

CD4 Candidate Questionnaire

Who We Are

The Democratic Socialists of America is a member-driven, member-funded organization committed to the vision of democratic socialism that has recently captured the imagination of millions across the US. Nationally, the organization has over 50,000 members, and we have elected dozens of our own members to office, most notably Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.



The Los Angeles chapter, DSA-LA, has over 1,700 dues-paying members that regularly join forces with labor and social justice groups across the county to push for change.

What We Do

When DSA chapters across the country choose to engage with electoral campaigns, we work to make our endorsement more than just a name that a candidate lists on their website. Our members work alongside campaigns to gather signatures, knock on doors, make phone calls, and tap into our media skills to get the word out. Over the course of the recent Proposition 10 campaign, DSA-LA members turned out for over 1,000 canvassing shifts and knocked on nearly 30,000 doors—and precincts in which we canvassed voted Yes on 10 by some of the highest margins in the county.

In addition to the material support DSA-LA can provide, an endorsement signals to other community groups that the candidate has serious progressive bona fides. Many groups and unaffiliated community members respect our group's integrity and look to DSA-LA's lead to help them make their decisions. An endorsement would also go a long way to reach those traditionally uninvolved in local politics.

Endorsement Process

We, the Electoral Politics Committee of DSA-LA, are reaching out to candidates for the 2020 primary cycle so that we may gather information for a potential endorsement.

If you would like to seek our endorsement, please return completed questionnaires to electoralpolitics@dsa-la.org by Sunday, November 3rd 2019. We will be reviewing responses as they are returned. Candidates will be invited to speak in front of our membership at our general meeting at the discretion of the Electoral Politics Committee, after which our general membership will vote on the endorsement.

Note: in the event that the chapter chooses to endorse your candidacy, we will create an independent expenditure campaign to conduct voter outreach and raise awareness of your campaign. If this is not acceptable to you, do not return this questionnaire.

Our organization

1. Are you a member of DSA? If so, how long have you been a member, why did you join DSA, and what work have you done with our organization? If not, would you join?

I have not been a member and would love to join.

2. Do you publicly identify as a democratic socialist? If so, what does being a socialist mean to you?

I am running as a Democrat, but my values and policies outline with democratically socialist policies. I believe that all people deserve basic human rights, regardless of income, class, race, religion, sexuality or any other socially discriminating factor. To me, these human rights extend to healthcare rights, rights to guaranteed housing, environmental rights (right to clear air, clean water and clean food) and educational rights.

3. How do you believe capitalism affects your constituents and the issues in your district?

The predominant way capitalism affects my constituents are the influence of the oil refineries (25% of California's oil and natural gas refineries are in my district). These companies have a history of paying off most politicians in my district, most notably the current Assemblyman. (my opponent). In return, they provide park improvements, free school programs on energy, and student scholarships, as a "compromise" to keep themselves operating (which is sickening, as the quality in our air and water in our district worsens). Additionally our district has one of the highest rates of homelessness in Los Angeles County, and this is due to our capitalistic system lining the pockets of real estate developers, rather than providing guaranteed, truly affordable housing to our residents. Developers love to call housing "affordable" in our district, when it is nothing but. Privately owned banks are also less likely to give out good loans to lower income families to help them invest in a new home.

You and your campaign

1. What in your life or work experience qualifies you for this office? What part of this will you highlight in communicating with voters?

I have worked as a public school teacher in the low-income community of Watts (in district) for several years. While there, I taught Chemistry and Environmental Science and served in several leadership roles, including Science Department Chair, School Advisory Council and New Teacher Mentor. I also brought the first Robotics team to my students that Watts has ever had- this is a \$40,000 after school and weekend program, where students worked with professional engineers to learn to manufacture with tools, code, run a business (we raised all our money through grants) and more.. During the time I was in Watts, I got to know my students, their stories and their families intimately. I spent time in their homes, and got to know their successes and their struggles. I saw that while the community as a whole is powerful and talented, the right resources were not being provided, due to systemically racist systems in place. I plan to highlight our awards winning Robotics team which received a lot of media attention, and the experiences and stories of students and families in the community. I've also lived in Carson for almost a decade, and have an autistic son attending public school. I plan to use my son's experience to address the needs of special needs students and all low-income students in general in the public school system.

2. Please describe any experience you have, paid or as a volunteer, in community organizing. What, briefly, have you learned from this work?

