

## Assembly District 51 Candidate Survey for October 3, 2017 Special Primary Election

1. Californians face looming cuts and in some cases the current elimination of federal funds to California social safety nets, such as after-school programs, teen pregnancy prevention programs, and HIV/AIDS education. How will you ensure that adequate state funding for sexual and reproductive health is secured and maintained for this district?

*In the Assembly, I will fight to ensure that sexual and reproductive health programs are fully funded by raising awareness about the importance of these programs and pursuing new funding sources, like Prop 13 reform.*

2. In a multicultural state, the conversations about race, white supremacy and bias are real. There have been recent attacks on communities that make up the fabric and strength of Los Angeles- Muslims, immigrants, refugees, communities of color, and transgender people.
  - a) What is a concrete policy or campaign that you will commit to championing that affirms the humanity of transgender people? (e.g. SB 396 and Transform CA)

*I wholly commit to the championing of trans people, something that is particularly important to me as a queer person who knows the terrible, and sometimes deadly, impact of discrimination on the LGBTQ community. As a longtime ally of the trans community and the co-founder of HONOR PAC, I certainly back my longtime friend Senator Ricardo Lara's bill, SB 396, and support the work being done by Transform California.*

- b) What is a concrete policy or campaign that you would support that dismantles white supremacy, empowers communities of color, and addresses safety in our communities?

*While there are a wide variety of policies that I support that would dismantle white supremacy, empower communities of color, and addresses safety in our communities, I believe the most important one right now is the so-called "sanctuary state" bill. The immigrant communities that encompass the 51<sup>st</sup> Assembly District are incredibly fearful for their safety because of the xenophobic actions of the Trump Administration and justifiably so. Passing a sanctuary state bill not only helps to combat neo-white supremacist institutions like ICE, but also makes immigrant communities more safe, and enables local police departments to focus on monitoring violent criminals, rather than being in the business of immigration enforcement.*

*Additionally, another vital policy reform that California needs to address is finally repeal Prop 209, which banned the use of affirmative action in California's public institutions. Enabling our state's world class university system to include race and ethnicity as a component of the admissions process would go a long way toward ensuring that we have an equitable and representative higher education system.*

3. California is among the most secretive states in the nation when it comes to information about police shootings and officer misconduct. California law gives police officers secrecy around their records far beyond that given to any other public employee: all information about discipline and investigations into misconduct is confidential, even that related to shootings and instances where the officer's own department has found they engaged in misconduct.

Should California allow public access to records of investigations, findings, and discipline in police shootings, and other serious uses of force, so long as releasing the information does not interfere with an ongoing investigation? Should California allow public access to records of findings and discipline imposed in any case where a department has, after an appeal, found an officer engaged in misconduct involving a civilian, such as racial profiling, excessive force, unlawful search, or falsifying evidence?

*Yes. Californian police officers must be held accountable to their own actions in their duty of serving the community, so long as releasing such information does not interfere with the investigation at hand. A transparent record of police investigations, findings, and disciplines will provide the public a greater sense of security to the officers they lay their trust in. It will also deter active police officers from unruly misconduct, such as racial profiling or excessive force.*

4. Over the past several years, public concern has grown over the high number of police shootings of civilians, especially in light of disproportionate number of African Americans and individuals who suffer from mental illness. Last year, California saw more police killings than any other state, and the Los Angeles Police Department fatally shot more people than any other police department — including the Chicago PD and NYPD, which are significantly larger. Nothing in state law requires police to engage in best practices to reduce fatal shootings and other excessive force, such as employing de-escalation techniques, requiring officers to intervene when other officers are using excessive force, and requiring prompt provision of medical aid to civilians they injure. Only one officer in Southern California has been criminally charged in a shooting since 2000, and no officer has been convicted.

Should California require de-escalation training for police officers at all departments? In

deciding whether an officer's use of force was legal, should California require that departments and courts consider whether the officer used de-escalation techniques and exhausted alternatives to force? Should California change state law regarding officers' use of deadly force — from authorizing officers to use any "reasonable" force, to authorizing police to use deadly force only when reasonably necessary?

