

**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 CONGRESSIONAL
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**



Candidate: Jake Auchincloss

Office Sought: US House Representative, MA-04

Party: Democratic

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Email questions to elections@progressivemass.com.

I. About You

1. Why are you running for office? And what will your top 3 priority pieces of legislation if elected?

JA: The American idea is that the condition of your birth should not determine the outcome of your life. It's an idea that my mom's family adopted as Russian refugees. It's an idea that my dad's family helped advance in the Roosevelt and Kennedy administrations. And it's an idea that I've tried to serve as a Marine officer, as a Newton city councilor, and next as a Member of Congress. There are three priorities that would most advance greater opportunity for all:

- (1) Repealing the Authorization for Use of Military Force so Congress can regain its constitutional prerogative to end these reckless overseas wars and to invest the trillions of dollars we have spent in the Middle East on infrastructure, education, and health care instead.
- (2) Expanding funding and support for education, especially early education
- (3) Expanding funding and support for transportation infrastructure, especially mass transit, which is a key component of addressing climate change (40% of carbon emissions in MA come from the transportation sector.)

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

JA: Although I am the youngest candidate in this race, I am the only one who has delivered results across elective office, business, non-profit, and military. The American people no longer have confidence that Congress can deliver results. My whole career has been about the collaboration and communication necessary to deliver results.

3. What do you view as the biggest barriers to progressive policy on the federal level?

JA: The obvious answers are 'Trump' and 'Mitch'. But digging a bit more deeply: the electoral system in the United States structurally favors conservatives, especially the presidency and the U.S. Senate. By 2040, 70% of Americans will live in 15 states; that means 30 senators will represent 70% of Americans, and 70 senators will represent 30% of Americans. Those 30% of Americans represented by 70 senators live in mostly rural, red states. Therefore, progressives need to appeal to the center in order to gain election in a way that Republicans simply do not have to.

II. The Issues

Our questionnaire is based on our [Progressive Platform](#): Shared Prosperity, All Means All/Racial and Social Justice, Good Government and Strong Democracy, and Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection.

A. An Equitable Tax System

1. *What does a progressive tax system look like? Which specific proposals would you advocate for?*

JA: A progressive tax system encourages innovation while ensuring that the successful pay forward their good fortune to make sure everyone has a shot at success, too. It would include:

Corporate taxes:

- * Raising corporate tax rates back to 35% and eliminating the special pass-through tax provision.
- * Spreading out advertising tax deductibility over time but increasing the tax credit for R&D

Taxes on wealthy:

- * Implementing the Buffet Rule taxing the very wealthy on social security and Medicare benefits
- * Eliminating the step-up basis and the repeal of estate-tax changes
- * Increasing enforcement at the IRS

B. Jobs That Pay a Living Wage

1. **Minimum Wage.** *The gap between productivity and wages has grown dramatically since 1973. Moreover, the federal minimum wage remains stuck at \$7.25—what it was in 2009. Would you support legislation to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour?*

JA: YES.

- a. *And eliminate the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers?* **NO.**
- b. *And index the minimum wage to inflation?* **YES.**

JA: We would likely need to phase in the higher federal minimum wage at different speeds for different regions of the country, where there are huge differences in the costs of labor and costs of living. I would need to understand much more about eliminating sub-minimum wage for tipped workers, as this affects a huge number of workers and examples from other countries show more layoffs and increased automation than sustained higher wages.

2. **Retirement Security.** *With the decline of pensions and other defined-benefit retirement plans in the workplace, retirement is becoming more insecure, and seniors are having to work longer just to stay afloat. Would you support legislation to....*
 - a. *Increase the benefits provided by Social Security?* **YES.**
 - b. *Raising the cap on earnings that are taxed for Social Security? (Currently, only earnings up to \$118,500 are subject to the payroll tax.)* **YES.**

JA: We also need a Buffet Rule on these benefits for the very wealthy.

3. **Paid Leave.** *The US is the only industrial nation without paid family leave. Would you support federal legislation ensuring that workers can take up to 12 weeks of paid leave for a pregnancy, the birth or adoption of a child, to recover from a serious illness, or to care for a seriously ill family member?*

JA: YES.

Paid Leave is not just good for families, it's good for business, too.

4. **Union Rights.** *Unions play a key role in building a strong middle-class; however, unions have been under attack in recent years. Would you support the following efforts to strengthen the role of unions in our economy:*
- Prohibiting “right-to-work” laws at the state level? **YES.***
 - Requiring employers to recognize a union when a majority of workers in a bargaining unit sign valid authorization cards? **YES.***
 - Prohibiting employers from interfering with unionization efforts, such as by compelling worker attendance at anti-union meetings? **YES.***

JA: I have done significant outreach to organized labor in the MA-4 and have already earned support. I will continue to be a strong advocate for unions as one of the best institutions for rebuilding a strong working and middle class.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

C. Quality, Affordable Health Care

1. **Medicare for All.** *Would you support the creation of a single payer/“Medicare for All” health insurance system in the country that would guarantee health care as a right?*

JA: NO.

