

DC for Democracy Questionnaire Response

1) Why are you running for City Council, and if (re)elected, what are the three most important things you intend to accomplish in the near term?

I am running for Council to continue the effort to improve public education in the District, to protect the environment, and to ensure that the government acts responsibly, openly, and effectively. The specific legislative initiatives will depend on the Committee assignment.

2) What are the three most important issues facing the District of Columbia in the next decade?

Education must remain the top priority. In the near term, the second priority must be to maintain the fiscal integrity of the District government while preserving core governmental services. The third priority relates to modernizing our infrastructure to meet the challenges associated with population growth, environmental protection, and economic development.

3) What are your qualifications to serve as Council member?

At this point, my record as a Councilmember demonstrates my abilities to implement common-sense legislative reforms and to exercise independent judgment to protect District residents' interests.

4) In the context of the projected budget shortfall, do you believe the current budget discussions fairly balance increases in revenue against spending reductions, and fairly allocate the burden of revenue increases? If not, what would you propose?

I am in favor of a thoughtful approach to balancing the budget. We shouldn't simply tax the rich or slash needed programs. Instead, we must carefully review what programs can be restructured, what savings can be realized, and where the "fat" can be trimmed. If we can balance the budget without new revenues, that's the approach I prefer. But, if we need new revenue to maintain the service that District residents need, we should adopt a more nuanced, less hyperbolic, approach to taxation.

5) The District of Columbia is suffering significantly higher unemployment than Maryland and Virginia in this recession. Describe your plan for broad-based job recovery.

The biggest challenge is connecting District residents to existing jobs. It's important to remember that the number of jobs in the District has actually gone up, while fewer District residents have jobs. We need to invest in adult and vocational education, including working with UDC and other universities to provide more opportunities for training. In the longer term, public education reform is the single most important way to train, attract, and retain highly qualified District residents.

6) If (re)elected, what will you do to create and protect affordable housing options for both home-buyers and tenants, and alleviate homelessness?

Smart-growth strategies such as transit-oriented development and inclusionary zoning are

the most important keys to providing affordable housing options. Alleviating homelessness requires a comprehensive framework, such as providing wrap-around medical services and job training.

7) Do you think reform in the D.C. Public Schools is headed in the right direction? Explain your answer.

Yes. It is clear that the Mayoral takeover of the schools has brought about improved accountability and better education outcomes. At this point, though, sustainability of reform must be the focus.

8) What policies do you recommend for reducing crime and increasing public safety in the District of Columbia?

Increasing educational, recreational, and vocational opportunities for District residents is one component. Vigilant police work is the other. Both are necessary.

9) What are the three most important steps that need to be taken to revitalize the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority?

Bringing in new leadership. Better management of human capital. More resources from the federal government and from Maryland and Virginia.

10) If (re)elected, what steps will you take to invigorate the D.C. statehood movement?

It will require a new strategy, invigorated advocacy inside and outside of the District, and, above all else, a commitment to principles. Unfortunately, statehood will be a long process. We can make incremental steps, but we should remember why we are striving for statehood: an equal right to federal representation AND self-determination.

11) A moratorium on earmarks was declared in Fiscal Year 2010. Do you think past practices for awarding earmark grants should be reformed? If so, how?

There does need to be a more thoughtful way of selecting and monitoring the results of earmark grants. I think that the Bennett report offered a good starting place for reform, such as requiring formal grant requests, increased disclosure, and requiring proof of capacity for performance. Once the budget situation is less dire, the Council should seriously consider a more transparent and accountable approach to earmarks.

12) The District's election laws do not allow the rights of minorities to be subject to popular vote. Do you nevertheless think the District's new Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality Law should be put up for popular vote? Why or why not?

No. Basic civil rights of District residents should not be the subject of an initiative or referendum.