

DC for Democracy Questionnaire for 2016 Democratic Primary

Please answer the following questions, which will help our members in making their endorsement decision. Responses should be sent to dcfordemocracy@gmail.com no later than Friday, April 8, and will be published online shortly after that.

1. Bills now before the DC Council are intended to reduce the influence of big money donors through several approaches:

- Banning corporate campaign contributions;
- Keeping donors who make very large contributions from getting government contracts and special tax breaks; and
- Providing for public financing of political campaigns through a system that matches small donations, similar to what it used in New York City.

Where do you stand on each of these approaches?

We are seeing corporations, and the individuals that own them, become enriched by elected officials turning a blind eye and passing legislation without counseling from residents. In Ward 4, we recently witnessed this during the roll out of the homeless shelter initiative. The Ward 4 Councilmember received donations from the owners of the property that was selected by the Mayor to participate in the program. Does this seem above board?

Another example, on March 1, 2016 the Ward 4 Councilmember voted "YES" on B21-0630 for contract DCAM-14-CS-0096A, but received a \$500 contribution to his re-election campaign from the contractor on November 19, 2015. This appears to be a thank you.

We should work with community organizations such as DC for Democracy, the DC Board of Elections, and the DC Board of Ethics and Government Accountability, to create effective legislation that 1) increases oversight of DC Council Constituent Services Funds; 2) expands the oversight responsibilities of the Office of Campaign Finance; and 3) strengthens election regulations so special interests groups and companies that have contributed to principal campaign committees or political action committees are unable to participate in primary or general elections.

2. Do you support the pending ballot initiative to gradually raise the DC minimum wage to \$15 by 2020, and to eliminate the difference between the tipped minimum wage and regular minimum wage by 2024? If not, please explain your reasons.

We must treat all of our workers with dignity and respect, and that begins with equal pay for a days work. As the next Ward 4 Councilmember, I would fight vigorously to stop any attempt at excluding a class of workers from receiving a living wage.

I support implementing a pilot program that increases the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, but it also will evaluate higher rates as well. If as a government our findings support a minimum wage of \$15 per hour, I would recommend its full implementation through comprehensive legislation.

But we must see the forest for the trees. To stay competitive nationally, our program must include annual increases that keep residents ahead of the rising cost of living we experience in the District.

3. Child care on average costs \$21,000 a year for families. What would you do to ensure access for all families? Do you support universal childcare?

Childcare will always be an expense that families of all income levels must include in their monthly budgets. As a father of three young girls, I understand the difficult decisions that must be made – in-house caregiving vs. a child-care center. The reality is, the \$21,000 average cost is only for one child, and many families in DC are made up of multiple children. So the question is, how do we ensure access for families of all sizes?

We can begin by redefining the eligibility requirements to receive DC Government childcare subsidy payments. Next, we should evaluate the reimbursable amount of childcare vouchers to ensure our providers are receiving adequate payment for services. And then, and most importantly, we must work with the Federal Government, community organizations and corporate citizens to establish a grant program whereby the DC Government, or residents, can directly receive matching funds for childcare regardless of income levels or the number of children in their families.

By making childcare affordable for all, we ultimately increase the quality of life for residents and, increase local spending and job opportunities with small businesses, as there are 85 childcare centers in Ward 4.

4. In recent years, DC has lost tens of thousands of units of affordable housing. Over the next few years, we are projected to lose thousands more. How many of these units should the DC government replace or preserve? What steps do you propose to replace and preserve that many units?

To ensure housing is available for everyone, we must have a dedicated fund for affordable housing that is deposited, at the beginning of the fiscal year, through collected non-dedicated sales tax revenue.

In 2006, the DC Council passed legislation, without sunset, that directed the Chief Financial Officer to begin depositing the first \$100 million of non-dedicated sales tax revenue collected annually into the Public School Capital Improvement Fund, which was meant to modernize our public schools. Should DC continue with its revenue growth, I would recommend the Council pass language that directs the second \$100 million of non-dedicated tax revenue to affordable housing construction and programming to secure that population for years to come.

Just as the city placed a moratorium on liquor licenses across Ward 2 because of the proliferation of restaurants in neighborhoods, we must look to innovative methods to ensure affordable housing remains in every ward and neighborhood across DC.

5. What actions would you take to enhance public safety and reduce violent crime while reforming racialized policing that unfairly targets people of color?

While public safety will always be a concern, we cannot police the problem away just by adding more officers. We need our elected leaders to require more from our police chief and the rank-and-file.

As Ward 4's next Councilmember, I will propose legislation that mandates collaboration between the Metropolitan Police Department and the Department of Human Services. This partnership will join preventive measures with intervention services, thereby facilitating the restoration of at-risk lives.

Among my many legislative priorities, I will advocate for a community-policing model, which puts officers on the street and out of their cruisers ensuring they know their beats and the communities are interacting positively with those officers. I will also focus the city's finances on new methods to increase public safety, such as improving street lighting, beautifying public spaces, increasing visibility in high crime areas, removing impediments to clear lines of sight, and re-defining the usage of cameras for monitoring high crime areas.

6. Good government requires checks and balances between the council and the mayor. Which policies do you support that are different from Mayor Bowser's policies? Please be as specific as possible.

Pepco Exelon

The Exelon benefits package negotiated by Mayor Muriel Bowser, and recklessly supported by Councilmember Todd, should be thoroughly examined by the Public Service Commission, and quite possibly investigated by the US Attorney, the DC Inspector General and the DC Office of Government Ethics. As residents, ratepayers and voters, we hold the stewards of our quality of life to the highest standards, and this decision-making process lacked the level of transparency we require in 2016.

Let me be clear – I support an electric utility, which places the interests of residents over those of shareholders and, as a responsible corporate citizen, provides reliable energy from renewable sources for the long-term.

By accepting the Exelon package, Mayor Bowser and Councilmember Todd tacitly acknowledged they have no problem with the tactics deployed to secure this deal. Some of these maneuvers included donations to the government and sectors of DC's business community, whose members, in turn, supported the closed-door agreement.

If elected as the next Ward 4 Councilmember, I pledge to be a member who refuses to accept the entrenched business-as-usual attitude the District Government has demonstrated time and time again, especially when corporations deem their interests to be more important than the welfare of DC residents.

Homeless Shelters

Great idea, but terrible execution - this is a prime example of back-door dealings that should be frowned upon by the public. Placing homeless shelters across the city is a concept that is successful in cities across the US, but communities are included in the discussions.

Committing to ending homelessness does not just include building shelters, but it is wrap-around services that are needed. We must commit to helping those that do not want help, or know that help is available to them, without being tracked by the government – a true fear for some. I would work with community organizations, such as N Street Village, to ensure our homeless population has unrestricted access to their basic health needs, as well as critical support when they make the decision to accept additional services.

Universal Paid Leave

As a father to three girls, I fully understand the benefits of paid family and medical leave. As a family, we made the choice to have a paycheck and to care for one another on a daily basis, but there are too many families in the District that are living paycheck to paycheck and must make the difficult decision of a paycheck or caring for their family and this is unacceptable when change can happen.

While the language within the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 establishes a universal paid leave system for all District residents, the DC Council has been unable to agree on its fiscal impact. Thus in its current state, it does not appear it will move to the Committee of the Whole for a vote, but will instead be re-introduced with new language. I do support the concept, but not with a negative fiscal impact.

As a Councilmember, I would work with my colleagues and other community organization, to draft fiscally sound language that would be acceptable to DC residents, the Executive Office of the Mayor, the DC Council and Congress.