I serve on the leadership council of Watts Rising- a collaborative group that seeks to improve air quality, and improve the economy in Watts by creating green jobs. I have also served as the K-12 education commissioner for our current Assemblyman. I've attended several neighborhood council meetings, LA City council, Carson City Hall and Compton City Hall meetings. I've given public comment on homelessness and green initiatives in LA. I've worked with Sunrise, Our Revolution, Food and Water Action and Carson Community Coalition. I've also volunteered extensively for Bernie's campaign (since 2016). From doing this work, I've learned that the more voices that are unified towards a cause, the better to create change and that it is important to be a voice for those who are not able to have a voice.

3. If elected, what are your top 3 priorities and how would you go about achieving them?

My top 3 priorities are guaranteed housing, clean air, clean water, clean food, and a great, free education system as human rights for all. For the latter, this includes free and universal pre-K as well as free 4 year public colleges. I would go about achieving these by making sure I have detailed policy plans for each of my 3 major priorities (completed for public education; environmental and housing upcoming), including how to pay for them, and work with those on both sides of the aisle. I know radical change won't happen overnight, but I will always make sure to move the needle towards achieving each of my three priorities. This will happen as long as I keep my district engaged, organized and advocating.

4. Who do you support for president in the 2020 election cycle?

I have supported Bernie since 2016, and my support has never wavered.

5. How many signatures did you turn in to qualify for the ballot?

700 signatures

6. How much money have you raised to finance your campaign?

\$50,000

7. How many unique donors do you have?

100

8. Have you pledged to refuse campaign contributions from corporations and their PACs, as well as real estate developers and landlord interests (ex: California Apartment Association, the California Association of

Realtors, and real estate investment groups such as Blackstone)?
Why/why not?

Yes. My campaign is corporate PAC free. I would like those who donate to our campaign to be in line with the values of our campaign, and the real estate and developer industry are not in line with our values.

9. What community organizations in your district have you worked with prior to starting your campaign? For how long and in what capacity?

I have worked with Watts Rising- an environmental collaborative for the past two years. I also volunteered actively with Bernie's campaign (phone banking, hosting volunteer events, and helping out at other Bernie events). Before this August, I worked full-time as a teacher and was committed to the work of my students, especially my Robotics team, therefore my time to engage in more organizing was limited.

10. What community organizations in your district do you currently work with as part of your campaign?

The in-district community organizations that I work with include members of Carson Community Coalition who have helped me with donations, canvassing and signature collecting. I've also worked with members of the Watts Neighborhood Council who have helped me with the same. I am beginning to work with Communities for a Better Environment (located in Wilmington).

11. Please list significant endorsements you have received for this position.

Our Revolution (LA).

12. Do you support Medicare for All?

Yes.

13. If you do not win electoral office, what other methods would you use to try to implement your policies in the community?

I will continue working actively with local community groups (those mentioned above). Additionally, I will continue going to the neighborhood council and city hall meetings in my district to speak on behalf of the community. I will also work with others to put severe pressure on the current Assemblyman to hold him accountable to not taking corporate money and to vote on behalf of environmental and housing justice for those in my district.

14. It can be argued that voting is largely ineffective and not a viable means for accomplishing a progressive agenda on its own, especially given the stranglehold of corporate power on the political process. How would you approach this challenge and convince us to vote for you?

I would convince those that have this belief that with local and state elections, every vote truly matters. This means that even if corporate money is involved, an active and organized field effort with lots of volunteers can defeat corporate influence.

City of Los Angeles

1. Do you support the creation of a Public Bank in Los Angeles? Currently city tax money is used to fund fossil fuels, private prisons, and weapons manufacturing. If a Public Bank were created in Los Angeles, what would you want the bank's charter to stipulate that it fund?

Yes I do support a Public Bank in Los Angeles. It makes no sense that we pay fees and interest to a private bank on projects that are funded by tax dollars to support our communities. That money can be better used directly supporting

our schools, transportation infrastructure, and families. The mission and charter of the bank should be to invest and support efforts to create and maintain long term prosperity for our community. This will help eliminate the short term thinking that we are used to in privately owned banks, and fund green and sustainable investments. Instead of looking to increase profits by deferring expenses and taxes to our children, we should be looking to see how we can reduce their burden and make the world a better place for them. Public banks should also offer good subsidized loans to all to guarantee affordable housing.

2. Do you support the common practice of city council members deferring to their colleagues when voting on developments in their colleagues' districts?

No, city council members are elected to represent the people and should make the tough calls needed to serve the members of their communities. Let's call it what it is, a "quid pro quo" and potential vote trading.

