

**SMCDCC ENDORSEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**May 16, 2019**

Endorsement Committee Members: Karen Maki and Brigid O'Farrell, Co-Chairs, Robert Bernardo, District 1, Shikha Hamilton, District 2, Steven Booker, District 3. Diana Reddy, District 4, Kalimah Salahuddin, District 5, Tom Mohr, Ex Officio, Cliff Robbins, By-laws Committee, Nicole Fernandez, SMCDCC Chair

**Overview**

The San Mateo County Democratic Central Committee has taken several steps this year to improve its endorsement process and address issues that arose in the 2018 election cycle. The candidate and ballot initiative endorsement process is governed by the provisions of Article XIII of the SMCDCC By-laws.

In January 2019 the newly elected chair developed guidelines for appointing Endorsement Committee members that included having one person from each supervisorial district, one person representing ex-officios, a representative from the by-laws committee, the co-chairs, and the SMCDCC chair. Using the list of people who volunteered for the Endorsement Committee, the chair further tried to balance the Committee with people who reflect the different age, racial, ethnic, and gender identities of the county as well as people with and without prior endorsement committee experience. Following these guidelines, the Endorsement Committee will be expanded when more people are needed for interview teams.

The Endorsement Committee is currently developing a document defining the endorsement process, including a vision statement, guidelines, and norms, and developing an endorsement orientation program for candidates to explain the process.

The attached recommendations address four issues that arose during the 2018 endorsement process and were announced at the March SMCDCC meeting:

1. When does a candidate need to be a registered Democrat to qualify for consideration for our endorsement?
2. Should we specify a process to rescind an endorsement?
3. When must an endorsement committee member recuse themselves from involvement in the endorsement interview with respect to a specific race?
4. Whether to have a criminal record/involvement question on the questionnaire?

In looking into these issues, seventeen members, alternates, and associates of the SMCDCC participated in an animated and open discussion facilitated by Anne Adams, an organizational consultant from Half Moon Bay. Ten members submitted written comments. The committee reviewed endorsement by-laws from five other central committees. Documents are available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10eivHpINzdBPAPcGT21LJam5olfM-j6i>.

## **Endorsement Committee Recommendations**

### **1. Timing to be a registered Democrat:**

Question: When does a candidate need to be a registered Democrat to qualify for consideration for our endorsement?

The Endorsement Committee recommends that a candidate needs to be registered as a Democrat by the end of the “filing deadline” for that office.

### **The Endorsement Committee recommends that this be reflected in the By-laws.**

The Endorsement Committee further recommends that, as part of the endorsement process, candidates be advised of this deadline and encouraged to timely verify their registration with the San Mateo County Elections Office.

### **2. Rescission of an endorsement**

Question: Should we specify a process to rescind an endorsement?

The Endorsement Committee recommends that the SMCDCC specify a process to rescind an endorsement as follows:

In the event a compelling reason to consider rescinding an endorsement is brought forward, reasonable efforts will be made to contact the candidate and to give the candidate an opportunity to state their position to the SMCDCC Chair.

If time allows (as determined by the SMCDCC Chair), the matter shall be brought before the full SMCDCC to decide, with a vote of 60 percent of the members present and voting required to rescind, the same as the 60 percent vote required to endorse a candidate.

If time does not allow (as determined by the SMCDCC Chair) a vote of 60 percent of the members of the Executive Board plus Endorsement Committee chair shall be required to rescind. Any decision to rescind shall be promptly reported to the full SMCDCC.

**The Endorsement Committee recommends that this be reflected in the By-laws.** The Endorsement Committee further recommends that, as part of the endorsement process, candidates be advised of this rescission policy.

### **3. Recusal**

Question: When must an endorsement committee member recuse themselves from involvement in the endorsement interview with respect to a specific race?

The Endorsement Committee recommends that a member of the Endorsement Committee/interview team should recuse themselves from participating or observing in the interview and Endorsement Committee deliberation on a specific race if they have /are:

- o Donated, endorsed, volunteered for or are employed by a candidate campaign for that specific race.
- o Employed by the public agency / entity or serve as an elected official for the public agency / entity in that specific race
- o Have a family or financial relationship with a candidate in a specific race

These recommendations are for recusal from the Endorsement interview process and do not apply to the actual vote of the full Central Committee membership.

#### **4. Candidate's criminal record/involvement in the judicial process**

Question: Whether to have a criminal record/involvement question on the questionnaire?

The recently used SMCDCC questionnaire states:

“14. Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or pled guilty or nolo contendere to a crime or are you currently the subject of any type of government or law enforcement investigation? (If yes please provide an explanation.)”

The Endorsement Committee recommends removal of this question in its entirety.

Resources:

Documents - <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10eivHpINzdBPAPcGT21LJam5olfM-j6i>.

Democratic Party Platform - <https://www.cadem.org/our-california/platform>