

## 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?

**This is in large part an issue of budgetary priorities. We need to continue to collectively fight to protect and prioritize funding for these very important programs. The value of these programs is proven beyond any doubt. Any program that has such a strong and direct impact of the public's health and well being should never be compromised.**

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)

**As a board member of Equality California, I have fought hard to ensure that the transgender community receives equal rights and protections like any other citizen. I support measures such as SB 396 that will codify the rights of transgender individuals and specifically seek to combat discriminatory practices. I believe we need to work aggressively to enact policies like this one that provide the strongest protections possible while also treating hate crimes as serious criminal offenses.**

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?

**I strongly support policies that seek to dismantle white supremacy and attacks on communities of color such as the recent legislative proposal to treat violence from white supremacy groups as acts of terrorism. As a member of the California Coastal Commission, I have fought hard to ensure that all people have access to our coastline and that we prioritize funding for programs that provide access and recreational opportunities for low income communities of color. Connecting urban communities with the great outdoors isn't just a question of equity, but a surefire way to ensure that our majority-minority population in California is invested in conservation and open space preservation.**

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?

**As a Los Angeles Unified School District Personnel Commissioner, I have personally been involved in oversight of disciplinary appeals for school police officers, and it is important to treat these situations seriously. I believe it is important to conduct comprehensive and unfettered investigations when there are questions of police misconduct, but the public's right to information must always be balanced with an officer's rights as an employee.**

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 do believe that de-escalation training should be required for law enforcement officers. Looking at ways to better prepare officers to handle the multitude of often unpredictable situations they face is always a positive step. As is currently the case when it comes to the review of an officer's conduct in a given situation, if these techniques are part of department procedures they should be considered as part of a holistic review of a given situation.**

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 agree that the right to quality, accessible, and affordable health care is a human right. California should continue to be a leader in creating new policies that achieves this common goal. By the same token, I believe that in this current national political climate where all of the historic strides we have made in health care policy over the last decade are under attack, we must do everything possible to advance health care policies that will succeed. I support Speaker Rendon's decision to continue to study implementation mechanisms for SB 562 and hope to support a future version of the bill that is more detailed and comprehensive than as it is currently drafted.**

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?

**Absolutely. Criminalizing homelessness does not solve our homelessness crisis and to tackle the issue we need to address its root causes instead. I similarly believe that access to quality, affordable, and accessible housing and wrap around services are rights that we need to work to enforce and protect.**

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?

**As California Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye said, "Inadequate funding and chronic underfunding of the courts is just one way a justice system can become unjust;" however we should not continue to place an increasing financial burden on defendants to fund the court system. These costs only make it harder for defendants and their families to stay financially afloat at a time when defendants are already facing diminished economic opportunities oftentimes resulting in repeat offenses by the defendant themselves or a family member.**

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 need to look at ways to modernize and improve Prop. 13.**

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? **Yes, I am in favor of SB10. In addition to disproportionately harming minority communities, our current bail system does not put our public safety first, but rather provides the wealthy with the ability to temporarily buy their freedom, whether they are guilty or innocent. Meanwhile, those who cannot afford to post bail, whether innocent or guilty, face stress in their personal and professional lives because they are unavailable for friends, family and work. I am proud to have served on the Little Hoover Commission, where we studied this issue and reported to the Governor and legislature that county sheriffs, not judges, increasingly make bail and sentencing decisions to manage jail overcrowding. We also found a need for evidence-based practices to safely reduce large pre-trial populations that account for a majority of jail detainees.**

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?

**I definitely agree that we need to take a long hard honest look at sentencing guidelines and mandatory minimums especially given the fact that our prison population continues to balloon and prison overcrowding is straining public resources. By the same token, it is critical that we place a greater emphasis rehabilitation and reduction of recidivism in order to make meaningful long term change on this issue.**

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 believe we need to have greater clarity in regard to the terms "willful defiance" or "disruption of school activities". Greater clarity will make significant headway in addressing this issue.**

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?

**I do believe that it is helpful to have public safety officers that are specially**

**trained for school environments in order to ensure the health and safety of stakeholders at school districts. In terms of citing or arresting students for misbehavior, I believe this is in part a function of schools not being properly resourced to address issues facing the school and students. Law enforcement officers are often tasked with handling behavioral issues that are better suited for counselors or other professionals. We need to provide proper funding for these positions in order to effectively address these issues.**

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 I would. The incident of the parent being detained by ICE happened in the 51<sup>st</sup> AD and is near and dear to our hearts. I'm the son of immigrants. I have undocumented immigrants in my family and in my network of friends and colleagues, so this issue is extremely personal for me. Our society as a whole suffers when any child is left without access to an education. Our schools should always be safe places for children and parents. I strongly support legislation that would make schools off limits to immigration authorities and prohibits shared immigration related information.**

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?

**Yes, I support SB 1050 and related efforts to support the retention and graduation of low income and underrepresented student populations. I support continued investment in programs that provide financial support to these students and also prepare them to succeed once they enter college. These are both extremely important measures given the high percentage of students who do not complete their degrees due to financial pressures.**

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?

**Absolutely. California is home to hundreds of thousands of DACA students, and countless more undocumented immigrants, so this attack on our family members, friends, and neighbors hits home to all of us. I believe that the immigration policies of the Trump Administration are unjust, cruel, and completely misguided. I strongly support local and state efforts to fight back against these wrong headed policies and protect our immigrant communities.**

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. I believe that everyone should have the right to counsel.