

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?

As mayor, I introduced campaign finance reform legislation that would put an end to pay-to-play politics. Recently, the Washington Post editorialized in favor of passing that legislation which had stalled in the Council. A new bill was recently introduced by the DC Attorney General to manage campaign finance reform. That bill incorporates many features of my original bill.

I support the concept of opening up elections to candidates who otherwise do not have access to the kind of money required to mount a competitive campaign. In addition, I believe that contribution matching programs (like the one in place in New York City) help to stem pay-to-play and other forms of unethical influence. As a Councilmember, I would support adopting a system similar to that proposed by the Citizens Fair Election Program Amendment Act of 2015. I look forward to reviewing the CFO's fiscal impact statement and, as well, receiving input from the public and experts through the hearings process.

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.

Yes. As mayor, I was pleased to sign into law a bill that raised the District's minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour (although I regret that the Council did not raise the rate to \$10 an hour as I had originally proposed). Under this law, the minimum wage is slated to increase by \$1.00 on July 1 each year through this year, capping at \$11.50 per hour. I recently announced that I will support an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour as New York state and California have done. Given the success of our city, the increases in the cost of living and the continuing challenges of poverty, this will ease some of the economic strains of living in the District. It will be hugely important to continue to invest in preparing our residents with increasingly sophisticated skill levels.

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 child care?

In 2008, I lead the passage of the Pre-K Expansion Act, making us the nation's leader in early-childhood education. While other cities and states are still focused on pre-K quantity, we have shifted our focus to increasing quality. As mayor, I worked to ensure that our youngest children benefit from quality child care. We started the process of establishing an innovative community-based Quality Improvement system that will allow children and families to benefit from comprehensive child-development and family-support-engagement services. I believe the key to future success is a strong educational foundation; and universal early-childhood education provides the building blocks for our children and for families.

I heartily support increasing investments in the infant and toddler system towards creating a universal approach. In order to reach the most economically challenged families whose children may bear the greater risk, it would be wise to have a means tested system of eligibility, thus facilitating reaching the optimum number of children with the most formidable needs. This will bring us closer to having comprehensive early childhood education that reaches the maximum number of families and children in an economically integrated system. Ultimately, the goal should be to have a high quality system that includes:

- Prenatal care
- Infant and toddler services
- Pre-kindergarten for three and four year olds in public education schools.

The District has made enormous strides in achieving such a system that ultimately will reduce the achievement gap and will markedly improve the quality of life for the most challenged children. The reduction in children with special needs and in our juvenile justice systems, as well as, the number who suffer from under achievement will significantly contribute in human and financial terms to paying for the cost.

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?

As mayor, my administration worked to find innovative, new approaches to address the need for a variety of affordable housing options in the District. I am not new to the issue of affordable housing. I appointed a Comprehensive Housing Strategy Task Force to develop a set of comprehensive recommendations to ensure that the District remains affordable to all who wish to live here. The results of their work were released in a report "Bridges to Opportunity" that outlined a comprehensive approach aimed at meeting the needs of District residents at a variety of income levels. Even before the report was finished, my Administration began working with the Task Force to implement their recommendations. This work included my

announcement of a historic and unprecedented \$100 million investment opportunities in a variety of affordable housing. I announced the 47 projects in which, in the end, we invested \$187 million.

Overall, as mayor, we invested \$287 Million in affordable housing and recommended that the city subsequently invest each year at least \$100 Million in affordable housing. As councilmember, I will continue to advocate for affordable housing and welcome the opportunity to work with organized labor on these issues. I have supported New Communities as an alternative to public housing, with the provision that their is 1:1 replacement and those who want to return get that commitment.

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

Public safety remains at the top of my agenda. During my time as mayor, we saw remarkable improvement in public safety in the neighborhoods east of the river. The clearest measure is the reduction in homicides, which citywide declined 36% between 2010 and 2013. Further, there were 92 fewer homicides East of the River – 92 lives saved – than in the three years before I took office. Much of this decrease was driven by a decrease in gun violence. MPD Chief Lanier maintained a strong focus on getting the illegal guns that terrorized our neighborhoods for far too long off the street.

