

2024 Endorsement Questionnaire- Primary Election

Email *

jovankabeckles@gmail.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 note: your questionnaire will be posted on our website for Caucus members to review. Please submit your responses by Thurs., Dec. 28, by 5 pm.

Personal Information

Candidate Name *

Jovanka Beckles

City and zip code of residence. *

Richmond 94805

What is your campaign website address?

<https://jovanka4casenate.com/>

What is your campaign email address? *

jovanka@jovanka4casenate.com

What is the office that you are seeking? *

Senate District 5

Senate District 7

Senate District 9

AC Supervisor District 4

AC Supervisor District 5

AC Superior Court Office 12

AD 14

Other: _____

Are you the incumbent? *

Yes

No

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

Yes

No

Are you an APA Dem Caucus member? *

Yes

No

List ONLY the top 5 endorsements that you have received. (Please reference your website if you want to alert us to more).

ATU (Amalgamated Transit Union) Local 192, