

EBDSA 2018 Electoral Endorsement Questionnaire

General

1. Why do you want East Bay DSA's endorsement?

As a member of DSA for about two years now, I have deep admiration for the work of this organization. I believe the message of the Community Power Slate fits in perfectly with DSA's platform on housing and rent control. The endorsement and support of the Community Power Slate is crucial to our success, and I believe will further, not hamper, DSA's effort to elect Jovanka and pass Prop 10.

2. Are you a democratic socialist? How do you define democratic socialism?

I am a democratic socialist. That means that I believe the profit motive should not be the primary driver of our lives. It means I think workers should have a say in their workplace, both through unionization and workplace democracy like worker owned cooperatives. Broadly, it means I believe in democracy both internally and externally, within the workplace, political and partisan organization, and as a mean of achieving power. It means that I believe far more areas of the economy should be subject to democratic control, whether at the national, state, regional, or local level, including electricity, gas, healthcare, telecommunications, and housing. It means that I support the rights of people around the world to democratic control of their own lives, both from local despots and international military powers.

3. If elected, how would you relate to East Bay DSA?

My hope would be that EBDSA would be a source of support, advice, and accountability. There will be times when I will call on members to come to meetings to push for progressive, socialist policies, both at the Rent Board and at City Council. There will be times when I will seek the input of DSA, particularly the Housing Committee, on matters of policy and priority. And there will doubtlessly be times when I will need EBDSA to provide the accountability and pressure to help me resist other forces that would have me act against my principles.

4. Describe your top priorities and the policy areas that will be of most interest to you if elected.

My top priorities would be expanding rent control and other tenant protections to those units which currently lack them, and increasing the Ren Board's outreach to populations less aware of their rights and resources, especially students. I further address this in the housing section.

5. Please describe your plan to win this race. What is your "win number"? How will you get there?

In 2016, winning Rent Board candidates received between 30,000 and 26,000 votes. In 2014 and 2010, the winners received between 17,000 and 15,000 votes. I think our win number is likely between 15,000 and 20,000 votes. I plan to get there through the canvassing efforts of organizations like the BPA, BCA, BTU and hopefully DSA, with assistance from tenant and student volunteers, and by dominating the endorsement game among democratic club, progressive organizations, and unions making endorsements in this race.

6. If endorsed, what participation would you like to see from East Bay DSA in your campaign?

I would like to see EBDSA integrate the Community Power Slate into their pitch for Jovanka and Prop 10 to create a comprehensive pro-rent control housing message in Berkeley. The slate has endorsed Jovanka and Prop 10. Our main opponents are literally two landlords. The script basically writes itself.

7. What is your campaign budget, and how much have you raised thus far? What is your average donation size? What is your strategy to continue fundraising?

I intend to raise between \$4,000 and \$7,000, I have raised \$400 to date. I have received four contributions thus far, one (from myself) of \$250 and three others of \$50. I have not yet begun fundraising in earnest, my strategy includes soliciting donations from members of the organizations that hosted the Tenants Convention, as well as from DSA members and students, among others.

8. Do you use public financing?

Unfortunately, candidates for rent board are not included under the Berkeley Public Financing Program.

9. Have you ever, during this race, or in a previous electoral race, accepted campaign contributions from a corporation, corporate PAC, or lobbyist? If yes, please explain in detail.

No, and I do not intend to.

10. Is your race partisan? What is your relationship to your political party, if any? Why?

The race is non-partisan. I am an active member of the Democratic Party. I view pulling the Democratic Party left as the most viable way of achieving real, tangible benefits for the working class in America. As such, I serve on the board of the California Young Democrats Progressive Caucus. A majority of the board members are self-professed as socialists.

11. What community organizations are you a part of?

EBDSA, Cal Berkeley Democrats, UC Berkeley Progressive Student Association, Berkeley Progressive Alliance, Berkeley Tenants Union, East Bay Stonewall Democrats, East Bay Young Democrats.

12. What is your profession? Is a significant portion of your income derived from capital holdings (e.g. investments, property, etc.)

I am primarily a student at Cal. I work part time as a legislative assistant to Berkeley Councilmember Kate Harrison. I have minor stock holdings inherited from a relative, and own no real property.

13. Describe your record of public service.

I have served as a Legislative Assistant to Councilmember Harrison since her election, helping to author legislation to increase our City's affordable housing requirements, enact a lobbyist transparency measure, reduce workers exposure to potentially harmful chemicals, and improve workers' rights to a fair schedule and full time employment.

14. Please list other major endorsements.

I am a member of the Community Power Slate for Rent Board. Our slate was nominated at the 2018 Berkeley Tenants Convention, convened by the Berkeley Progressive

Alliance, Berkeley Citizens Action, and Berkeley Tenants Union. I am also endorsed by the California Young Democrats and East Bay Young Democrats. I have also been endorsed by AD 15 Candidate Jovanka Beckles, every member of the Berkeley Rent Board, former Rent Board Commissioner Pam Webster, Mayor Jesse Arreguin, Former Mayor Gus Newport, Berkeley Councilmembers Kate Harrison, Kriss Worthington, Ben Bartlet, and Sophie Hahn, Former Councilmember Ying Lee, and EBMUD Director Andy Katz, among others.

