



## **Latino Democratic Club Questionnaire**

### **November 2019 Candidate Endorsements**

#### **Candidate: Vallie Brown for District 5 Supervisor**

##### **1.) Why are you running for this position?**

I'm running to be an advocate for my community, for our neighborhoods, and our shared progressive values.

I got here as a community activist and what I've learned through 25 years of activism is that working on the grassroots level, collectively with my neighbors and especially for those who need a voice, is not only the right thing to do but the most powerful.

I lost my dad for when I was a year old, my mother when I was 14. As a single mom, my mother did the best she could: She held odd jobs, working as a waitress or in a factory. But, I grew up never having housing security. We moved often, usually before we were evicted. And because of our financial situation, we never had healthcare and my mother died at 40 because she had undiagnosed diabetes. These experiences shaped my progressive values.

I came to San Francisco in the 80s to be an artist, but I found community and purpose as an activist. When my closest friends were dying from AIDS — with the City doing nothing — I walked the Castro handing out clean needles. When I taught art to children in Hunters Point, I saw how many children of color were suffering from asthma and I worked with local parents to shut down the polluting HPPP. When my neighborhood elementary school, John Muir in Hayes Valley, was facing closure, I worked with my neighbors and we founded the first PTA in 50 years — even though none of us had kids in the school — and organized pub crawls to raise money for school supplies.

##### **2.) What are you going to do for the Latino Community as an elected official?**

With the wealth gap widening in San Francisco, so many, including in the Latinx community, are at risk of being left behind. That's why one of my first priorities was getting the Cashless Ban legislation passed. 14% of the Latinx community is unbanked and the idea that they or anyone would be denied services at a brick and mortar store in San Francisco would create a de-facto

two class system in the city and it's unacceptable.

The housing crisis affects us all but I'm especially troubled by the increasing displacement of communities of color from San Francisco. This is why I worked to create the neighborhood preference policy, so when we do get affordable housing built, local residents have priority to stay in their original neighborhood. We had to fight the federal government for neighborhood preference in District 5. We won, and now it is used throughout the city and there is evidence that it is working.

As supervisor, I have continued to pursue policies that improve equity in our city and improve Latinx representation at all levels of the City government.

### **Housing:**

#### **3.) Can you tell us your position on SB 50 and your reason for that position?**

I think we have to be activists for housing. We face a housing shortage and a market that is displacing families and risks turning San Francisco in a city only for the uber-wealthy.

That means we have to take an all-hands-on deck, comprehensive approach to solving the housing crisis — including strong tenant protections and higher density apartments. Sadly, the debate on SB50 has not been constructive and I don't believe that simply opposing the bill and wishing it would go away gives us any leverage to negotiate a better bill for San Franciscans.

We need to be leaders on housing — we're not a city of naysayers and we don't run from challenges. At the Board of Supervisors, I recommended eight amendments to be made to SB50 to improve the bill to meet our needs in San Francisco, and I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors to advocate for our needs with our State representatives.

#### **4.) Do you support sustaining the shelter for students and their families at Buena Vista Horace Mann? What should we do to expand this program city wide?**

I support expanding the Stay Away concept to other schools where it would help shelter our children. I voted in March to expand the shelter at Buena Vista Horace Mann. Like so many programs, the Stay Away shelter started out as a pilot with no guarantee of success. The program exemplifies why we need to be creative and willing to try new things in order to craft a comprehensive approach to addressing homelessness and housing insecurity.

#### **5.) Should the Affordable Housing Bond be \$500 million or \$1 Billion in the next upcoming San Francisco election? Why do you support that amount over the other?**

I'm in support of the Mayor's \$500 million bond. Of course it would be wonderful if we could get the bond to \$1 billion, but we need to start with a \$500 million bond and if it becomes possible to expand it, I will absolutely support a larger bond to build more affordable housing.

**6.) Do you oppose the Monster in the Mission? Do you support the Marvel in the Mission?**

We desperately need to build more housing in every neighborhood in our city. We need to build both affordable and market rate housing if we are going to solve our housing crisis. We have to do this without causing displacement, through strong renter protections, inclusionary zoning, and the neighborhood preference policy that I worked to create.

Neighbors and activists in the Mission have shown how to build and sustain affordable housing, how to prevent displacement, and how to rally the community together. I know from my experience working in our District 5 neighborhoods that we can build more housing at all levels, and that it is possible for the City and the developer to come together to find solutions.

