

DC for Democracy Questionnaire
April 2014 Primary, At-Large (Democrat)
Pedro Rubio

Pedro Rubio
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DEMOCRATIC AT LARGE CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

ECONOMY & JOBS

1. Given the strong economic and population growth in recent years, we can all agree that this city is now a hot place to live and work. Going forward, what criteria should justify the use of DC taxpayer funds for economic development?

All economic development should benefit the residents of Washington, D.C.. I am committed to economic development through job training, investment in human capital, affordable housing, neighborhood development, parks, and most importantly education.

After-school Programs

My first legislation would be to pass my Kids After-school Program plan, it provides funding to non-profits to provide after-school programs for our children. Many students don't have a place to go after school, or someone to help them with their homework, so they fall behind in their classrooms, which leads to behavioral programs. After-school programs provide a safe environment, tutoring services, and additional learning time.

City Contracts

As a former Contract Specialist for the federal government, I learned that transparency and ethics is the key to having a successful bidding process for government awards. I want to ensure that all city contracts are awarded ethically to the best qualified vendor. When you award a contract through competitive bidding and hire the best qualified vendor we avoid delays, and save tax dollars that could go to libraries, parks, sustainability, and cleaning efforts. As councilmember, I want to ensure that city contracts are awarded ethically and end the pay-to-play culture.

2. The tipped minimum wage has been frozen at \$2.77/hr in DC for over 20 years. Meanwhile, the Minimum Wage Act left out the issue of tipped minimum wages. Would you support an increase in the tipped minimum wage, and to what level?

Yes, I support an increase in tipped minimum wage. I would propose to raise the tipped minimum wage to 70% of the minimum wage to continue to allow for tips.

My parents owned a couple of restaurants in Columbia Heights and near Gallaudet University. They paid the minimum wage salary plus tip because we had slow months

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and the tip would vary from customer to customer. My parents came to U.S. and worked in the restaurant industry. They never became servers because they knew their salary would vary, and they needed a consistent paycheck when raising a family. I know that in order to see more families call D.C. home, we must help make the playing field fair.

As councilmember, I would propose this bill, bring awareness and educate the community. I will begin by building a coalition of restaurants that are willing to raise the minimum wage without a bill, which will pressure more restaurants to raise the minimum wage to stay competitive in finding servers.

TAXATION

3. The Tax Revision Commission was presented with clear, official data showing that the District's current tax system is regressive. The Commission has recommended some proposals to reduce this regressivity. Are you comfortable with their proposals in this regard? What further changes would you propose, if any?

I am glad that we will have a progressive tax system but there are things that are missing from the proposal that will make it fair for all.

Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit for childless workers. A parent with one child qualifies for a maximum benefits of \$1,300 while a single person with no children qualifies for a maximum of \$190 in 2012. I recommend raising the EITC benefit for childless workers to match the federal benefit which was \$475 in 2012.

Raising the Standard Deduction. D.C. standard deduction is \$4,000 while the Federal standard deduction is \$6,100. I would propose to match the Federal standard deduction to help lower-income residents who don't have sufficient deductions to itemize.

High Income Earners. The top rate of 8.95 percent is set to expire in 2015 for high income earners making \$350,000. I would propose a tax rate of 9% for income earners above \$200,000 and \$350,000 for married couples and heads of households.

Tax Credits. Under my Kids After-school Plan, I proposed a tax credit for individuals who volunteer at an after-school program to help tutor, mentor, and be role model to our students. Of the 80,000 DCPS students, 30,000 are at-risk and need additional learning time. As a mentor and tutor, the majority of volunteers are low-income earners who live west of the river. When we think of low-income earners, we don't think of the recent college student who moved to DC, the waiter/waitress, teacher assistant, secretary, journalist, hill staffer and many more who make far less than the city average. From my experience in working with after-school programs, the majority of volunteers are living

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paycheck to paycheck, I want to help them save money by offering a tax credit to those who volunteer.

4. DC has a reputation as a high-tax jurisdiction that drives investment and wealthy families out of the District. In reality, how big a problem is this?

I love D.C. because of its diversity, we have every social circle from hipsters, yuppies, politicians, college students, seniors, parents, teachers, and many more. I never want to make it harder for one group of people to live in the city. With that said, I also never want to create a Warren Buffet problem where he pays less taxes than his secretary.

The commission proposed cutting income tax rate for businesses in DC to be competitive with surrounding jurisdiction but DC has out performed surrounding jurisdictions in business and job growth in the last decade while having a higher corporate income tax rate.

As councilmember, I want to ensure that businesses are paying their fair rate of taxes and that we provide excellent service such as quality neighborhood schools, after-school programs, green space, parks, libraries, transportation, and sustainability to everyone regardless of income level.

ELECTION REFORM

5. In order to reduce the influence of large contributors on legislation, a number of states and localities have turned to public financing. Do you in general favor public financing, and if so, what model(s) do you recommend?

We should replace corporate-funded elections with a fair elections that is empowered by the people. Politicians should work for us, not for the special interest. I believe that politics should be more about the mission than business.