*I believe that a strong majority of the misconduct we see on national headlines are due to the failure of the officer to fully assess and control the situation at the heat of the moment. This sometimes leads to impetuous decisions made by the officer, which then might lead to the increased propensity for misconduct in the forms of overt force. De-escalating training for police officers can greatly reduce the necessity to use force if the situation is adequately controlled, and should be required statewide. We should also work to ensure all techniques of de-escalation are applied by their officers before the use of force is conducted. Forceful intervention should always be the last resort, and only drawn when absolutely necessary.*

5. We believe true freedom and equality includes the right to healthcare, housing and access to all basic human needs services so our communities can thrive. That's why we advocate in support of single-payer healthcare, ending the criminalization of poverty (i.e. laws that target people experiencing homelessness) and expanding access to affordable housing and supportive services.
  - a) The Healthy California Act, SB 562 (Lara & Atkins), would guarantee healthcare for all California residents through a single-payer model. SB 562 would provide medical, dental, vision, mental health, chiropractic and many other services while eliminating premiums, co-pays and deductibles. Will you publicly support and if elected co-author SB 562?

*Yes, I am a proponent of the SB 562. Access to affordable, quality healthcare is a fundamental right that all Americans deserve, regardless of their socio-economic background or immigration status. I am committed to ensuring that California has an affordable, efficient, and quality health care system for both patients and providers.*

- b) Do you believe California – as a state and its municipalities – should change laws that target and criminalize people experiencing homelessness and will you support changing these laws and championing legislation that invests in a well-funded statewide housing trust fund and permanent supportive services?

*Criminalizing the homeless, provided that they are in compliance with the law, is fundamentally wrong if the reason for they're indictment is to do with their state of living. In fact, our compassion should be directed towards them. We need to work together in order to pull them out*

*of this cycle. They are human beings as well, and deserve a second chance to contribute to the society that has abandoned them. A good first step to take is allocating the funds necessary to invest in statewide housing trust funds and permanent support services.*

6. It has been widely acknowledged that California's court system is underfunded. In recent years, defendants in criminal court and traffic court have been charged higher fines and fees in order to fund the courts. This has led to a cycle of debt and incarceration for some of the poorest and most vulnerable Californians. The ACLU of Southern California believes that administering a court system is a core function of government and that the costs of administering courts should not be shifted to defendants, the vast majority of whom are low-income.

Who should bear the costs of administering California's justice system? If you believe that criminal and traffic court defendants are partly responsible for funding this system, what measures would you take to address California's high fees and fines and their disproportionate impact on low-income communities and communities of color?

*Monetary constraints should never deter the defendant's right in making a defence for himself before the court of law. I agree with the ACLU that the costs of administering courts should not be shifted to defendants, especially when the majority are of a low income.*

7. Proposition 13 was passed by voters to provide important protections for homeowners and renters, but it also included a property tax loophole for many corporations and wealthy commercial property owners. This loophole allows some big corporations and wealthy investors to avoid paying their fair share in property taxes. We can no longer afford to keep giving billions of dollars in tax breaks to millionaires, billionaires and big corporations. Closing California's commercial property tax loopholes restores \$9 Billion for schools, community colleges and other vital community services, including health clinics, emergency rooms, affordable housing, parks, libraries and public safety. Do you support closing the commercial property tax loophole in Proposition 13 by taxing commercial and industrial property at its fair market value while preserving the important protections for homeowners and renters so we can invest in strengthening our schools and important local priorities?

*I strongly support closing the commercial property tax loophole in Proposition 13. It is not so much that the rich should pay more taxes to the state, but that they should pay their fair share of taxes just like every other member of society. If there is a loophole in the tax code that is known, then every measure to address that loophole must be taken by the state. These missing tax revenues are crucial for the state government to provide a better life for the community it serves. The utility from the owed taxes are channeled directly back to the society in the mold of higher quality education, healthcare, and safety.*