**Education:**

**7.) About 50 non-citizen parents voted for school board in 2018. What can you do to expand the access and security for Immigrant Parent Voting (Prop N 2016) for the 2020 School Board Election?**

I supported Prop N. First and foremost, we need to raise awareness of the Immigrant Parent Voting law and make sure parents know they are able to vote in school board elections. In terms of strengthening the program, I would start with a robust public affairs campaign from the City Department of Education. I look forward to working on this issue with my fellow members of the Board of Supervisors and members of the School Board to ensure parents have access to the ballot.

**8.) Spanish speakers comprise almost half of English Learners (ELs) in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), yet only 8% were re-classified in the 2015-16 school year. This is only halfway to the goal and outcomes for other English Learners. How can you support bridging this disparity?**

I have been very involved in equity issues in our neighborhoods and citywide, as an activist, as a legislative aide to two supervisors, and now as supervisor. I know that tough problems require people coming together to find solutions, and I will look to members of the School Board for their leadership on this issue and I will support all efforts to bridge this disparity.

**9.) Latinos went without an elected school board member from 2004 to 2016 (12 years), yet comprise the second largest SFUSD population at 27%. Do you believe district elections for school board elections can bring more equitable representation to latino parents?**

I agree we need better representation that reflects the population of our school district. We should absolutely be pursuing district elections if that will improve equitable representation to Latinx people and all diverse people. As an elected representative for District 5 residents, I know how important it is to represent the people of my community, to be accessible to the

people in our neighborhoods, and to be responsive to local needs.

Additionally, I am aware that there have been recent actual and threatened legal actions to force at-large school boards throughout California to move to district-based systems due to provisions in the California Voting Rights Act that protect minority voters. If San Francisco is not compliant with the California Voting Rights Act, then the School Board should take swift action to address any possible inequity, including a move to district elections if that is determined to increase equity in representation.

### **Immigration:**

**10.) Asylum seekers at California border ballooned from 17,284 in fiscal 2017 to 38,269 in fiscal 2018. A backlog has grown to more than 820,000 CA immigration cases, each takes several months to process. San Francisco has done a great job supporting legal defense for asylum seekers. What should San Francisco's role be to provide social services to asylum seekers while awaiting justice?**

Our Sanctuary City policies are a clear statement of our values as a City and I stand behind our Sanctuary City policies 100 percent. I believe that asylum seekers should be afforded access to social services, and that we should continue to support asylum seekers through legal defense and access to social services. If there are services that are not being afforded asylum seekers, I would work to fix that situation immediately.

**11.) Would you have advocated for a Clean Dream Act that includes TPS recipients?**

Yes.

**12.) Do you have any plans to advance the rights for undocumented immigrants to receive housing services?**

We are a Sanctuary City and there should not be any distinction between people in need of housing services when it comes to immigration status.

### **Criminal Justice:**

**13.) Are you for or against tasers for use in San Francisco?**

Against. We've seen tragically that the use of tasers can be lethal. I think our police should be well trained in de-escalation techniques above all else.

**14.) What is your plan to add supportive services and reduce revisitation?**

Every city should be looking at criminal justice reform and how we can ensure that people don't get stuck in the endless cycle of recidivism. I worked on the Reentry Council as a legislative aide and continue to support the mission of the Council. We should continue to look for ways to expand that work to address any shortcomings and solve new issues.

## **Equity:**

### **15.) How would you support cannabis and alcohol parity for the Mission and Excelsior with other San Francisco neighborhoods?**

I have always supported cannabis and will continue to do so, in terms of both legality and access. The criminal justice system has been incredibly unfair to communities of color on non-violent drug convictions. Now that cannabis is legal, we have to work hard to ensure equitable licensing for businesses for cannabis purveyors.

We must work with communities, like the Mission and Excelsior, to ensure a fair distribution across the city that takes into account local needs and priorities.

### **16.) How would you and how have you supported Latinx parity for Commissioners, Elected Officials, and Legislative Staff?**

Our city government should reflect the diverse fabric of the people who live in this city, plain and simple. I would love to see more Latinx community members able to step up and take these roles.

I am currently working with Supervisor Fewer to create the Office of Equity and Inclusion within the Human Rights Commission to analyze the city's hiring, promotion, and retention practices. With the office, we can better understand how gender and race based discrimination impacts the city's workforce and services.

### **17.) How do you measure the Latinx community receiving equity of San Francisco resources? How would you ally to help the Latinx receive equity?**

I view every piece of legislation as an opportunity to address issues of equity in our city, especially when it comes to housing, education, and jobs.

I also sponsored the Cashless Ban legislation that just passed the Board of Supervisors and is headed to Mayor Breed for her signature. The ban will protect the unbanked in San Francisco and ensure that every brick and mortar business will continue to accept cash.