



DC for Democracy 2012 DC Council Candidate Questionnaire

Why are you running for City Council, and if(re)elected, what are the priority areas you intend to concentrate on in the near term?

I am running for Ward 8 because I believe in the potential of our residents. Under the current Councilmember talent and opportunity remains stifled. We should encourage residents to transition from public assistance to independence, from public housing to homeownership. Our leaders most united our Ward to stand with our young people & offer them opportunities to succeed. I work for better schools, cleaner and safe neighborhoods. I run to put ward 8 back to work. If DC can build baseball stadiums then we can invest in putting residents to work. I see what we can be, and we have to stop selling ourselves short. We are Ward 8.

With unemployment, homelessness, and general economic distress at historically high levels, do you favor increasing safety net spending in future budgets? If yes, which programs should be given highest priority?

I believe all three are equally important. The goal here should be transitioning our residents by placing opportunities that have the end-goal of creating self-sufficiency. For far too long, DC has upheld the status quo of more aid and an ever growing-safety net. I also believe that we should adequately fund each of the three but the priority is job-creation and expanding homeownership.

Do you consider the District's total current budget to be too large, too small, or about right? Please explain.

A 7 billion dollar budget is a great size budget. DC has residents with many needs, and we need to continue to meet them. If DC can build baseball stadiums then we can invest in putting our residents to work. If dc can afford to give Marriott money to build a hotel, then we can invest in expanding homeownership and affordable housing by implementing the continuum of affordable housing plan.

Last year, income taxes for those earning above \$350,000 were increased from 8.5% to 8.95%, subject to a “sunset” provision after 4 years. With this temporary increase, all taxpayers earning between \$40,000 and \$350,000 remain subject to the 8.5% rate. Do you believe this is fair? If not, what would you propose?

I do, but what I support is the tax rate that was in place before Adrian Fenty became mayor that asked our wealthier residents to do their part. I believe if you are successful you should help with others to get successful. Our working poor shouldn't be paying a higher tax rate than a millionaire.

What recently revitalized DC neighborhood would you suggest as the best model for the city as a whole, and why?

Though we see neighborhoods such as H Street and Columbia Heights, I must say I see the potential of all neighborhoods in Ward 8. I believe Anacostia is growing as not only a business and art district but is laying the foundation for neighborhoods like Congress Heights and Washington Highlands to experience a renaissance.

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

There are 4 key things as council member that I would take the lead on to address the lack of affordable housing and implement a full continuum of housing. They are:

1. Increase Local funding by raising the priority level of affordable housing but dedicating \$200 million over 5 years to implement the those recommendations by the Comprehensive Housing Strategy Task Force.

2. Adopt policy and processes that provide affordable housing that will develop and sustain a continuum of affordable housing, create and maintain neighborhoods of opportunities, engage through public-private resources partners.

3. Strengthen locally funded continuum of housing program tools such as the housing production trust fund, home purchase assistance program, first right purchase assistance program, local rent supplement program and housing first fund. I would propose to creating a 5 year action plan for each of the programs to reach the goal of \$200 million in funding to create and maintain affordable housing.

4. Create the Housing Savings Plan that allow residents to create tax free saving accounts so that that money could be use to purchase homes and move into affordable housing. In this economy we have to be creative and think outside the box to ensure residents have access to affordable housing.

Do you think reform in the DC public schools is headed in the right direction? Explain your answer.

I believe the intent of reform is commendable, yet the overall reform is failing. We simply have too

many hands in the education bureaucracy. Under fmr. Mayor Adrian Fenty, many schools west of the river were remodeled, experienced increases in school construction funding, whereas east of the river, the focus was on renovating athletic fields. We need a chancellor who will successfully lead school reform for the entire Ward not just pockets. We need reform, that unites the community and involves all stakeholders from parents and business leaders to the kids themselves.

How do you suggest that we purpose the large number of school properties that have been closed over the past few years? Cite specific schools/communities as examples, if possible.

Our goal here should be turning them into affordable housing. We can use the Housing First Trust Fund to allow residents to buy these buildings and be able to take out money against their property for renovation. Therefore we know that the building would be kept in the community and put to good use.

What are the most important steps that need to be taken to reform the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority?

I believe we should do what is necessary to improve the metro system. But at the same time we cant afford to bail out an agency that continue to dine on 5 star meals doing board meetings. We need to strengthen their Rider Advisory Council a greater voice in key decision making roles. Improving wmata is not only an important goal but a crucial goal as we move towards creating a walking transit city. I will always stand with ATU 689 to make sure that we continue to pay good wages to our WMATA workers and help them continue to build a 21st transit system that is one of the best in the country.

Do you support funding the DC statehood campaign in the 2013 budget? If so, what amount would you support and for what purposes?

I believe we should do what is necessary to achieve statehood. But we must first start at home. It would be easy to educate other states on the importance of statehood, if we did a better job unifying our advocates here at home. We have tens of thousands of residents here in Ward 8 who do not know that we do not have voting rights or is not a state.

Do you believe that the current DC Council represents the interests of the broad public? If not, what segments of the public are underrepresented?

I believe the majority of our Council is doing what is best for DC Residents. We should do what is best for all our residents. In order to really be one city, we can't continue to separate segments of our communities. But rather encourage inclusiveness.

Do you support the creation of an independent ethics commission with members nominated by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council, as provided for in the newly enacted ethics reform legislation? Please explain your position.

Yes I do, I am on record testifying in support of an independent ethics commission.

Unlike most states, the District allows entities under contract with or soliciting contracts from the city to contribute to political campaigns. Is this a problem which future legislation should address, and, if so, how? Should DC ban all corporate contributions?

I believe we should create more transparency with businesses who have city contracts and donate to political campaigns. One additional idea could be to block those contractors from donating to councilmembers whose committee has jurisdiction of those said contracts.

Do you support the use of Constituent Service Funds (CSFs)? If so, why? If not, would you be willing to work for their elimination?

I do support the use of Constituent Service Funds, but with some much needed reforms. Councilwoman Bowser has introduced many common-sense solutions to keeping this accounts free from fraud. Those funds should be used to help with constituent hardships, not perks and cultural events around the district.

What should DC do to improve its job-training programs?

We need to create a better partnership with the private sector. I do not believe that job training only happens in the classroom. I commend the non profits who help with job training. But if I want a job in the hotel industry, I need hands on experience inside a real hotel. The classroom only goes so far, and our businesses who complain about the lack of employable residents, needs to step up their game as well. As Commissioner and Char of ANC 8B, we did just that. We partnered with our businesses and encourage them to train new neighborhood workers.