Health care should be a right, and I would support a bill that gets us to universal access. But I would not support doubling the federal budget and eliminating private insurance for the 85% of Americans who have it, in one fell swoop. We need to take a hybrid approach, to begin, that includes a robust public option.

2. **Prescription Drug Prices.** *Prescription drug prices in the US are consistently higher than in other countries. Which policies would you support to lower the cost of prescription drugs?*
- Allowing Medicare to negotiate prices with pharmaceutical companies? **YES.***
 - Allowing patients, pharmacists, and wholesalers to buy low-cost prescription drugs from Canada and other industrialized countries? **YES.***
 - Allowing the federal government to manufacture lower-cost generic versions of prescription drugs when the market does not offer them? **NO.***

JA: I'm skeptical of the federal government's competence to manufacture its own drugs, but I do think we need faster and smoother paths to market for generics, as well as more price transparency from pharma on the value versus cost of their drugs.

3. **Reproductive Rights.** Would you support repealing the Hyde Amendment, which bars the use of federal funds to pay for abortion except to save the life of the woman, or if the pregnancy arises from incest or rape?

JA: YES.

4. **Opioid Crisis.** An essential part of addressing the opioid crisis, safe consumption sites allow medical professionals to respond to overdoses and engage participants in medical and behavioral health services. Would you support the legalization of SCSs?

JA: YES.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

D. Quality, Free Publicly Funded Education

1. **Education Equity.** *More than six and a half decades out from the Brown vs. Board Supreme Court ruling, our public education systems remain highly segregated and unequal. Please name three policies you would advocate for in order to address this.*

JA: (1) Expanded funding for early education
(2) Federal grants for higher pay for teachers, especially in lower-funded districts
(3) Expanded busing programs, which have been demonstrated to work

2. **Charter School Funding.** *The NAACP has proposed a moratorium on public funds for charter school expansion until a national audit has been completed to determine the impact of charter growth in each state. Do you support such a moratorium?*

JA: NO.

3. **Charter School Accountability.** *Do you support requiring that charter schools comply with the same transparency and accountability requirements as public schools?*

JA: YES.

4. **High-Stakes Testing.** *Do you support prohibiting the use of standardized testing as a primary or significant factor in closing a school, firing a teacher, or making any other high-stakes decisions?*

JA: YES.

5. **Student Loan Debt.** *Student loan debt is holding back the economy, as graduates are unable to make important long-term investments in their future. Presidential candidates have put forth various schemes to forgive student loan debt. Do you support doing so, and what would your ideal scheme look like?*

JA: NO.

Student debt should not be blanket-discharged. However, we should reform bankruptcy law to make student debt more easily dischargeable, we should re-configure the incentives that induce colleges to load prospective students with more opaque debt than they should properly take on, and we should induce higher education to reduce their own administrative overhead, which has ballooned from 10% to 30% and is a driver of higher tuition.

6. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** *More and more jobs are requiring a college degree, but the cost of higher education has been growing faster than wages, contributing to a ballooning student debt burden. Would you support legislation to guarantee free tuition at public colleges and universities?*

JA: NO.

We should start by making community colleges tuition-free. Many students at public universities are well off and I would prefer to see tuition assistance be directed on a needs-based assessment.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

E. Affordable, Decent Housing

1. **Tenant Rights.** *Would you support legislation to establish a national just cause eviction standard, which would limit the grounds upon which a landlord may evict a tenant?*

JA: NO.

Tenant rights' issues are best addressed at the state level.

2. **Inclusive Communities.** *Federal funding can be a major source of leverage in shaping state and municipal policy. Would you support legislation to tie transportation or housing funding to...*
- Ending exclusionary zoning practices? **YES.***
 - Repealing state prohibitions on rent stabilization policies? **NO.***

JA: Rent control has been one of the most reliably ineffective approaches in housing policy over the last 60 years. We need more housing supply and better inclusionary

zoning policies, but empirically, rent control just doesn't work – in fact it's counterproductive.

- 3. Public Housing.** Would you support the repeal of the Faircloth Amendment, which bans HUD from funding the construction or operation of new public housing units beyond the total that existed in 1999?

JA: YES.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

F. A Fair and Efficient Criminal Justice System

- 1. Ending Mass Incarceration.** *The past few years have seen a growing recognition that the “tough on crime” legislation passed in the 1980s and 1990s has had a devastating impact on communities of color and has not improved public safety. Which of the following proposals do you support?*
 - Legalizing marijuana? **YES.***
 - Repealing mandatory minimums for non-violent drug offenses? **YES.***
 - Eliminating cash bail, so that no one is held in jail solely for an inability to pay? **YES.***
 - Abolishing the death penalty? **YES.***
 - Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which has been proven to have significant racial disparities ?*
 - Barring the federal government and state and local jurisdictions from contracting with private corporations to run prisons and detention facilities?*

JA: Incarcerating nonviolent drug offenders has been counterproductive and corrosive. We need to change sentencing guidelines and enforcement provisions.

