SF League of Pissed Off Voters 2020 DCCC Questionnaire

Hello candidates! Thank you for filling out the League’s questionnaire. Please complete the questionnaire by 5pm on Sunday, December 1st if you wish to be considered for the League’s endorsement. Please use this form rather than formatting it into a Word document or PDF. If you have any questions, you can contact us at TheLeagueSF@gmail.com.

Candidate Info

Need to see the other questions before you get started? Just fill this in. It’s the only section with required answers.

Name *

A.J. Thomas

Campaign Contact *

Email Address *

...
Phone Number

Website

ajthomas.org

Tell Us About You

Why are you running for this office?

I am running for SF DCCC because I want to help fight back against the corporate interests that have dominated our party for a long time. I am proud to be running as part of the Social Justice Democrats slate with a group of fellow progressives who share the same core values. I am a leader in a progressive SF union (IFPTE Local 21), and I want to be a voice for progressive labor on the DCCC. I am also a long-time tenant in San Francisco who is a volunteer tenants counselor at the SF Tenants Union. I am also running to be a voice for tenants on the DCCC.
What are the top three issues you will work on and how will you implement solutions in a timely manner?

1) Foster collaboration between progressive organized labor and the Social Justice Democrats on the DCCC. Progressive Unions and SF democratic party progressives have been caught on the wrong page too many times. Our underlying goals are the same and I will be an active conduit between the two groups from day one.

2) Affordable worker housing. SF must invest in workforce housing for it’s working class residents, such as teachers, carpenters, and retail workers. As a union activist I was proud to support Supervisor Haney’s changes to the Jobs-Housing Linkage Fee and 2019’s Proposition E. As a DCCC member I will call for resolutions and endorsements to build consensus around more affordable workforce housing.

3) Expand Red2Blue initiative. One of the most powerful things progressives on the DCCC did last year was leverage SF’s progressive base to help flip swing house districts across the state. These efforts returned the House to Democratic control and finally brought some accountability to #45. November 2020 will be one of the most important elections in our lifetimes and I plan to use my seat on the DCCC to organize San Franciscans to volunteer, text/phonebank, and canvass to retake the Senate and the White House.

What three endorsements are you most proud of?

Jane Kim, Sandy Fewer, Francis Hsieh. All three of these leaders have been incredible mentors to me and I am proud to have their endorsements. I am proud that they're authentic people who don't compromise their values.
What for-profit or non-profit boards do you serve on, including political organizations?

Member - CA Democratic Party Legislative Committee.
Chapter President - IFPTE Local 21
Member - IFPTE Local 21 Political Action Committee
Chairperson - IFPTE Local 21 SFERS Oversight Committee
Delegate - San Francisco Labor Council
Member - SF Labor Council Public Employees Committee
Board Member - SF Young Democrats
Board Member - Alamo Square Neighborhood Association

What local and state commissions or policy bodies do you serve on?

Member - City College San Francisco: Parcel Tax Oversight Committee
Member - City College San Francisco: Citizen Bond Oversight Committee

DCCC

Do you pledge to support San Francisco Employees' Retirement System (SFERS) fully divesting from fossil fuels within three years and holding SFERS accountable at the ballot if they do not divest?

☐ Yes

☐ No
Do you pledge to support San Francisco purchasing PG&E assets to create public power in San Francisco?

- Yes
- No

Do you pledge to support the closure of 850 Bryant, jails #3 and #4?

- Yes
- No

Do you pledge to vote to endorse only those candidates that support Abolishing ICE?

- Yes
- No

Do you pledge to vote to endorse only those candidates that support decarceral criminal justice reform?

- Yes
- No
Do you support the expansion of charter schools? Yes/No (Please explain your answer.)

No, as a union leader, I am skeptical of charter schools. They are notorious for antagonizing workers who attempt to unionize. I would have a lot of difficulty supporting an expansion of charter schools that did not include a teacher’s right to organize. I also find the common practice of selecting specific candidates while leaving the disabled and developmentally challenged out of the loop to be fundamentally unfair.

