



Questionnaire for 2016 General Election
Council Position Sought: At-Large
Candidate Name: David Grosso

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?

I am committed to advancing ethics and elections reforms while on the D.C. Council. If implemented properly these ideas will make the Council a more effective and accountable legislative body. I introduced legislation in 2013 and again in 2015 to implement the public financing of campaigns in the District. I will continue to advocate for this and campaign finance reform more broadly, such as limiting the role of big donors in campaigns. I took a strong stance against FreshPAC, and led the fight to close the loophole that allowed that PAC to raise unlimited funds during an off-election year.

I am also committed to strategies that will ensure more public engagement in the elections process. In January 2015, I reintroduced a bill to allow legal resident non-citizens to vote in our local elections. That same month, I reintroduced a legislation to mandate instant runoff elections. This bill was previously included in an elections reform package that I put forward in 2014, including the Open Primary Amendment Act and Clean Hands Elections Reform Amendment Act. I also voted for the amendment that would have prohibited campaign donations from businesses who have received government contracts. I also introduced a ceremonial resolution calling for the Citizens United decision to be overturned.

2. The DC Council recently passed a law to gradually raise the DC minimum wage to \$15 by 2020. However, they failed to eliminate the difference between the tipped minimum wage, as called for by the ballot initiative that prompted the law. What is your position on the tipped minimum wage?

I voted in favor of the minimum wage increase. I believe that the Council passed the minimum wage bill hastily without giving it the proper research and examination it deserved. We need to have an in depth conversation about how much it actually costs to live in the District of Columbia. That is why I introduced an amendment to study how to implement a guaranteed minimum income system in the District of Columbia. The amendment was accepted as part of the minimum wage law. A minimum income system would provide residents with the financial assistance needed to cover basic needs such as transportation, education, housing, and child care. This would help address the difference between the tipped and minimum wages.

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?

I support universal child care. I've examined child care policies and facilities through my work on the Committee on Education. We need to tackle this issue through two avenues. First, we need to invest in the workforce to ensure we have qualified and quality individuals working in our child care centers taking care of our children. Second, there are not enough facilities to provide universal child care, so we need to build capacity. These two things are going to take an incredible investment by the District of Columbia. I'd be happy to work with DC for Democracy and other advocates to make affordable universal child care a reality.

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?

I think we need to replace as many units as we're losing, and preserve even more. Access to housing is a fundamental human right and it is also reaching crisis levels in the District of Columbia. To adequately address this crisis, we must establish a Housing Policy Council that consists of government agency directors, nonprofits, financial institutions, realtors, and other lenders, developers and community residents. Second, we should establish a Housing Land Trust to assist with preservation of affordable housing. Third, create a low-income housing tax credit to supplement the federal program. Fourth, create a database of affordable housing units. Fifth, establish a public bank with affordable housing as part of its mission. Finally, we need to invest in

financial literacy programs so residents know and understand how to best manage their finances.

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

Our criminal justice system has too often focused on vengeance and punishment, rather than on crime prevention, restitution for victims and the social and economic reintegration of released prisoners into our communities so that they do not turn to crime again. I am committed to the effort to reform the criminal justice system in D.C., respecting the human rights of all residents. This includes recommitting to community policing with a more peaceful and positive engagement strategy between law enforcement and the public. Through a new “alternatives to violence” approach to policing our entire city will see more productive relationship between the public and the government. I also think we should reform our laws to keep people out of jail and instead undergo diversion programs when appropriate. Incarceration is disproportionately consequential relative to the crime we are often attempting to prevent—with lifelong impacts.

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.

The Mayor and I work closely on education issues, but we aren’t afraid to disagree occasionally. I am the only person who has voted against some of her nominees to various boards and commissions—Max Brown and Fred Hill to name two. The mayor also tried to implement her own objective approach to school modernization and capital funding, which when analyzed by my team and community members seemed to be more of a political approach than an objective approach. Therefore, we instead improved our objective model, over the mayor’s objection. I worked with my colleagues to improve the Mayor’s homeless shelter proposal, with feedback from the community. I criticized the Mayor’s decision to fundraise for FreshPAC, which took unlimited amounts of money from big donors in an effort to influence the outcomes of this year’s elections. I worked with my colleagues to close that loophole.

I have no problem exercising the Council’s check and balance power so we don’t simply rubberstamp policies without thoughtful dialogue and improvement.

7. The New Columbia Statehood Commission has proposed a Statehood Initiative that calls for an Advisory Referendum that includes approval of a new Constitution and boundaries to be adopted by the DC Council. If you had designed the Statehood Initiative, would it be different in any way, and if so, how?

I've publicly given the Mayor credit for pursuing this strategy on Statehood. It is ambitious, and I share a sense of urgency with the Mayor on the issue of statehood. It is offensive that the federal government still decides how D.C. can spend the money we raise through taxing D.C. residents and businesses, while our laws can be manipulated by a Congress where we have no voting representation. I would like to see another constitutional convention happen within 2-years after we obtain statehood. This way, we can write our constitution as an independent state within the United States of America, instead of tailoring our constitution to what we think Congress may be comfortable with.