3. Do you support the 2028 Summer Olympics being held in Los Angeles?

No, I am not supportive of the Olympics being held in Los Angeles. It is not right to use our tax dollars, city and state money to fund such a large scale effort when we have a homelessness crisis. We need to ensure that people's concerns are heard and addressed. There are lots of factors related to housing, security, cost, traffic, and environmental impact which has not always been fairly represented to the people. Let's make sure the government is working for the people and not for the big businesses and special interests that are looking for monetary gain that comes from hosting the Olympics that will be subsidized by our tax dollars.

Housing and Homelessness

1. Do you support universal rent control? Vacancy control (cap on rent increases between tenants)? If yes, at what annual percentage rate, if no what qualifications or limits on rent control do you support?

I do support universal rent control, and vacancy control. However, my policies related to this are still in progress of being developed.

2. Do you oppose the criminalization of unhoused people? What is your stance on the specific demands of #ServicesNotSweeps? To read the specific demands of #ServicesNotSweeps, please [click here](#).

I vehemently oppose criminalization of the unhoused. I am supportive of the stances in the #ServicesNotSweeps campaign in particular the regular, scheduled, and publicly advertised schedules for these services so we ensure that those at the lowest echelons of our society keep the property that they have worked so hard to attain.

3. Do you support a tenant's right to counsel? If implemented, do you support additional funding for this program?

Yes to the right to counsel and yes to funding this program. There is no need to put more people on the street because they do not have the ability to appropriately represent themselves.

4. Do you support just cause eviction laws?

Yes, there must be a valid reason to support the eviction of families from their homes and these families should have the right to counsel.

5. How would you fight the loss of rent stabilized housing due to legal and illegal hotel conversion?

Our first priority as a state and city should be to house the homeless as we are in a homeless crisis right now. While some properties under the Ellis Act

are allowed to evict tenants under certain conditions, there should be a moratorium or freeze placed on this law, as it is clear that landlords are taking advantage of this act in order to make a quick buck. Without adequate legal representation of their rights, these tenants are then left homeless.

6. Do you support additional funding (at your level of government) for public housing? Additional funding for section 8? Do you support additional funds for immigrants who don't qualify for HUD assistance?

I am supportive of additional funding for public housing and section 8. Yes, I do support additional funds for immigrants. Housing is a right for all. In general, we should be trying to ensure we have the ability to house anyone who needs it, as guaranteed housing is part of federal law. If we want to look at it monetarily, it has been shown that it costs MUCH less to ensure people are in adequate housing and have the support services, than respond to emergencies related to inadequate housing. If we want to look at it morally, it is just the right thing to do. Why should we prevent immigrants from receiving housing, healthcare and other rights (essentially punishing them), when government has not done the job of fixing our immigration system?

7. How would you increase the supply of permanent supportive housing for those currently unhoused?

Permanent housing is often pushed to the side in order to work on other development projects. Permanent supportive housing is meant to support not just our homeless population, but the most vulnerable amongst the homeless population. As a result, it needs to be made a priority over all other development. Proposition HHH is helping to build permanent supportive housing, but it is not enough to keep pace with how many homeless individuals Los Angeles has. As a result, increased public investment to create affordable housing needs to occur, and this will be run by the government with proceeds being invested right back into the community, instead of the hands of private developers. Representatives at state and city also need to start looking at ways to increase cooperative housing and at an

abandoned lots in which tiny homes and/or coop housing units can be created as permanent housing units.

8. How would you increase the supply of housing that is affordable for tenants classified as "extremely low income" in LA (Income under 20K for a single person, under 30K for family of 4)

There are quite a few empty or undeveloped lots in my district. One thought is to use them to build up a series of "tiny homes" that can be used to serve the extremely low income people. These can be built quickly, cheaply, have a smaller environmental footprint, and gets people to quickly have a roof over their head. Another option is to build cooperative living spaces or multi-family living spaces which could be rented or bought at drastically reduced costs than single family homes.

Climate Justice

1. Do you support the Green New Deal (GND)? What GND policies could you implement in your district? What tools would you use to set targets in line with science, and to make sure targets are hit?

Yes, I support the GND. As a hub of environmental racism, so of the aspects of the GND that we would work towards are 1) net-zero emissions by 2030 2) divest completely but justly from dirty energy 2) make sure as we are divesting that good, unionized jobs as well as training for these jobs is provided for by the state and local governments) 3) guarantee clean water all throughout the district (this isn't currently the case) 4) eliminate food deserts 5) eliminate toxic waste sites 6) until complete divestment from toxic waste sites, oil and natural gas occurs enforce a 2500 buffer zone to protect residential communities. 7) Increase green spaces. The tools that I would use would depend on the specific goal being addressed. There are currently ways to measure local air quality and smog that can be used to track data on emissions, as well as tools to measure the specific toxins in the air. Making sure targets are hit will

require calling out and holding accountable politicians that profit from dirty energy, so that these companies can be phased out.