I support

- Public financing of elections, a voluntary system to empower small donors by matching their contributions with public money.
- Lower Contribution Limits- reduce the maximum contribution limit
- Transparency- Ensure that public matching funds are appropriately disbursed.

One of the first legislations I would propose is the "End of Pay-to-Play legislation". It would prohibit city contract holders and their employees from donating to political candidate campaigns. I was a former federal contract specialist, I awarded government contracts through competitive bidding to save tax dollars and obtain the best qualified

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company. Under the Procurement Integrity Act, I was prohibited from accepting any form of compensation. All government employees who played a role in the decision making process of a contract were banned from receiving any form of contribution during the life of the contract and two years after the contract had it ended. It should be the same in D.C. with a ban of any type of contribution to political candidates during the life of the contract and two years after the contract has ended.

6. The electoral system in DC allows candidates to be elected to office with a plurality, not a majority, of votes. Do you support any type of runoff system of voting? If yes, what mechanism do you favor? If not, why not?

I favor the Instant-runoff voting system, where voters rank the candidates in order of preference. A candidate should win with over 50% of the votes, to better represent the people of the city. Anita Bonds won with 31%, while the majority of voters were split between six other candidates. D.C. election continues to have multiple candidates and it makes it harder for voters to learn about all the candidates. An instant-runoff would pick a candidate that better represents the majority.

HOUSING

7. Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie has introduced a bill (Disposition of District Land for Affordable Housing Amendment Act of 2013), which includes a requirement that private developments on surplus public lands with transit access (. mile of metro station or . mile of major bus route/streetcar line) to provide at least 30% of rental units to be set aside for very-low to low-income households. Would you support this bill? Why or why not?

Yes, I support this bill. My parents purchase their first home while working low skilled jobs. They were able to use the equity to buy their first business and help pay for some of my education. I want to ensure that more families are home owners by investing in the Housing Production Trust Fund. When we think affordable housing, we think across the river but many west of the river residents are also looking for affordable housing. A large population of D.C. resident spends over 50% of their income to live in D.C. I want to help people save to send their kids to college, save to buy their first house, or save for retirement. I will focus on developing more affordable housing.

While pursuing my Master's in Real Estate at Georgetown University, I learned that the direction that D.C. developers are going is smaller units, with community style kitchens, living room, and amenities. Developers realized they could gain a bigger profit and make it affordable if they sold smaller units with community style amenities. We need to make

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sure that the units that are set-aside for very-low to low-income households are big enough for families, and that future developments are big enough to live

As Councilmember, I will ensure

- we invest in the Housing Production Trust Fund
- we use private land for affordable housing
- we hold developers accountable to building larger units for families and individuals
- that affordable housing is going to the people that really need it
- Help develop neighborhoods that are underdeveloped

EDUCATION

8. The percentage of children in traditional public schools has declined dramatically in DC and is now, at 56%, the third lowest in the nation. Should we be concerned about this trend? If so, what should be done to halt or reverse it? If not, what changes would you propose to accommodate to the trend?

I believe that traditional public school and charter school systems can co-exist in Washington, D.C. All D.C. children deserve a excellent education.

In order to get there we need to:

- Provide new up to date resources for all schools
- Higher more teachers for smaller classes
- Help DCPS operate more efficiently
- Focus on students who are at-risk and need more attention. We must provide one-on-one help, mentors, and tutors. Of the 80,000 students who attend DCPS, 30,000 are consider to be at-risk.
- Provide more after-school programs. Research has shown that after-school programs have increased test scores, reading, and writing skills. Please read my Kids After-school Program plan on my website, to learn more.

We need to create a system that helps Charter and Public School system work together. Where it does not feel like a competition, and the resources are being used to benefit the student only. As a mentor, tutor, and Uncle to two beautiful children who attend DCPS, I know first hand, that there are some great charter schools and great public schools. I'm not against either systems, I am in favor of providing a good quality education in every neighborhood to all our children.

I would like to see our public schools serve two thirds of children in the next 10 years.

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Within 10 years, DC is expecting a 50% increase in children. Our schools will need to get better and our charter schools would need to show that they are adding value. If we commit to investing in schools and keeping them open, then we can end the declined in DCPS attendance.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

9. What would you do to improve job and living prospects for the high number of returning citizens in DC?

As Councilmember, I will ensure that our family and friends are not being locked up far away or in a maximum security prison if they did not commit the crime to warrant such imprisonment. Our prison system is inhuman, it's hard for family and friends to visit our love ones in other states. Our D.C. resident prisoners are being held in prisons that have serious criminal offenders, who have committed a vicious crime. I want to ensure that our prisoners stay local.

As Councilmember, I propose

- 1) We help our prisoners stay local
- 2) We ban the box
- 3) Create programs that teaches them to read and write
- 4) Provide outside therapy sessions
- 5) Give them job training
- 6) Provide jobs through city contracts that pay livable wages. Homelessness is created because we don't have jobs that pay livable wages.
- 7) Support additional transitional housing for our returning residents

I want to be the councilmember that ends the cycle of our residents who go to jail on regular basis.