Housing

1. Do you support Proposition 10, the Affordable Housing Act?

Yes yes yes. The Community Power Slate is fully committed to strong rent control and the repeal of Costa Hawkins, and will be fighting for Prop 10 while we seek election to the Rent Board.

2. What are the causes of the housing crisis in California and the Bay Area?

A confluence of factors have driven us to the crisis point we currently face. Some would have you believe that this problem is primarily or even exclusively caused by restrictive zoning laws that make housing difficult and expensive to build. It is absolutely true that our zoning laws need to be reformed, and that they have been used by wealthy, white homeowners to put up barriers to the working class and people of color from moving to their neighborhoods. This is only one part of the problem. A huge issue has been the systemic disinvestment from public housing at the federal level. The national government once spent billions of dollars building public housing; now, HUD is a shell of its former self and is being strangled to death by Ben Carson. Another major factor is the treatment of housing as an investment opportunity for the wealthy. Banks, corporations, and billionaires both here and around the world see California housing stock, especially in the Bay Area, as a hot commodity, another way to enrich their already overflowing profits. This drives up the cost of property, pushing the market away from affordable apartments and towards luxury lofts and condos.

There are other factors that drive our crisis, but at the end of the day our problems stem from treating housing as a market to profit from rather than a necessity that all people need, no matter their income. We won't solve this problem by building more luxury apartments, of which we are already oversaturated in Berkeley. We have to use all our available resources, including regulation, incentivization, and state, federal, and local direct investment to build permanently affordable housing.

3. Describe your vision for housing justice. If elected, how will you use your position to advocate for this vision? Please cite any specific policy examples.

In the broadest view, housing justice means that no one should be without a home because they cannot afford to make rent. Protecting and expanding rent control and other tenant protections is just one part of housing justice, but it is the part that is most directly germane to the work of the Rent Board. As a Rent Board Commissioner, I will work to expand rent and eviction protections to more of Berkeley's rental units. That includes revisiting the length of the new construction exemption (20 years is far too long). I will work to expand the benefits and assistance available to tenants and also to small, truly mom-and-pop landlords. Assisting small landlords with improving their properties is

a pro-tenant policy: it helps to prevent evictions and rent increases, and improves the lived conditions of tenants. I will also use the platform provided by my post to push for more state investment in affordable housing. I will condition my political support on support for rent control, tenant protections, and affordable housing funding. I will work to improve outreach to those populations of tenants least aware of their rights and the resources available to them, especially students.

Healthcare

1. Do you support Medicare for All, and what would such a system entail?

Yes. Medicare for all means that every resident of the United States, regardless of citizenship, should be able to access healthcare at no cost to them personally. Medicare for All mean all programs are covered comprehensively, including dental, mental, and vision, and reproductive health care.

2. If elected, how will you use your position to fight for Medicare for All?

While the Rent Board has very little authority over health policy, as an elected official, support for Medicare for All will be a litmus test in order to earn my support. There is no reason not to support Medicare for All. It is broadly popular across demographic groups throughout the country. A lack of support for Medicare for All indicates questionable values.

Education

1. What's wrong with the current education system? What reforms would you like to see, and has the contemporary educational reform movement been effective at achieving them?

One of the biggest problems with our current educational system, especially our higher-ed system, is the high cost of tuition and a lack of financial resources. All education, from pre-K to university, should be publicly funded and tuition free. The current reform movement has not been very effective at achieving this, especially in the higher-ed arena, although there have been recent positive strides. The organized efforts of students, especially from the UC and especially from UC Berkeley, just won the first tuition rollback for UCs and CSUs for the first time in 30 years.

2. What is the role of charter schools in your desired education system? Would you support a immediate, statewide moratorium on charter schools in California?

Charter schools have little to no role in my ideal educational system. Education should be publicly funded and publicly operated. I am absolutely in favor of a statewide charter moratorium.

3. What role do teachers' unions play in the education system? What role should they play, and what policies would you pursue to achieve this vision?

Teachers are workers, and like all workers they should be represented by strong, organized labor voices. Teachers unions play an important role in fighting for school funding, and recent attacks like the Janus decision from the Supreme Court fundamentally undermine teacher's rights to be organized. I support policies that mitigate Janus, like mandated payments to unions to cover the cost of representing employees.

Anti-Militarism

1. How will you use your office to oppose war and imperialism?

The Rent Board has essentially no sway over issues of American foreign policy, but in my capacity as an elected official I will prioritize endorsing candidates for federal office who view armed conflict as a truly last resort and who are committed to diplomacy and nonviolence as a bedrock of American international relations.

