

UNITE! CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2020

We want our questionnaire to help UNITE members understand why you are running for office, how you fit in to our movement, and where you stand on issues that concern us. Please feel free to add or elaborate. Email back to info@uniteforpa.com

BACKGROUND

Name: Sara Innamorato

Office and district you are running for: State Representative, 21st District

Party Affiliation: Democrat

POWER AND POLITICS

Tell us about yourself and why you are running for this office. We are interested in learning about your policy priorities and also about how you understand the role of elections and elected officials in movement-building. (250-500 words)

I am running for reelection, because the work is far from done.

I love this job. I love going to the community library and helping kids decorate cookies. It brings me great joy to deliver a giant check to individuals in a community who advocated for making their business district accessible. When we are able to solve a problem from a senior who is looking for their birth certificate, it's a win to be celebrated. Most of this job is creating an opportunity for civic engagement, to see kindness and compassion reflected in government.

This job also makes be incredibly sad. When you are accessible and listen, you hear the painful stories of how our economy and society are not working for everyone and how public policy fails them. I've had a mother recount the time she found her son dead in the bathroom from an overdose. Another told me she is afraid she is going to start rationing her insulin again because of the cost. A man, worried that he doesn't have enough money to leave his son with disabilities, is upset because no one will hire him. He is 82 years old. Yes, our office has the ability to help individuals, but this position as a state representative has the power to enact legislation that moves from helping the individual to dismantling and rebuilding entire systems with those who have traditionally been most excluded at the center.

My approach is to humanize policy, to make sure that the legislation we are writing is not written by the academic elites or industry, but written by the people most impacted by those policies. My job is to use my platform to invite people to co-govern with me. This democratic process is messy, it's labor intensive, and resource heavy, but it's exactly what citizens deserve.

The status quo won't change unless we change who represents us. On the electoral side, it is my duty to reach back and ensure that we are bringing along other forward-thinking, human-centered working people with diverse identities and backgrounds.

Tell us about the communities you plan to engage during your campaign and how you will work with them during and after your campaign. (250-500 words)

The only reason we run our race in 2018 is because we expanded the electorate. This came through reaching out to people on the doors and inviting people into the process. The only way we will build a movement is to meet people where they are, to listen to their story and to invite them to engage in the civic process through campaign volunteering and advocating for legislative changes.

When writing legislation, I have worked with organizations to help inform and craft it. For example, the housing co-governing table our office has formed includes tenant organizers, individuals displaced by gentrification, nonprofit developers, housing justice lawyers, housing policy experts, social service providers, and landlords to talk about issues, evaluate legislation, and work towards crafting a state-level policy agenda around housing.

Again, as legislators, we cannot craft meaningful, change-making legislation if we don't engage, center and listen to the impacted individuals and communities.

Tell us about why you are seeking the endorsement of UNITE and how you envision an ongoing working relationship with us - both on the campaign trail and once in office. (250-500 words)

Unite is the manifestation and long-term solution to building people-powered politics. Often we rally around one campaign, one candidate, and the reality is we need a sustained, people-powered movement that can mobilize for each election cycle, up and down the ballot.

As someone who was originally involved in conversations on forming a coalition to maintain a structure that would continue to engage the individuals and organizations involved in mine and Representative Summer Lee's campaigns, I am open to remaining an ally to the organization. During the campaign, we can work together to train up organizers and volunteers. In office, we can remain in contact around writing legislation, and, given the make-up of our current general assembly, mobilize members to push back against toxic legislation. I've spoken at and attended member's events and rallies to fight the corporate greed of UPMC, unite against anti-semitism, and end our racist criminal justice system.

There are also opportunities to educate my colleagues on issues of social, racial, economic and environmental justice that they aren't aware of. Recently, we worked with Casa San Jose by way of the LCLAA to educate my colleagues who voted in favor of the expansion of the e-verify legislation to the private building trades industry.