2. What issues of environmental racism affect your district, and how would you attempt to correct these historical injustices? How will you work to protect frontline communities?

In our district, clean water is not accessible to many students even in their schools. Toxic chemicals are too often found near school and residential areas. Children and families are getting respiratory illnesses and cancer and much higher rates than other districts. The way to protect the severe environmental racism that is occurring in our district is to stop politicians from lining their pockets with oil and fossil fuel money. There are literally politicians who claim to take oil money, but promise that this doesn't affect their legislation or votes. This is simply awful and should not be tolerated, because it doesn't show a complete commitment to the rights of clean water and air in our district. It's time to hold them accountable. In our district, therefore, overturning Citizens United and pushing towards publicly funded elections will help politicians to stay away from this dirty money. Our campaign intends to call this dirty money out and hold politicians in our district accountable. We will challenge all who are running for elected office in our city and district to sign the No Fossil Fuel Money pledge (during this election cycle). There are amazing local community organizations also that must continue to do the work and build their groups to be a voice louder than the dirty energy companies.

3. How will you work to improve equitable access to non-car modes of transit in your district? Do you support the elimination of parking minimums?

I support public transit being free-the profit that transit currently makes from passengers paying is negligible and not profitable so there is no reason not to. I support increasing access to bike lanes. I also support greater investment in electric buses and electric ride share services. We are piloting this (bus and

car share) program under Watts Rising in the city of Watts for Los Angeles. I also support the elimination of parking minimums.

4. What is the current status of green space in your district, and what can you do to increase its presence in underserved communities?

Green space is severely limited in all parts of my district. There are plenty of community non-profit organizations, such as Tree People and Lot to Spot, that we should tap to provide them incentives to increase green spaces all over our district. We could provide incentives for renters, homeowners, schools and local businesses, if they are able to plant trees or other greenery on their property. Trees are one of the most effective and easiest ways to clean our dirty air.

5. How sustainable is the agriculture in your district, and what will you do to improve it? If your district is urban, how will you approach community farms, food deserts, etc.?

It is exciting that more community gardens are popping up throughout my district, however it is still not enough. Community gardens are a perfect way to increase green spaces and create healthy food sources; just as I stated in the previous questions community non-profit organizations need to be given incentives to create more of these spaces, while making sure they hire locally to do so. This is also important if healthier food stores are to come to my district. It is important that we ensure that these stores will not displace residents, due to higher cost of food. One way that we can prevent this is to provide incentives to business to hire locally only and for food prices to be regulated at levels that local residents can afford.

Immigration Justice

1. Do you support abolishing ICE?
Yes.

2. Do you support renewing funding for the Los Angeles Justice Fund? Do you support reversing the fund's current carve outs and making its coverage universal?

Yes, I support renewing funding for the Los Angeles Justice Fund. Yes, I support making its coverage universal.

3. Will you advocate for firing police officers that murder immigrants and black people?

Yes.

4. Do you support reducing funds going towards law enforcement, and instead increasing funds going towards social welfare and public services for immigrants?

Yes.

Mutual Aid

1. Do you have experience with mutual aid organizing in your community?
If so, what kind of work did your mutual aid organization do?
- 2.

I don't have formal experience with mutual aid organizing in my community. I believe I have done some mutual aid organizing, but I'm not sure if it would count as this, and would like to learn more about this, particularly in LA.

3. What role, if any, do you think should police play in your community?

Gun violence is an epidemic in our country, unlike in other industrialized countries. In terms of policing, there are too many black boys and men shot at the hands of a police officer. In many industrialized countries, policemen don't

carry guns- I believe that we have to start there and ask ourselves why all our police force carries guns. Also, the role I see police playing is working with community leaders to uphold values of the community, not the other way around. From too many in my district, I have heard that “the police runs/rules the city.” This shouldn’t be the case- the community should feel empowered to run itself without living in constant fear.

4. Will you support legislation mandating grocery stores donate their unsold food before expiry?

Yes. This should also happen with leftover school breakfast, lunches and snacks.

5. Will you support, sponsor, or otherwise subsidize free medical and dental clinics in your community?

Yes.

6. Will you support legislation sponsoring free meals (breakfast and lunch) for all schoolchildren?

Yes. This is a part of my education policy.

7. Will you support, sponsor, or otherwise subsidize free child care in your community?

Yes.

8. Do you support antifascist action?

Yes, however I don’t condone violence and will never engage in it, besides defending myself.