2. Do you support the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement to oppose the occupation of Palestine?

As a progressive, socialist Jew, the issue of Israel and Palestine has presented me with difficulty and discomfort. The recent passage of the Nation-State bill by the Knesset has crystalized my opinion about BDS and the conflict. Palestinians deserve a free and independent state. I support a two-state solution. We must also recognize that at this point in time, Israel is committing a disproportionate amount of the violence in the conflict, and is clearly the party with the most leverage and power, which it is currently using to illegally expand settlements and other acts contrary to international law. It is important, in my view, to separate BDS as a tactic and BDS as a movement. I support BDS as a tactic to bring the Israeli government to the bargaining table and end the occupation. I have deep concerns about BDS as a movement, as I have seen significant evidence of antisemitism both from individual leaders of and organizations promoting the movement.

Police & Prisons

1. How will you use your office to fight against police brutality and other forms of state violence?

While the Rent Board does not have jurisdiction over policing issues, I will use my post to fight for the Police Review Commission reform measure that will likely be on the 2020 ballot, the end of Urban Shield, and other efforts to reform Berkeley's police system.

2. What policies do you support to reduce and end mass incarceration?

Along with the above, I support an end to cash bail, the decriminalization of sex work, significantly reduced sentencing, expanded prisoner rehabilitation and education programs, expanding voting right to felons and the incarcerated, among others. Pro-tenant, pro-rent control Rent Board policies can help to reduce mass incarceration by helping to prevent homelessness, one of the significant pipelines into our prison system.

The Environment

1. What's your ideal timetable for phasing out fossil fuel production and consumption including coal, oil and natural gas?

As soon as possible. While it is vital that we address those individuals and communities that lose jobs and livelihoods as a result of the transition, waiting is unacceptable. Climate change is happening now and it is killing people. Those most impacted, both in the United States and around the world, are disproportionately poor people and people of color, the same groups least responsible for climate change.

2. Please describe your vision for combating climate change, both globally and locally. How will you use your office to fight climate change?

We must institute a carbon tax both at the state and national level. The state should spend tens of billions, and the country hundreds of billions, to build high-speed public transportation that does not rely on fossil fuels. We must stop subsidizing big agriculture to produce water and oil intense crops. We must ban all new fossil fuel extraction projects in the state. At the level of the Rent Board, by supporting policies like rent control and tenant protections, we can help workers to stay closer to their places of employment rather than being displaced farther out. This helps to keep down commute times and thus carbon emissions.

Immigration

1. How will you use your office to fight against deportations and other attacks on immigrant communities?

Berkeley was proudly the first sanctuary city, and will remain so. By continuing to strengthen protections and provide more services for tenants, we can protect undocumented residents from potentially abusive landlords. We need to do better at enforcing Berkeley's Tenant Harassment law.

2. How would you use your office to strengthen the rights of immigrants and their access to public services and quality of life?

See above.

Anti-Racism

1. How would you use your office to strengthen the rights of people of color and their access to public services and quality of life?

People of color are disproportionately affected by the issues that the Rent Board seeks to address. People of color, especially African Americans, are far over represented in Berkeley's homeless population, for example. Enacting strong rent control and tenant protections are vital for maintaining a diverse and vibrant Berkeley where people of color can afford to live.

2. How would you fight against the criminalization of people of color?

Preventing evictions prevents homelessness. Data shows that a strong majority of those without homes in Alameda County were evicted or could no longer to afford their rents in an Alameda County residency. We must work to decriminalize homelessness, and we must work to end homelessness. Both will help to fight against the criminalization of people of color, who are disproportionately evicted and disproportionality homeless.

Taxation

1. How do you propose to change our budget and tax structure (on the federal, state, or municipal level) to better fund public services?

The rich need to pay more in taxes. We should reverse the Trump Tax Cut, add more tax brackets for the federal income tax, raise the capital gains tax, institute a financial instrument transfer tax (a tax on stock and bond sales), eliminate the cap on taxable income for Social Security, impose steep penalties on those companies moving profits overseas, and progressively increase the estate tax. At the state level, we need to reform Prop 13, potentially through a split roll system and ease property tax restrictions

on second homes. We should enact a fossil fuel extraction tax, allow cities to pass millionaires taxes, and reduce sales taxes. At the local level, we should charge progressive fines, meaning that fines would be proportionate to your income, both to increase revenues and so that the wealthy would not be able to flout out laws.

Labor Movement

1. Are you a member of a union? Have you ever been? Please provide specifics and describe and leadership roles you have played.

I have not yet had the privilege of union membership. Perhaps one day legislative assistants in Berkeley will be covered by labor representation...

2. What is the role of the labor movement in achieving your policy priorities?

Labor support has been critical in advancing affordable housing measures in Berkeley. In particular, SEIU 1021 and CNA have been vital allies in electing officials who support rent control and affordable housing and pushing for such legislation.

3. What specific labor or workers rights policies will you pursue?

I am currently working on a Fair Workweek Employment Standards Ordinance for Berkeley in Councilmember Harrison's office. It is currently in the Labor Commission. That ordinance would ban "clopening" shifts for all businesses in Berkeley, require advanced notice of schedule changes and additional pay if schedules are changes for large employers and franchise businesses, and give currently hired part time employees the right of first refusal to new shifts for large and franchise restaurant, hotel, and retail firms. As a Rent Board Commissioner, I would have little authority over labor laws and practices, though I will push for such laws and support labor friendly candidates.