Movements require people, and I commit to continue to fight for our vision of building a Pennsylvania for us all through speaking up for what is right, and also using our coalition to educate and inform the harm these policies have on people.

ISSUE QUESTIONNAIRE

Healthcare

1. Do you support a single-payer healthcare system?

Yes **No**

Comments: The state has the capability to deliver on a single payer system for Pennsylvanians.

2. Do you support guaranteed access to abortion services as part of any present or future healthcare system?

Yes **No**

Comments: As a member of the Health Committee, a significant amount of time this year was spent defending attacks on access to abortion care. Pennsylvania is not unique in quest to restrict abortion access, at the end of 2019 25 new abortion bans across the US were signed into law. Our healthcare system must include abortion access to protect the bodily autonomy of those who can become pregnant.

3. Do you support LGBTQ specific healthcare as part of any present or future healthcare system?

Yes **No**

Comments:

4. Do you support legally mandated paid family leave/paid sick days?

Yes **No**

Comments: The Family Care Act that is currently being considered in the House is a small step towards a paid family leave program. Ideally, we can work towards a program that isn't only covered by workers' wages.

5. Do you support initiatives to limit the costs of prescription drug prices, such as Ohio's Drug Price Standards Initiative?

Yes **No**

Comments: I am also monitoring Maryland's recently passed HB 768, which creates a Prescription Drug Affordability Board.

Housing and Public Services

6. What policies, if any, would you support to protect existing residents against rising housing costs?

Comments: This year we formed a housing co-governing table around housing to imagine a more proactive role the state can play in the affordable housing crisis. Our office is currently working on a social housing bill.

7. Do you support measures to improve accessible, affordable, integrated housing options so that people with disabilities can live in the communities where they work or are seeking work?

Yes **No**

Comments:

8. Do you support legislation that would allocate additional funds to maintain and repair of our public infrastructure, including lead line replacement?

Yes **No**

Comments:

9. Do you support public banking initiatives?

Yes **No**

Comments: We can look at the recent victory in New Jersey as an example, or look at enabling municipalities to set up their own public banking system.

10. What improvements, if any, would you suggest for public transportation?

Comments: I requested to be a member of the Transportation committee for this very reason. With the expiration of Act 89, Pennsylvania will be faced with an even larger funding crisis for public transit. The critical priority from a state perspective is get more funding to our local Port Authority for them to invest in expanding routes and capital improvements. This past year, I've worked with Pittsburghers for Public Transit to support their equity initiatives and work about autonomous vehicles regulations.

11. Would you support legislation banning the privatization of our water and sewage systems?

Yes **No**

Comments: This is an under-acknowledged threat, since Pennsylvania has more pro-privatization laws for water systems than any other state. An alarming amount of once public, municipal systems in Pennsylvania have been acquired by American Water

over the past few years. I worked with a coalition of organizations and elected officials to organize and amplify the Keep Our Water Public campaign in the Summer/Fall of 2018.

Work

12. Do you support policies and legislation that make it easier for workers to organize unions?

Yes **No**

Comments: These include and are not limited to: paid family leave, a housing guarantee, universal healthcare, as well as universal childcare, pre-k, and full-day kindergarten. If we have these systems in place, workers will have a basic public programs available to meet their family's basic needs outside of employment, thus giving them more freedom and autonomy as a worker.

13. Do you support legislation enshrining the right to strike, including sympathy strikes?

Yes **No**

14. Do you support raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr or higher?

Yes **No**

Comments: Yes, and I believe we must move towards sectoral bargaining.

15. Do you support legislation to increase employment opportunities for adults living with disabilities?

Yes **No**

Comments: It depends on the legislation. In America your worth as a human is often defined by the work you do. While I believe in hard work, forcing people into the workforce or to work a minimum amount of hours to receive life-sustaining, and often life-saving, benefits is cruel.