Did you support SB 50 (Senator Wiener’s zoning bill) as written?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If not, what amendments would make you support SB 50?

SB50 has improved a great deal from the original version. However, it still does little to address the most important downstream issue it will cause: displacement from gentrification. We know that by-right multifamily zoning will incentivize construction of luxury units. We know that the most powerful way to combat displacement is through robust local rent control which is currently forbidden on new units under Costa-Hawkins (AB1482 does not allow local municipalities of rent control). I would amend SB50 to include a full repeal of Costa-Hawkins so municipalities can implement rent control in a manner appropriate locally to fight displacement and gentrification.

Do you pledge to endorse only candidates committed to ending homeless sweeps?

☐ Yes

☐ No
Do you support the City funding community land trusts?
- Yes
- No

Do you support congestion pricing for the downtown core?
- Yes
- No

Do you support and would you vote to endorse a Public Bank in San Francisco?
- Yes
- No

Do you pledge to vote to endorse only those candidates that support Medicare for All?
- Yes
- No
- Other: 

Do you pledge to only endorse those candidates that support a full repeal of the Ellis Act and Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act?
- Yes
- No
Do you believe the number of real estate contributions to a candidate impacts their fitness as a progressive candidate?

- Yes
- No

If Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act is repealed, would you work to enact vacancy control in San Francisco?

- Yes
- No

Do you support a baseline percentage of 40% of affordable housing in developments when negotiating the number of housing units?

- Yes
- No

Do you support requiring 100% affordable housing on public land?

- Yes
- No
If not, under what circumstances would you support allowing a percentage or all market-rate housing on public land?

I support both the 40% affordable housing goal and 100% on public land. However, these must be accomplished by utilizing the numerous tools available. Various housing development projects such as Mission Rock are examples of this being done successfully. If there is a solution offered that results in more affordable housing being built than would be done by hitting these numbers, then it should be considered for community input. But we should never just concede to giveaways for developers ever.

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DCCC Policy

Do you support contribution limits for DCCC races?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

What are your ideas to avoid a corporate takeover of the DCCC?

Electing progressive members who expressly fight back against corporate interests, like the Social Justice Democrats. This slate is proudly progressive and has rejected corporate influence. Please consider endorsing the whole slate to fight back against corporate democrats.
Do you support limiting DCCC ex-officio member voting rights for endorsements?

- Yes
- No

Do you support banning elected politicians from running for DCCC?

- Yes
- No

Do you pledge not to resign your seat before the November 2020 endorsement vote?

- Yes
- No

If not, please explain why:

For the next set of answers, I am choosing not to make a pledge to a vote to sole endorse at this time, because strategy is all important and I’d want to check in with other Social Justice Democrats first. And I’d want to respect the role that ranked choice plays in allowing lesser known candidates with good ideas to have a voice. In terms of my personal endorsements, all the questions regarding pledges in the affirmative reflect my choice for elected officials that I respect and admire, and would vote for if they served in my district.
Do you pledge to vote to SOLE endorse Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer in District 1?

- Yes
- No

Do you pledge to vote to SOLE endorse Supervisor Aaron Peskin in District 3?

- Yes
- No

Do you pledge to vote to SOLE endorse Supervisor Dean Preston in District 5?

- Yes
- No

Do you pledge to vote to not endorse Karim Salgado or Joel Engardio for Supervisor in District 7?

- Yes
- No

Do you pledge to vote to SOLE endorse Supervisor Hillary Ronen in District 9?

- Yes
- No
Do you pledge to vote to SOLE endorse Former Supervisor John Avalos in District 11?

- Yes
- No

Do you support restrictions on Prop 13 in the November 2020 and future elections?

- Yes
- No

Do you support the proposed commercial vacancy tax?

- Yes
- No

Do you support the Fair Elections charter amendment to prohibit mayoral appointments of candidates 90 days before an election?