- 2. Prison Conditions.** *In addition to having incarceration rates that far [outpace](#) those of other countries, the US is known for violating both domestic and international law in the conditions of its prisons. Which of the following steps would you support to emphasize the rehabilitative, as opposed to punitive, nature of the system and protect basic rights?*
 - Preventing companies from charging prisoners unreasonable fees for banking and telecommunications services? **YES.***
 - Requiring that incarcerated individuals be paid for their work at a rate no lower than the federal minimum wage? **NO.***
 - Restoring Pell Grant access to prisoners? **YES.***

- d. *Limiting the use of solitary confinement to no more than 15 consecutive days, beyond which it is defined as torture by the United Nations? YES.*

JA: I have been in solitary confinement as part of Marine Corps SERE (interrogation resistance) training for special operations. It is anguish.

3. **Police Accountability.** *Lax or nonexistent systems of accountability and perverse incentives at the federal, state, and local level, combined with a legacy of systemic racism, too often lead to law enforcement neither enforcing the law nor keeping the public safe. Which of the following steps would you support to promote a more humane, community-focused policing?*
- Prohibiting the transfer of military weapons from the federal government to state and local law enforcement? NO.*
 - Eliminating qualified immunity, which allows law enforcement to violate people's constitutional rights with impunity? NO.*
 - Restricting the use of civil asset forfeiture by police departments and prosecutors' offices? YES.*

JA: I don't understand how you're defining qualified immunity here – my understanding of this doctrine is that it shields government officials from being sued for exercising discretionary powers of their office. We cannot make holding elective or appointed office a personal liability or else no one will do it. On the military weapons point, I generally agree that the transfer from military to police has been detrimental, but I wouldn't want to blanket-prohibit as there likely are some sensible efficiencies in wholesale of old weapons.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

G. A Humane Immigration System

1. **Comprehensive Immigration Reform.** *The approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants in the US are important contributors to strong economies and strong communities. Due to political and economic instability abroad, as well as a labyrinthine and discriminatory immigration bureaucracy at home, this number could very well continue to grow. However, comprehensive immigration reform legislation has remained elusive in Washington. Which of the following policies would you support?*
 - The DREAM Act, which would allow certain US-raised immigrant youth to earn lawful permanent residence and American citizenship? YES.*
 - A path for undocumented immigrants to gain US citizenship? YES.*

- c. *Repealing the three-year, ten-year, and permanent bars of reentry for undocumented immigrants? **YES.***
- d. *Decriminalizing border crossing? **YES.***

JA: I am STRONGLY pro-immigrant. We need more high-skilled AND more low-skilled. Immigrants are a blessing to America.

2. **Upholding Rights, Ending Perverse Incentives.** *Every day, we hear new unconscionable stories about how the US is treating immigrants at the border, fueled by both bad laws and lawlessness at the federal level. Our immigration system should reflect our values. Which of the following policies would you support?*
- a. *Ending the practice of family detention? **YES.***
 - b. *Ending the practice of family separation? **YES.***
 - c. *Ending ICE's daily bed quota? **YES.***
 - d. *Imposing a moratorium on the construction of new detention facilities? **YES.***
 - e. *Abolishing ICE? **YES.***

JA: ICE has lost its moral mandate and must be reconfigured so that only its just and necessary functions (e.g. combatting human trafficking) remain.

3. **Ending Mass Deportations.** *Would you support a moratorium on deportations until a comprehensive immigration reform bill is passed?*

JA: YES.

4. **Refugees.** *In October of 2019, the number of refugees resettled in the US hit zero, and the Trump administration would like to keep it that way going forward, abandoning historic humanitarian commitments. What do you see as the appropriate number of refugees for the US to accept each year?*

JA: My great grandparents arrived as refugees from the Russian pogroms before World War I. The answer isn't a number, it's a commitment: those who are fleeing violence and oppression and extreme poverty should be able to find a home here.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

H. A Diverse and Welcoming Society

1. **LGBTQ Rights.** *Over the past several years, we have seen numerous states try to deny trans individuals the right to exist in public spaces as well as conservative lawsuits*

seeking to legalize discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. Would you support legislation to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

JA: YES.

2. **Reparations.** *Would you support legislation to create a commission to study the impact of slavery on the social, political, and economic life of the US and propose appropriate remedies (such as HR40)?*

JA: YES.

