

Luis Lopez

Candidate Statement

As a gay Latino, who grew up in an immigrant family, I have fought stereotypes and defied barriers to healthcare access, overcome tracking and distractions that threatened to derail my education, and faced police scrutiny based on my ethnicity, age, and appearance. Now I'm a nonprofit healthcare leader, an advocate for others in my community, and a champion for equal rights, civil liberties, and social justice.

From elementary school to the Kennedy School at Harvard, I have always been a progressive voice for expansive rights, recognition and protection of our cultural diversity, and true economic equity. My record of service since graduating from Harvard shows I practice these values through public service and relentless coalition-building.

For the past two decades, I've worked in public health, fighting for increased funding for community health clinics and fighting to expand access to quality healthcare for patients. As founder of the Latino Coalition Against AIDS, I successfully championed expanded funding of HIV/AIDS funding under the Schwarzenegger Administration. As a community leader, I've been at the forefront of delivering environmental protection and equity to our communities in Northeast and Eastside Los Angeles. As Vice Chair of The Eagle Rock Association, I led a coalition to stop the expansion of the toxic Scholl Canyon Dump in Glendale.

In Sacramento, I will be the champion we need to protect the rights of everyone and deliver real equity in education, criminal justice, affordable housing, and economic opportunities. As the gay son of immigrants, I know the battle WE face to bring our communities together and achieve a California that is equal to our vision of equality and justice for all.

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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?

For nearly the past two decades, I've worked in public health, fighting for increased funding for community health clinics (when I was at AltaMed) and today, at City of Hope, fighting to expand access to quality health care for patients throughout Los Angeles County and statewide. As a health professional, I have also advocated for healthcare for underserved communities, community health center programs for kids and seniors, and increased HIV/AIDS funding. Also, as a seven-year Board Member of Planned Parenthood Los

Angeles, I've been on the front lines fighting for the continued funding of Planned Parenthood and securing the right of every woman to choose.

People of color communities continue to be the epicenter of the HIV epidemic yet lack the needed resources for the most effective prevention messages, testing, care and treatment services. In general, the failure of our state to maintain solid or sustainable revenue has led to funding cuts at precisely the moment we were poised to take on the challenge of wide-scale, evidence-based, multi-lingual prevention messaging, testing, and treatment. We need to restore our commitment to education about the risks of HIV/AIDS, how to prevent its transmission, and the importance of testing in preventing the spread of the disease. I have been a national board member of AIDS Action and lead staff for the Latino Coalition Against AIDS, so I have direct experience in this battle and will take advantage of my expertise in this area to push measures to help address our continuing HIV/AIDS crisis in California. If I'm elected to serve the voters of the 51st Assembly District, I will continue to be an advocate for public health and fight to my last breath for increased funding.

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)

My life and community service for the past 20 years have been devoted to the fight for full equality for all members of the LGBTQIA community. I am a co-founder of HONOR PAC and the HONOR Fund, two organizations dedicated to empowering LGBTI individuals from the Latino community. I have worked for marriage equality for a decade as a member of organizations, such as Let California Ring and the Stonewall Democratic Club. I have been a national board member of AIDS Action and lead staff for the Latino Coalition Against AIDS.

As an LGBTQIA leader, this cause is deeply personal to me, and is something I am committed to continue fighting for. I believe we must keep fighting until the LGBTQIA community is treated equally, given the same rights, and fully respected by society. This is especially true for the transgender community.

- 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?

The only way to dismantle white supremacy and empower communities of color is to truly deliver an equitable education system that truly delivers a quality education to every child no matter where they might live. Until we have near equity between classrooms, teachers,

and educational opportunities in schools in East Los Angeles and Santa Monica, our society will not be truly equal. Continuing to struggle, fight, and claw for equity must remain our cause.

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?

Transparency is a great disinfectant for corruption and misconduct. I believe that we must rebuild the public's respect for police officers and a great way to do that would be to allow for public access to records involved in police shootings and serious use of force cases that does not interfere with an ongoing investigation.

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?

California should require de-escalation training for police officers to reduce the amount of force used and provide alternative non-violent methods to save lives and reduce injury to the public. As for changing how our justice system reviews the actions of public safety officers, I am not an attorney nor am I an expert on public safety. If I'm elected, I would look to groups like the ACLU, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, PORAC, Crime Victims United, and other groups with extensive knowledge and expertise in the justice system to review California's current standard and provide input in the development of a new standard.