8. California's bail system needs to change. On any given day roughly [60% of people in California jails](#) are being detained before trial or sentencing simply because they cannot afford to post bail. California keeps far more people in jail awaiting trial compared to the rest of the country, but has lower court appearance rates than other states. Further, bail amounts are assigned with staggering racial bias. [Research](#) shows that Black people are assigned higher bail amounts than white people accused of similar offenses. Bail bond amounts for Black men are 35% higher than for white men; for Latino men, they're 19% higher than for white men. As a result of not having the money to pay bail amounts, people often pay nonrefundable fees to bail bond agents and never see that money again even if their case is dismissed, they make every court date, or they are found innocent. People who can't raise money for a bail bond (1) more readily decide to accept plea bargains as a means of getting out of jail quicker because even just a few days in jail can cost people their cars, jobs, housing, or child custody, and (2) are much more likely to be sentenced & to receive longer sentences. SB 10 (The California Money Bail Reform Act) aims to restructure the current bail system and significantly reduce and constrain the use of money bail and prioritize services to help people make their court appearances while their cases move forward. Last Friday the Governor and the Chief Justice publicly announced their support for bail reform and their commitment to work together with the legislature through the fall to pass SB 10. Would you support SB 10?

*Just like the higher fines and fees levied on the defendant in the Californian court system, monetary constraints should never interfere with a person's right to a trial before a judge. The data above suggests that a strong number of incarcerations are due to the fact that bail bonds are simply too expensive, thus leading to involuntary plea bargains even when one might be innocent. SB 10 aims to provide a fair justice system by significantly lowering the cost of a fair trial, and I fully support it.*

9. Current sentences are racially disproportionate and ineffective from a public safety standpoint. The incarceration rate for Black and Latino people is now more than 6 times higher than for whites; 60% of those incarcerated are Black or Latino. Eight percent of Black men of working age are now behind bars, and 21% of those between the ages of 25 and 44 have served a sentence at some point in their lives. To serve overly long sentences, people serve time in jails and prisons with horrifying conditions and rampant inmate abuse, where they're separated from their communities and support systems, and where people with mental health and substance use conditions leave with worse prognoses. People are then released on probation or parole to face years-long waiting lists for reentry services. They're overly surveilled, face numerous of obstacles to reentry, and receive little to no support to ease their transitions. Nearly two thirds of the reentry population technically

violate probation or parole in some way and become incarcerated again. Experts say (1) that we are not going to have a sustainable reduction in our prison population if we continue to limit the discussion to those who are sentenced for non-serious or non-violent crimes and (2) that jurisdictions that divert resources away from incarceration and towards investments in communities are safer and healthier. Would you support reducing sentences, including for people convicted of serious/violent crimes?

*Yes, absolutely. Despite California's perception as a progressive paradise to some, our state unfortunately continues to be a national leader in mass incarceration. We need an all-hands-on-deck approach to addressing this crisis, which must include reducing sentences for people convicted of serious crimes as well as nonviolent offenders.*

10. The California Department of Education (CDE) reported that 243,603 students were suspended once or more in the 2014-15 academic year. The vague and all-encompassing terms "willful defiance" and "disruption of school activities" were by far the primary reason school administrators suspended students, accounting for 129,835 suspensions statewide. In California, African American students make up 6% of total statewide enrollment, but made up 18-20% of the total number of suspensions for willful defiance-related offenses in both 2013-14 and 2014-15. With respect to the age of students suspended or expelled for willful defiance offenses in 2014-15, the majority were high school students in grades nine through twelve (52%), followed by middle school students in grades six through eight (35%), and elementary school students in Kindergarten through fifth grade (13%). Would you support a bill that prohibits California schools from suspending students on the basis of "willful defiance" and "disruption of school activities" in grades kindergarten to 12? If so, what alternatives to such suspensions would you recommend?

*I will support a bill that prohibits Californian schools from suspending students on the basis of these non-violent misbehaviors. The clarification of 'willful defiance' and 'disruption of school activities' as reasons that lead to a child's suspension is important as it removes ambiguity from one case to the next. However, punishing children through suspension at such a young age is detrimental to the child's development, especially during his or her formative years. Children instead should be instructed to re-evaluate their decisions through conversations with trained counselors, as opposed to immediate suspension that acts as an unsuccessful deterrence.*

