

DC for Democracy Questionnaire
April 2014 Primary, Ward 1 (Democrat)
Brianna K. Nadeau

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?

Government subsidies must be attached to job creation and job quality standards and coupled with enforcement mechanisms that penalize beneficiaries who do not comply. There are qualified workers living in DC who need good jobs and it's appalling what some companies will do to get around existing requirements. As the founder of Sustainable U, a program to build cooperation around sustainable living and working options in the U Street area, I would also like to establish green building standards for any new construction or renovations done using taxpayer funds.

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. As a board member of JUFJ I joined in the effort to pass the minimum wage increase as well as to provide paid sick leave tipped workers. Now we must go back and get a wage increase for tipped workers. I'd support an increase to at least 70 percent of the standard minimum wage.

HOUSING

3. Many neighborhoods in this ward are experiencing a rapid influx of new residents. How do you propose to preserve a sense of community and appropriate services for long-term residents?

When I am out moving across the ward talking to long-term residents they are worried. They are happy to see growth and prosperity, but after living through the bad times, they are worried if their energy bills, their taxes and other rapidly increasing living expenses will force them out. That's why when I talk about maintaining affordability, I'm talking about more than housing.

That said, we must reestablish a sense of community for all residents, not just long-term residents. Many of the projects I have created over the years have sought to build community, bringing together people from different backgrounds in a way that also moves us forward. The

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U Street Movie series not only got neighbors out picnicking together once a month, it also raised money for Harrison Recreation Center, a green space used by nearby schools, families and our little league. Sustainable U is not only about protecting the environment, it's about collaboration between business owners to manage waste and reduce the impact on residents, it's about moving people to renewable energy to reduce the costs for residents who are watching their gas bills skyrocket.

Over the past decade I have watched as Jim Graham has systematically disassembled ward-wide leadership structures, pitted neighborhoods against each other and made them compete for resources rather than collaborate. That ends the day I get sworn in as Councilmember. The only way for us to move forward as a community is to respect each other's' experiences and differences, learn from each other, and begin to collaborate with best practices and shared resources.

4. How do you define affordable housing? What are your priorities short-term and longer-term, for remedying the affordable housing crisis in the District?

The majority of the city's housing units are affordable to families earning greater than 60 percent of AMI, yet the greatest affordability pressures are borne by those persons earning less than 60 percent of AMI. Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie has introduced legislation to provide clearer definitions of affordable housing, which I support.

I live in a mixed income condo building on a parcel formerly owned by the National Capitol Revitalization Corporation. In exchange for the land equity, the developer of my property made a commitment of providing 20 percent of the units at affordable rates. I purchased my own unit through the Home Purchase Assistance Program, which provided down payment assistance. I believe we need to be putting much more energy and creativity into long-term solutions to the rising costs of housing in DC. In addition to ensuring that public lands being disposed for residential development include affordable units, we must be fully funding the Housing Production Trust Fund, expanding down payment assistance, and moving more people into homeownership and co-op, in addition to ensuring there is enough affordable housing for those below 60% AMI and enough family-sized affordable housing.

5. 60% of DC residents are renters. Do you propose to update and improve enforcement of rent control laws, which apply to an ever-decreasing share of DC's rental units? If so, how?

I certainly support strong enforcement of rent control laws, but any proposed changes to these important protections will require extensive community input. This is an effort that would take the cooperation of the entire council and should involve a committee of residents and other stakeholders. We need to bring all the stakeholders to the table to ensure that any changes to the law still uphold the spirit of the law, maintaining affordability for future

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generations.

We must also continue to preserve affordable housing units and ensure that they are properly maintained and upgraded over time. Fully funding the Housing Production Trust Fund can assist with this as well.

TAXATION

6. 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?

As a JUFJ board member I have spent the past several years focused on economic justice and workers rights. I recently testified before Tax Revision commission to reduce sales tax on lower income earners using a refundable tax credit as well as increase in standard deduction and an increase in personal exemption for lowest earners. My full testimony can be found here: <http://briannefordc.com/nadeau-offers-testimony-at-d-c-tax-revision-commission-public-hearing/>

While many of the concerns expressed in my testimony made it into the recommendations, I would still prefer the top marginal rate to be set at 8.95%.

ELECTION REFORM

7. 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?

Yes. I will fight for comprehensive reform that includes ending pay-to-play politics, providing greater transparency in contracting procedures, revokes Council review of contracting and supports a ban on corporate contributions.

I support Initiative 70, an effort to eliminate corporate contributions as well as the bill introduced by Councilmembers Grosso and Wells, "Campaign Finance Reform, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2013." This bill goes a long way toward the ethics reform by closing bundling loopholes, but there is more to do. I will support "Fair Elections DC," a bill that Councilmembers Grosso and McDuffie have introduced that provides for public financing of elections when candidates meet specific thresholds.

EDUCATION

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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 will bring back the community engagement piece that has been lost in our education reforms. We have seen in Ward 1 that when neighbors, parents, business owners and community leaders are given opportunities to support the schools, kids thrive. My conversations with teachers and principals have helped me map out a plan for working with non-profits, businesses and residents to bring comprehensive wrap-around services into the schools – healthcare, counseling, food pantries, after school jobs for older children – that lift up the at-risk population and allow classrooms to be places for real learning to take place. Once we've done that, we'll be attracting more families to our neighborhood schools.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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

Returning citizens deserve opportunities in all sectors, and on the Council I would work to ensure that DC laws make an effort to address the ways in which our society has failed these citizens rather than allowing for initial biases that place more stumbling blocks before them. My uncle was incarcerated and was fortunate enough to find work in the private sector when he returned to his community. That made all the difference in his reentry and ability to rebuild his life.

I'd focus on workforce training at UDC community college, effective transition coordinators and counselors who assist with substance abuse, mental health and housing.