During my administration, the police took more than 2,400 illegal guns off the streets East of the River. Seizing these guns helped to make our neighborhoods safer. There were 80 fewer fatal shootings from 2011 through 2013 than in the three previous years, and 108 fewer assaults with a gun. This is work that must continue and take high priority. The countless acts of violence committed by and against our youth is disheartening.

Another important factor in reducing crime is the presence of police. After years of MPD's number of sworn officers declining rapidly, when I became mayor I stepped in and increased funding to return our police officer strength to 4,000 officers. Recognizing the growth in our population, I believe we need to further increase that number to 4,200 officers. These officers and our communities also need facilities adequate to support their public safety efforts; thus, as Mayor, I broke ground on construction to transform the vacant Merritt Middle School into the new headquarters for the Sixth District Headquarters and MPD's Youth Investigations Division. The new site, which opened in 2015 allows MPD to provide our officers and residents with a brand-new facility to complement modern police operations and community-outreach programs. Additionally, we need stronger collaboration and cooperation between the WMATA Police and the Metropolitan Police Department. The number of Metro police officers at stations also needs to increase because we can not afford to lose metro as a means of public transportation as a result of people being afraid for their safety.

Before recent incidents in Ferguson, Baltimore, Staten Island and Cleveland brought attention to pervasive issues of inequality and requiring that we think more critically about the way we police our cities, MPD was leading the way with a body-camera pilot program and the most racially representative police force in the country which was recently corroborated by a report from the Department of Justice.

Of course, I recognize that public safety is about a great deal more than just policing. We need to deal with the root causes that too often lead to at-risk or criminal behavior and effectively address these causes before crimes occur. I have spent my entire career encouraging practitioners to recognize the correlation between undiagnosed or untreated mental health issues, self-medicating through the use of controlled substances, and the crimes perpetrated on our communities. As mayor, In fiscal year 2014, I merged the Department of Mental Health with the Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration to create the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH). To me it was just common sense that mental health and substance abuse issues are so closely related that they should operate under the same agency, especially when it is clear that nearly 40% of those who experience one condition also experience the other.

Finally, we must address the needs of our returning residents for if we do not, then we effectively encourage and support them in engaging in criminal activity. As mayor, I instituted or enhanced programming that ensures our returning residents will receive the support needed so that they may be successful in continuing their education, solidifying their job skills, navigating family reunification, and encouraging mental health services. Due to the foresight of my Administration, the Department of Employment Services(DOES) successfully revamped Project Empowerment allowing for better accountability and meaningful participation. During my administration the Office on Returning Citizens' Affairs opened the Reentry Resource Center (RRC). The innovative RRC is a place where individuals find support and connections to resources from such as basic technology courses and obtaining a driver's license to the more complex issues of housing and reconciliation with an individual's family and community. I recognize we still have a long way to go in addressing these issues, especially around housing and employment.

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.

A number of the Mayor's current policies were established while I was mayor. Policies like affordable housing, early childhood education and sustainability were developed and experienced significant growth during my administration. I also was clear about my commitment to close D.C. General as a shelter for homeless families. Unfortunately, we were unable to move forward with our efforts because our term ended. However, differences do exist; one specific area is campaign finance reform and pay-to-play politics. As mayor, I put forth sweeping legislation designed to limit, if not end, pay-to-play politics as we know it in the District. The Washington Post recently editorialized in favor of my reforms and reiterated their

support while drawing attention to a bill introduced by Attorney General Racine that is very similar to the reforms I proposed.

To date, I have not heard support for these reforms from the Bowser administration. As a general proposition, I will support those things that in the best interest of the people in the city, especially those in Ward 7 and will oppose proposals that do not appear to favor people of the city, particularly residents of Ward 7.