3. **Sexual Harassment.** *Would you support legislation to end the use of forced arbitration clauses in sexual harassment cases?*

JA: YES.

4. **Gun Violence Prevention.** *The US has the largest number of guns per capita in the world--and consequently one of the highest rates of gun deaths. For too long, the federal government has refused to play a constructive role in preventing gun violence. Which of the following proposals would you advocate for?*
- a. *Reinstating the federal assault weapons ban? **YES.***
 - b. *Banning high-capacity magazine ammunitions? **YES.***
 - c. *Requiring a license to purchase a gun? **YES.***
 - d. *Limiting the number of guns an individual can buy to one per month? **YES.***
 - e. *Repealing the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which shields the gun industry from lawsuits? **YES.***

JA: My proposals on gun violence prevention have been the most substantive, specific, and progressive of any candidate in the field. Simply put, there is no one to the left of me on gun violence measures, and as a former special operations officer I believe I can be an especially effective messenger.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

I. Good Government and Strong Democracy

1. **Comprehensive Democracy Reform.** *Will you commit to voting on HR 1, the For The People Act, as introduced in 2018? Among other things, HR1 ("For the People Act") contains automatic voter registration, Election Day Registration, the expansion of early voting, the prohibition of partisan gerrymandering, and other vital reforms.*

JA: YES.

2. **Ending Prison Disenfranchisement.** *Currently, Maine and Vermont are the only states that provide full suffrage to the incarcerated. Do you support ending the disenfranchisement for those currently incarcerated?*

JA: NO.

Violent offenders currently incarcerated have temporarily ceded their right to vote.

3. **Ranked Choice Voting.** *Do you support the 2020 ballot initiative to adopt ranked choice voting for state, county, and (non-presidential) federal elections?*

JA: YES.

I was a strong supporter of RCV from the beginning and remain so.

4. **Campaign Finance -- Part I.** *Do you support public financing of Congressional elections?*

JA: YES.

I have given a presentation at an academic conference on a specific proposal for campaign finance reform, which is quadratic matching funds public : private. This system would amplify small donors while reducing the influence of big donors. It is based on a paper by Glen Weyl.

5. **Campaign Finance -- Part II.** *Would you support a constitutional amendment to overturn the Citizens United decision and allow limits on corporate political spending?*

JA: YES.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

J. Sustainable Infrastructure & Environmental Protection

1. **Green New Deal.** *Do you support the concept of a Green New Deal? If so, what should it look like?*

JA: YES.

Please see my position paper at jakeforma.com/transportation.

2. **Transitioning to Clean Energy.** *We need to rapidly decarbonize our economy if we are to keep global warming within safe levels. Which of the following policies would you support to accelerate that transition?*
- Setting a goal of 100 percent clean energy generation and use by 2035? **YES.***
 - Putting a price on carbon emissions and investing the revenue in clean energy and green infrastructure? **YES.***

- c. *Prohibiting new leases for coal, oil, and gas on all federal lands and waters?*
YES.
- d. *Opposing any legislation that authorizes, or expedites the permitting or approval of, new fossil fuel pipelines?* **NO.**

JA: We need to be aggressive, especially on carbon pricing, but we also need to recognize that natural gas will be an important bridge to 100% clean energy. I have spoken to many energy experts and the math simply doesn't work without natural gas in the near and mid term.

3. **Climate Emergency.** *With rising temperatures and sea levels threatening significant harm to Massachusetts' coast, ecosystems, public health and well-being, do you support declaring a Climate Emergency to drive an aggressive response?*

JA: NO.

The word 'emergency' is not necessary to drive action. Political courage, especially regarding carbon pricing, is what is necessary.

4. **Clean Water.** *Would you support legislation to require natural gas drillers to disclose the chemicals that go into the ground during the hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") process and to close the so-called "Halliburton loophole," which prevents the EPA from conducting rigorous oversight?*

JA: YES.

5. **Environmental Justice.** *Would you support legislation to codify environmental justice into law; require federal agencies to address environmental justice through agency actions and permitting decisions; and strengthen legal protections against environmental injustice for communities of color, low-income communities, and indigenous communities?*

JA: NO.

Environmental review has too often been used to block necessary housing and transportation development, especially in California. I would want to see reform of the process before expanding its writ.

6. **Electric Vehicles.** *Would you support legislation to phase out the sale of gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles by 2030?*

JA: YES.

7. **Public Transportation.** *What would be your top priorities for federal reinvestment in transportation and infrastructure if elected?*

JA: Please see my position paper at jakeforma.com/transportation.

We are the only campaign to release a position paper on transportation and the environment.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

III. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Limit answer to 150 words or fewer.

Use this space to add any other issues important to your vision for Massachusetts or any other matter you think progressive voters should know about your candidacy.

JA: Endorsed by Progressive Newton for my city council re-election in 2019 based on strong support for housing, transportation, and green issues.