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?

I believe we must move toward a single-payer healthcare system that ensures universal access to comprehensive care for all, citizens, residents, travelers, and especially the undocumented. The rest of the industrialized world provides universal healthcare to their residents, while spending considerably less per capita than we do and providing much better health outcomes in general. We must work toward developing a healthcare system that covers and serves everyone. If elected to serve in the Legislature, I will work with CNA and other like-minded stakeholders to accomplish this goal.

- 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?

Homelessness is one of my top concerns. It won't be solved over night, but if elected, I want to bring the city, county and state together to focus on a holistic approach to tackling the homeless crisis. Unfortunately, currently the city, county, and state are not aligning their policies and funding to truly tackle homelessness. The county receives the vast majority of federal dollars to focus on public health and homelessness, but they do not work well with the city or state and align their efforts to the areas where the homeless population is. The county's one-fits-all approach simply doesn't work.

Until the County begins aligning their services with other government agencies, can the funding align to the problem at hand. As an Assemblymember, I would do everything I

could to bring the city and county together and better focus our resources to solve the homeless problem.

Further, I know that the affordable housing crisis is only acerbating the homeless crisis. If elected, I will focus on expanding funding for affordable housing, working with environmentalists and developers to find quicker methods to move through the permitting process, and with community groups to urge local officials to approve more affordable housing projects.

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?

California's justice system needs to be paid for by all tax payers, the brunt of the costs should not be borne by defendants within the system. To administer justice in a democratic society, we must have an open court system that applies the law equally to all those who come before it, no matter their net worth. Unfortunately, our current system does not allow for this type of blind justice before the law.

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 believe we must level the playing field when it comes to taxation in California. That means changing our tax system to ensure corporations, like Apple and Google, pay their fair share

of taxes. “Increasing” the corporate tax rate would allow for a reduction in taxes on truly small businesses, those with 50 or fewer employees. This tax shift would help small businesses grow and help to level the playing field between the corporate giants and the mom and pop businesses that create great communities.

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?

I fully support the Governor and Chief Justice in their efforts to reform the current money bail system. As stated above, I do not believe our system of justice is blind or applies justice equally to everyone in our society. Changes needs to be made and reforming our current bail system is one step toward a more equitable justice system.

9. Current sentences are racially disproportionate and ineffective from a public safety standpoint. The incarceration rate for Black and Latinx people is now more than 6 times higher than for whites; 60% of those incarcerated are Black or Latinx. 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?

It saddens me to know that the State of California has been more prisons than universities over the last two decades. We must reduce our prison population by ending the school-to-prison population and delivering a more equitable public education system where every student is given the opportunity to succeed through college or career.

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?

The state should follow the lead of LAUSD and Oakland Unified in ending the use of willful defiance suspensions and instead funding restorative justice programs. Implementing restorative justice programs helps to get to the root causes of the disruptive behavior and builds a better, stronger school sites that prioritize de-escalation, building trust between students, teachers and administrators, and modeling better social-emotional skills.

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?

We need to rip up the school-to-prison pipeline, that starts with making school campuses safe havens for our students. Developing enriching, culturally sensitive school environments built upon a restorative justice disciplinary system is a first step. Student activity should not be criminalized, instead teachers and administrators should be taught de-escalation skills to reduce violence on our campuses.

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?

As stated above, our school campuses must be safe havens for ALL students, no matter what their immigration status is. I support barring ALL immigration authorities from our school campuses and prohibiting districts from sharing immigration-relation information with immigration authorities.

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?

You can tell a great deal about a group’s priorities by how they choose to spend their limited resources. Sadly California has chosen to prioritize building prisons over building college campuses. We must reverse the trend of building seven new prisons for every new university in California.

If elected, I will work to reverse this trend and actually prioritize spending more money on higher education than on our prison system. Increasing our funding for higher education will allow for more investment in programs to help minority students attend and graduate from college and reduce the reliance of the Community College, CSU, and UC systems on student tuition and fees. We must make college more affordable and provide our students more programs to help them both attend college and then succeed once they are in college.

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?

I am in favor of sanctuary policies and want to ensure that our schools, our cities, our counties and our state is protected from the Trump Administration's heartless, mindless, and reckless attempt to separate immigrant American families.

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?

I believe that everyone should be provided counsel as part of their rights to due process under the law. Without representation, a defendant would not be able to defend their rights in our justice system. This basic right to counsel should be without exception or carve-out.