- Yes
- No

March 2020 Election
Which candidate will you support in the March 2020 Presidential Primary?
Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren

Do you support San Francisco Balanced Development Act which seeks to update 1986’s Prop M?"
○ Yes
○ No

Which candidate will you support for Congress in District 12?
○ Agatha Bacelar
○ Shahid Buttar
○ Douglas Deitch
○ Tom Gallagher
○ Nancy Pelosi

Which candidate will you support for SF Superior Court Seat 1?
○ Pang Va Ly
○ Maria Evangelista

Which candidate will you support for SF Superior Court Seat 18?
○ Dorothy Chou Proudfoot
○ Michelle Tong
Which candidate will you support for SF Superior Court Seat 21?

- Kulvinder "Rani" Singh
- Carolyn Gold

November 2019 Election

Who did you support for District Attorney?

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<th>1st Choice</th>
<th>2nd Choice</th>
<th>3rd Choice</th>
<th>Unranked Endorsement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Suzy Loftus</td>
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<td>Leif Dautch</td>
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<td>Nancy Tung</td>
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<td>Chesa Boudin</td>
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Who did you Support for D5 Supervisor?

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<th>2nd Choice</th>
<th>3rd Choice</th>
<th>Unranked Endorsement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dean Preston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vallie Brown</td>
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<td>Ryan Lam</td>
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<td>Nomvula O'Meara</td>
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November 2018 Election

Need a refresher of what was on the ballot? Use this link: [https://sfelections.sfgov.org/november-6-2018-election-results-summary](https://sfelections.sfgov.org/november-6-2018-election-results-summary)

Who did you support for Board of Education? Please list all endorsements and ranking if any.

ALISON COLLINS, GABRIELA LÓPEZ, FAAUUGA MOLIGA

Who did you support for D2 Supervisor? Please list all endorsements and ranking if any.
Who did you support for D4 Supervisor? Please list all endorsements and ranking if any.

Gordon Mar

Who did you support for D6 Supervisor? Please list all endorsements and ranking if any.

Matt Haney

Who did you support for D8 Supervisor? Please list all endorsements and ranking if any.

Rafael Mandleman

Who did you support for D10 Supervisor? Please list all endorsements and ranking if any.

Shaman Walton

Did you support November 2018's Prop C - "Our City Our Home" tax on gross receipts of businesses to fund homeless services?

☐ Yes

☐ No

June 2018 Election
Need a refresher of what was on the ballot? Use this link: https://sfelections.sfgov.org/june-5-2018-election-results-summary

Who did you support for Mayor in June 2018? Please list all endorsements and ranking if any.

No personal endorsement. Phone banked for Jane Kim/Mark Leno as volunteer for SF Tenants Union

Did you support June 2018’s Prop C, Tax on Commercial Rent for Child Care & Early Education?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Did you support June 2018’s Prop F “Tenant’s Right to Counsel”?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Did you support June 2018’s Prop H “Arm Police With Tasers”?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Past Elections
Did you support 2016’s Prop D "Let’s Elect Our Elected Officials" to have special elections to fill vacancies on the Board of Supervisors?

- Yes
- No

Did you support 2014's Prop G, the anti-speculation tax?

- Yes
- No

Short Answer Questions

Short Answers Please

Do you identify as an activist?

- Yes
- No
If so, please describe specific accomplishments in your activism. What did you get done, and what was your role?

I have phone banked and canvassed door-to-door for causes that I believe in and candidates who have fought for worker’s rights. Some of the campaigns I have knocked on doors for include 2018’s Prop C (Tax on Commercial Rent for Child Care & Early Education), Prop F (Tenants Right to Counsel) and CA Prop 10 (repeal of Costa Hawkins). I have also advocated for endorsements of progressive candidates such as Matt Haney and Gordon Mar in clubs and labor organizations.

In my labor activist capacity I have participated in numerous strike line pickets, organizing trainings, membership education events, and oversight committees. I currently serve as a chapter president in my union and chair our pension oversight committee where we make sure that worker retiree pensions are being managed responsibly while also adhering to our values, such as fossil fuel divestment.

What communities do you feel you represent in SF and how do those communities hold you accountable?

