

2022 Primary Endorsement Questionnaire

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

Email *

seth@sethstewardforda.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 *

Seth Steward

City and zip code of residence.

Oakland 94607

What is your campaign website address?

<https://www.sethstewardforda.com/>

What is your campaign email address?

info@sethstewardforda.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?

I first moved to Alameda County in 1999. But for time away for work and school, I have lived here ever since.

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

I am an active member of my local community through both political and non-partisan organizations including East Bay Stonewall Democrats and Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA)

I have been a Director and Scholarship Chair of the Peralta Colleges Foundation Board since 2019.

I am a lifelong member of the Democratic Party and have consistently been an active member. In my younger days youth, I engaged in political organizing through the San Francisco Young Democrats, in which I served as President from 2000-2001. Since January 2021, I have been an alternate member of the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee.

Since 2017, I have participated on the Oakland Technical High School Race, Policy, and Law Academy Advisory Board.

I have been an Assistant Scout Master in local Boy Scout troops for a number of years.

I am a Life Member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated.

I consistently support community events such as cleanups, fundraisers, advocacy efforts, marches, and celebrations.

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 an Assistant District Attorney in San Francisco, I was assigned to handle all felony hate crime cases. In that role, I addressed a number of hate crimes addressed towards Asian Americans. I ended my work as an Assistant District Attorney in San Francisco in 2019 so all of these actions were prior to 2020.

As a teacher of criminal law at Oakland Technical High School, my classroom regularly addressed issues of race including discussions regarding discrimination against Asian Americans. My initial class was prior to 2020.

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?

We must confront these disparities by actively engaging in recruitment and retention policies to support the diverse communities that reflect Alameda County, the fourth most diverse county in the nation in large part due to the many AAPI communities who reside here.

First, I would attempt to understand where the office and our staff is underrepresented with respect to Alameda County's demographics, national demographics, and those communities most likely to be engaged with the criminal justice system.

Next, I would engage in robust recruitment and hiring of the most talented, diligent, ethical and diverse attorneys in the office's history. I plan to recruit annually at top-20 rated law schools, the Minority Bar Coalition of the San Francisco Bay Area and its respective members, Historically Black Colleges' & Universities' (HBCUs') law schools, and Bay Area law schools to achieve this goal. I will also focus recruitment for paralegals, victim witness advocates, investigators and other positions at local colleges and universities and alumni organizations.

As an office, we must honor the diversity of our community. Whether it be race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability our office must reflect the people we serve. We must improve policies and training regarding bias and discrimination and implement culturally informed training and policies that reflect our diverse community.

Additionally, we must increase the language capacity of victim services to address the one-third of Alameda County residents who are foreign born and half of residents who speak a language other than English.

Taken as a whole, these policies will improve the recruitment and retention of diverse District Attorney's office and hopefully set the bar for other adjacent services across the public sector.

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?

Immigrant communities have contributed to the fabric of who we are as a people. Families, businesses, and communities enrich Alameda County with language, economic vitality and culture. The Alameda Department of Public Health has noted that Alameda County is the most diverse county in the Bay Area and the fourth most diverse county in the U.S. As District Attorney I will protect our immigrant communities by:

- Creating guidelines outlining that our Office will not provide information to ICE with regards to victims or defendants;
 - Strengthening protections to keep families together, especially if conviction for non-violent offenses would result in deportation;
 - Establishing and seek advice from an Immigrant Rights Advisory Board; and
 - Meeting regularly with community-based organizations and advocates to address concerns.
 - Study and publish reports about disparities at arrest, intake and outcomes by charge;
 - Create a task force that develops policies to eliminate any disparities in case charging and sentencing decisions;
 - Improve policies and training regarding bias and discrimination;
 - Lead the fight against hate by seeking felony charges for hate-motivated crime to end #AsianHate.
 - Develop trauma-informed resources for victims and survivors of crime;
 - Create a Crime Victims Advisory Board representing communities who are disproportionately impacted by crime including communities of color, LGBTQIA+, seniors, and immigrants;
 - Decrease restrictions on victim compensation;
 - Provide services to all victims of violence, even if the police never make an arrest;
 - Implement culturally informed training and policies that reflect our diverse community;
 - Fight for additional resources for victims of crime; and
 - Increase the language capacity of victim services to address the one-third of Alameda County residents who are foreign born and half of residents who speak a language other than English.
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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 have increasingly become aware that the term “Asian American” does not begin to describe the depth and diversity of the multitudes of communities that fall into this category. When I am elected to the office of District Attorney, I will consider it my responsibility to carefully distinguish between how different cultures, nationalities, language communities, and religious sects desire to self-identify, seek representation, and advocate for their needs.

I also know that the incidence of anti-Asian hate crimes has skyrocketed in recent years. Asian hate crimes have increased by 107% in California last year, with 700 anti-Asian incidents reported in the Bay Area alone. This is unacceptable. The effect of violent crime on Asian communities is pervasive and has struck a level of fear into Asian-owned businesses, community gathering spaces, and organizations that deserves special attention from our criminal justice system.

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

To me, the difference between supporting AAPI issues and being an Ally is a matter of how I use my own privilege and power to advocate. I do not see myself as a bystander on the sidelines of what is happening to our community members who are Asian American. These are the people who have brought cultural diversity to Alameda County making it the fourth most diverse county in the nation, and who themselves Ally with movements such as Black Lives Matter to advance civil rights for all. As District Attorney, I plan to use my position of authority to draw attention to the violence targeting the Asian American community and ensure that my office is tracking these sorts of crimes, resourced to handle these crimes, and reduces the incidence of anti-Asian hate.

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 believe many of the people who are victims of crime or defendants in criminal cases have been failed by other systems, and the AAPI community is no exception. The education system, local and state government all play outsized roles in limiting opportunities and under investing in low income and disenfranchised communities.

By working collaboratively with other systems to address these problems, we will implement innovative solutions to address the root causes of crime. I plan to partner with community organizations such as: East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, Asian Prisoners Support Committee, Just Cities, Oakland Rising, API Legal Outreach, the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, OCA East Bay, and others to understand the needs and solutions required to address the issues of the AAPI community.

In addition, I plan to:

- Advocate for increased funding and use of evidence-based violence interruption programs and place-based investment in Asian American neighborhoods;
- Work with public health community partners to approach gun violence as a public health crisis;
- Increase participation among Asian American voters;
- Work with the Alameda County Board of Education and school boards throughout the County to increase the high school graduation rate;
- Ensure that local civilian crisis response interventions such as the Pleasanton Mental Health Response Program, the Hayward Evaluation and Response Team, the Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland have the training and services needed to reach Asian American communities through language and cultural barriers.

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.

I have financially and otherwise supported the following Asian Pacific American candidates:

Kamala Harris
Dorothy Chou Proudfoot
Sheng Thao
Phong La

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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