

2022 Primary Endorsement Questionnaire

DEADLINE: Submit by 12:00 Noon, Monday, April 18, 2022

Email *

lena@lenatam.com



Thank you for your interest in being considered for an endorsement by the Asian Pacific American Democratic Caucus of Alameda County. Please answer each question in 250 words or less. Be honest and direct. Please submit your responses by 12 Noon, Monday, Apr. 18. All questionnaire responses will be posted on our website for Caucus members to review.

Personal Information

Candidate Name *

Lena Tam

City and zip code of residence.

Alameda, 94501

What is your campaign website address?

www.lenatam.com

What is your campaign email address?

lena@lenatam.com

Are you a registered Democrat? The APA Democratic Caucus can only endorse registered Democrats *

Yes

No

Are you an APA Democratic Caucus member? *

Yes

No

How long have you lived in the district which you are seeking to represent?

50+ years

What are the names of any community or nonprofit organizations with which you have been an active volunteer in the past 3-5 years.

Alameda County APA Democratic Caucus, Alameda Hospital Foundation, American Association of University Women, Friends of the Park Foundation, League of Women Voters

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. What actions have you taken to address anti-Asian discrimination/bullying/harassment? Please explain in what capacity you have acted and whether any of these actions were prior to 2020. (i.e., as an elected representative, member of commission/board/organization, and as an individual.

As a Board member of the Asian Pacific American Democratic Caucus, we organized forums featuring media personalities that are part of the Stop Asian Hate movement to discuss how the media reports on Asian hate crimes and whether it encourages more hate crimes or hinders it. I have worked in Oakland Chinatown for the past 30 years and have helped to leverage resources from neighboring agencies (Alameda County, BART, EBMUD) to mobilize the community and conduct training and community education sessions for residents on reporting and defending themselves against attacks.

I have also worked with the Toishan Family Association in supporting their efforts to implement a volunteer patrol team to escort Chinese residents and shoppers in Chinatown to protect them against violence and crime perpetrated against them.

Before 2020, I help organize and promoted several affinity groups at EBMUD, starting with the Asian American Employees Association, the Black Employees Network, the Hispanic Heritage Committee, and the Raining Pride Committee. These groups united in solidarity to condemn hate crimes during the recent Black Lives Matter and Stop AAPI Hate movement. It created a sense of ally-ship.

2. One out of every 3 Alameda County residents is of Asian ancestry but are underrepresented in elected office. What have you done and will you do to elevate their issues of concern?

I have been an activist in the Asian Community for over 40 years and have served as the first Asian American woman on the Alameda City Council and served as Vice Mayor. Prior to that, I was elected as President of the City of Alameda Health Care District Board of Directors, governing Alameda Hospital and chaired the Alameda County Planning Commission. As the only Asian-American in these elected and appointed positions, I have elevated the issues of concern, such as insuring bilingual signage at the hospitals and asking for more diversity in the police and fire department. I have also served in leadership positions with several civic organizations, including the boards of Save the Bay, League of Women Voters, Stopwaste.org, the American Association of University Women, the Alameda Hospital Foundation, Friends of the Park Foundation, and APADC (currently president). In each of these roles, I have elevated the issues of most concern to the APA community.

If elected Alameda County Supervisor I will be the only Asian woman on the board. I will bring my lived experience as the daughter of immigrant parents who relied on Alameda County bilingual health care access to every decision I make. I hope to be the voice of the Asian community, as Wilma Chan and Alice Lai-Bitker were before me for others throughout the county, beyond District 3. I speak Cantonese and can communicate without a language barrier.

I will conduct regular townhall style forums, partnering with community groups, to listen and gather information on the issues affecting the Asian community and incorporate their recommendations into expanding core county programs to address these needs. As an elected official, my door will always be open to the residents and organizations that represent the Asian community and collaborate on developing solutions.

I will confer with my colleagues in the natural course of doing board business and I will always assess the impact of proposals on the Asian community and seek to eliminate disparate or negative impacts. I will carefully evaluate the allocation of resources through the lens of social equity to insure that the Asian Community gets it fair share.

3. One-third of Alameda County residents were born in another country. Do you believe that the needs of immigrants have been adequately addressed by the office you are seeking to represent? What changes are needed to better center their needs?

When the needs of immigrants in our county are not been adequately addressed, it affects all of us. Health care, mental health care, housing, and economic security are sorely lacking for this segment of the population. Being unfamiliar with the language, American customs, and government processes is daunting to an immigrant. More community support is needed to improve service delivery to immigrants. Communication and explanation of available benefits is important to assist our immigrant community in moving toward self-sustaining economic security. Having culturally competent staff to guide them through the process will help to alleviate the clients' fears and confusion.

In addition to supporting more community services for the immigrant population, I would enforce the county's multi-lingual policies so that all county communications are provided to residents in the most prevalent non-English languages spoken in our county.

My Mom was attacked in Oakland Chinatown, and needed support. She has also benefitted from the bilingual mental services that were provided in the County. As the daughter of immigrant parents, I understand the importance of having a healthcare advocate that has the cultural and language competency to help our immigrant community.

4. What have you learned about Asian Americans in the past year that you were previously unaware of and how has that impacted you?

I learned that Asians Americans comprised 60% of the 500,000 immigrants that live in Alameda County. As I mentioned previously, my values were instilled in me by my immigrant parents. I am empathetic to their needs and I value their contributions. I can bring my lived experience to meeting the needs of a significant portion of the immigrant community.

I also learned that Asian Americans now represent 27.6% of the eligible voters in Alameda County. But Asian Americans are the most under-represented in elected office in the Bay Area due in no small part to the history of anti-Asian legislation. It was not until 1952 that Asian immigrants could become naturalized citizens and able to vote for the first time despite having been in the US for 100 years. I am running for Alameda County supervisor with this profound sense of responsibility and determination to provide the representation on the Board of Supervisors that is currently not reflective of the county.

I have access to more granular data on the voting patterns of the Asian American Community in Alameda County through my candidacy, and I learned that many of the issues of concern in the APA community are similar to those in other parts of the county --homelessness/housing, community safety, access to health care, and education.

5. What is the difference between supporting Asian American/Pacific Islander issues and being an Ally?

If you actively support API issues and collaborate with Asian leaders to address those issues, you are an ally. Ally-ship also means helping give a voice to the group that needs the most representation at any one time.

6. What resources (people/organizations) will you tap to increase your knowledge and understanding of the on-going needs of the Asian and Pacific Americans living in your district?

I will rely on the APADC, Asian Health Services, and a number of API community groups to help me stay abreast of the on-going needs of Asians and Pacific Americans living in District 3. As president of the Asian Pacific Democratic Caucus, I have access contemporary data and emerging policies that affect our community. The Caucus is made up of Asians from all walks of life and interests. We meet monthly to discuss issues affecting our community. We collaborate with other democratic organizations that ask for our support, as we often ask them for their support.

7. Please identify any Asian Pacific American candidates whom you have publicly endorsed/supported over the past 5 years including this election cycle. If there are none, please explain.

Betty Yee, John Chiang, James Fang, Phil Ting, David Chiu,
Fiona Ma, Hal Gin, Sue Chan, Sheng Thao,
Teresa Keng, Wilma Chan, Jennifer Ong, Rob Bonta
Shawn Kumagai, Alex Lee, Raj Salwan, Phong La, Benny Lee

Thank you for completing our questionnaire.

Only candidates who submit questionnaires by noon Monday, April 18 will be considered for endorsement.

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