Education

16. Do you support providing universal pre-K and/or childcare programs through our public school systems?

Yes **No**

Comments: One of the biggest workers rights issues of our time.

17. What is your position on charter schools?

Comments: On a macro level, the evidence says that children who go through a charter system are no better off than a traditional public school system. Yet, in reality, there are students who are thriving at charter schools in our region. I do not want to take any child's school away. I believe that we must rid the system of cyber charter schools, hold

charter schools to the same level of transparency of public schools, ensure they take students of all abilities, and free public school teachers from erroneous bureaucratic structures that distract from actual teaching. Ultimately, regardless of the school structure, we need to change the way we educate our children and provide cultural competent and honest curriculum that highlights America's racist and xenophobic history and pays tribute to cultures stolen by our colonizing tendencies.

18. What is your stance on free tuition for university students?

Comments: I believe public colleges and universities should be no cost to all those seeking a post-high school education.

Environment

19. Do you support the build-out of new petrochemical infrastructure in Pennsylvania?

Yes **(Hell) No**

Comments: Cancer Alley.

20. Do you support legislation to counteract rising emission rates and resultant climate change?

Yes **No**

Comments: Our current program under RGGI is not it.

21. Is it possible to both protect the environment while also creating and maintaining good union jobs in Allegheny County? If so, how?

Yes **No**

Comments: We've spent hundreds of millions of dollars on cleaning up acid mine drainage and we are still not remediated the environment, while hundreds of millions of dollars in profits were hoarded by the mine owners. All while they canceled miners' pension and health insurance as their kids watch them suffer from black lung. Our public funds that should go towards investing in our infrastructure and projects today, instead goes to paying of the debts and ills caused by the wealthy owner class. We must learn our lesson from the past and not allow industry to privatize their profits and socialize the risks associated with their business operations. Not only do we currently not hold industry accountable in our backwards permitting system, we still offer millions in tax subsidies.

If today, we simply redirect subsidies given to extractive industries and redirect to investments into rebuilding our roads and bridges, retrofitting and remediating our public buildings, especially our toxic schools, and constructing sustainable affordable housing, we could spend the money building an environmentally sound future built with union labor.

Criminal Justice and Police Reform

22. Do you support any police accountability or oversight measures, such as citizen review boards?

Yes *No*

Comments:

23. Do you support the full legalization of cannabis?

Yes *No*

Comments:

24. Do you support the decriminalization of other drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and/or methamphetamines?

Yes *No*

Comments: Decriminalization must be coupled with a release of those who are incarcerated for nonviolent drug offenses related to those drugs.

25. Do you support the abolition of ICE?

Yes *No*

Comments: Before ICE, we had a Department that was more about enforcing the bureaucratic structures that aggressively rounding up those here without documentation. We can return to a regulatory agency that is not centered around punitive measures, but around finding those who come here a path to citizenship.

Strengthening Our Democracy and Public Finance

26. Do you support the expansion of mail balloting, early voting, and other access-increasing measures?

Yes *No*

Comments: Act 77 of 2019 achieved some of these goals, but also codified into law were voter roll purges and other opportunities to suppress the vote.

27. Do you support automatic voter registration?

Yes *No*

Comments: I introduced Automatic Voter Registration my first month in office. I worked with Brennan Center for Justice, the Governor's administration, and those in other states to strengthen and create one of the most comprehensive AVR bills of any state. Now we just need to move it.

28. Do you support voter ID laws?

Yes **No**

Comments:

29. Do you support campaign finance reform legislation that would limit the amount and frequency by which rich individuals and corporations can influence individual campaigns?

Yes *No*

Comments:

30. Do you support the continued existence of "tax loopholes" that allow corporate entities to pay a lesser tax burden than they would otherwise be mandated by state or federal law?

Yes **No**

Comments: The largest one we must close is the Delaware loophole.

31. What is your stance on UPMC's standing as a non profit? Should their non profit status be challenged?

Yes *No*

Comments: