTANDING AFRICAN AMERICAN!

RA CISM

Pam Banks is an African American, a protege of Norm Banks and CEO of the Urban League. Sawant was backed by at least \$1,000,000 of out of state PCS, including very wealthy "progressives" groups from New York and Washington DC

Walkinshaw has done none of these things. Unlike Jayapal, he quietly joined the Democratic firing squad and endorsed Sawant's big money-backed challenger in 2014, Pamela Banks. That gives you an indication of where he might stand when the battle for the soul of the Democratic Party is being waged in the post-Trump era

Dan rightly gave huge credit for Seattle's \$15 minimum wage increase to Sawant, then attacked Jayapal for inartfully taking any credit for it (even though she was an early advocate for raising wages). Strangely, he's trying to tear down the one major Democratic politician who stood up for Sawant. This is nonsense. The \$15 was supported by Nick Licata, Mike O'Brien and Mayor Murry.

It's worth noting that Dan couldn't find any labor advocates to agree with him about Jayapal and the minimum wage—only millionaire anti-union business leaders like Dave Meinert and Howard Wright. Workers' advocates like David Rolf and Nicole Keenan, director of the Fair Work Center, have only positive things to say. Ignore the bullshit, listen to the SECB—vote Jayapal.

Dave Meinert owns a number of businesses on Pike Pine and was a MAJOR supporter of Sawant!