I grew into local politics through progressive organized labor and want to represent working people. I have been a renter for the entire 10+ years I have lived in San Francisco and an advocate for tenant’s rights since getting involved in SF politics. I count on these groups to keep me accountable.

Please list specific ways you have shown up for immigrants at risk of deportation.

I have participated in marches and demonstrations supporting immigrants at risk of deportation. I have spoken on the record during public comment at DCCC hearings calling for the abolishment of ICE. I have counselled many immigrants at risk of deportation as a counselor for the San Francisco Tenants Union who fear their landlords will use their immigration status to force them out of their homes or to suffer inhumane treatment.
Please list specific ways you have fought against racism and white supremacy.

As a non-white person who grew up in a predominantly non-white community, I have advocated against racism and white supremacy from a young age. I live in the Fillmore community of San Francisco and have worked to advocate for community benefits on numerous occasions. Sometimes these can be obvious and egregious, such as when I counseled a tenant whose landlord was trying to evict them for having an african-american boyfriend. Other times it can be small, such as the time I noticed that the historical african-american owned businesses along the Divisadero Merchant Corridor were excluded from the holiday lighting plan, that somehow included all the white-owned business along the corridor. I used my seat on the local Neighborhood Association to inquire and advocate that the lighting include all businesses and got the job done.

Please give us some examples of situations you’ve encountered where gender and LGBTQ inequity was evident, and what you did or would do to address it?

I have stood up to correct ignorant or bad behavior by colleagues toward LGBTQ colleagues many times and I have advocated for gender neutral bathrooms in my workplace. I have marched in pride parades and protests against unfair treatment toward LGBTQ communities of color. More importantly, I have sought to recruit LGBTQ individuals to leadership positions because I feel that this is one of the best ways to advance our movement and push back against inequity.

In the midst of a homelessness crisis, how can the City and County of San Francisco improve the effectiveness of our city’s homelessness and supportive housing services?

There are numerous ways we can improve our city’s response to the homelessness crisis facing our city. First, we need to fully implement Mental Health SF, which I helped fight to get agreement on, including marching, letter writing, and other forms of advocacy. We also need to open a navigation center in every supervisor district. I will hold supervisors accountable for setting up a navigation center in their district.
How would you expand checks and balances in regard to Mayoral appointments?

I believe that all mayoral appointments should be confirmed by the BOS.

Do you work for the City and County of SF?
- Yes
- No

Are you a member of a union?
- Yes
- No

If so, how will you balance accountability to union leadership, workers, and constituents?

I am proud to come from IFPTE Local 21 and believe that the union has strong progressive values. However, I also understand that an elected position carries accountability beyond just to those groups you came from. I understand that there are times when I must be accountable to the electorate as a whole beyond just my local union. For example, as an elected member of the CA state party, I chose to vote for Kimberly Ellis because I felt her vision for the future of the party matched my beliefs and those of my constituents better than her state union backed opponent.

Last questions...we promise.
What do you for fun in San Francisco?

My partner and I are avid hikers. San Francisco has some of the best urban hiking trails of any city we’ve visited. We are always excited to hike around the city and find a new hole-in-the-wall to eat at.

Why do you want the League of Pissed Off Voters’ endorsement?

The League makes an amazing voter guide that represents average progressive folks in SF. I’ve consulted with the League Guides for years and even done bar crawls to help pass out the guides along the west side of the city. It would be an honor to have the League’s endorsement.

Is there anything else you want to tell us?

SFERS: I fully support divestment from fossil fuels while also adhering to the city's fiduciary duty to protect the retirements of the city's employees/retirees. I do not believe these two obligations are in conflict and have worked as chair of the L21 SFERS oversight committee to actively push fossil fuel divestment.

For Future Endorsement Questions: I am choosing not to make a pledge to a vote to sole endorse at this time, because strategy is important and I'd want to check in with other Social Justice Democrats first. And I'd want to respect the role that ranked choice plays in allowing lesser known candidates with good ideas to have a voice. In terms of my personal endorsements, all the questions regarding pledges in the affirmative reflect my choice for elected officials that I respect and admire, and would vote for if they served in my district.