11. In 2013-14, 24% of elementary schools and 42% of all high schools in the U.S. had a full-time assigned police officer. In 2015-16, 19 school districts throughout California operated their own police departments. The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights' 2013-14 statistics show that, in California, the average arrest rate in schools where more than 80% of students are low-income is seven times higher than the average arrest rate in schools where fewer than 20% of students are low-income. Department of Education

statistics also show that although students with disabilities made up only 12% of student enrollment nationwide, they comprised 23% of police referrals, 23% of arrests, and 67% of students placed in physical restraint, seclusion, and confinement. Further, school officials are more likely to refer incidents involving students of color to the police than those involving white students: Native American students are 3.4 times more likely, Black students are 2.7 times more likely, and Hawaiians/Pacific Islander students are 1.4 times more likely to be referred to police. Do you support prohibiting law enforcement officers from being permanently stationed on school campuses? If not, what limits would you place on law enforcement officers being present at school sites? What practices would you recommend as alternatives to arresting or citing students for misbehavior?

*In some schools throughout California, it's far easier to come into contact with law enforcement than a counselor. This needs to stop, and I support prohibiting law enforcement officers from being permanently stationed on school campuses. Instead of getting California's young people needlessly involved in the criminal justice system at such a young age, we can find ways to implement a more restorative form of justice.*

12. Under U.S. and California law, all students, regardless of their nationality or immigration status have a right to public education. Across California parents and guardians have reported being afraid of sending their children to school for fear that students or their family members would be arrested by immigration enforcement. Indeed, in one prominent case, a parent was detained by immigration enforcement while dropping his student off at school. Would you support litigation that (1) bars immigration authorities from school campuses and (2) prohibits school districts from sharing immigration-related information with immigration authorities? How would you protect California immigrant students and families and ensure that they feel safe to attend school?

*Yes, absolutely to both. School districts should be prohibited from sharing immigration-related information with immigration authorities because under the statute, all students, regardless of their nationality or immigration, have a right to a public education. Enrolled and incoming students who may not have American citizenship are still entitled to receive their education without the fear of expulsion due to immigration related offences. Due to the Trump Administration's all out war on immigrant communities, these fears for immigrant families are real and on the rise. I will work to fight against any movement that threatens the security and safeguarding of working immigrant families that simply seek a better life for themselves and their children.*

13. Since 1980, California has built 22 prisons and only three (3) new universities. Decades of disinvestment have resulted in making college less affordable and less attainable for all California students, especially low income students of color. In 2016, SB 1050 (de Leon)

was enacted through the state budget, allocating \$240 million to level the playing field and “expand the pie” of educational opportunity for low income and underrepresented students. Would you support continuing SB 1050’s pipeline approach with future budget funding to increase college readiness and eligibility, expand University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) enrollment slots, and support retention and college graduation for low income and underrepresented students of color? What would you do to increase college access and success for low income students and underrepresented students of color?

*We need to expand the state’s educational outreach at every opportunity available. I will support SB 1050’s pipeline approach with future budget funding to expand the resources available to the UC and CSU in order to attract and accommodate more potential students to a tertiary education. I will also campaign to repeal Prop 209, which prohibited the use of affirmative action in our state’s public universities, and encourage any other vital efforts that support higher college graduation rates for low income and underrepresented students of color.*

14. The Trump Administration has promoted anti-immigrant rhetoric and aggressive immigration enforcement tactics that threaten millions of immigrants, and their families, in California. As part of its stepped-up enforcement campaign, the Administration is seeking to broaden collaboration and cooperation with local law enforcement agencies. This collaboration undermines immigrant community members’ trust in the police and public safety for all Californians. Do you support policies that prohibit local law enforcement agencies from engaging in any cooperation with federal immigration authorities, including by detaining individuals for, or providing release notifications to, immigration agents?

*Yes. I will support any policy that prohibits local law enforcement agencies from engaging in any cooperation with federal immigration authorities, especially with the anti-immigration rhetoric that has been consistently enforced by the Trump administration.*

15. Because there is no right to appointed counsel in removal proceedings, most noncitizens are forced to fight their deportation cases without the assistance of a lawyer. Do you support state funding for counsel for indigent California residents in removal proceedings? Do you believe that funding for this critical due process protection should be available without any exceptions or carve-outs?

*Yes. Without the assistance of a lawyer, noncitizens are almost certain to fail in providing a accurate and sufficient defense in court. Particularly given the Trump administration’s desire to disregard the legal process for undocumented people, the state must intervene on behalf of non-citizens so that a fair trial ensues in removal proceedings.*



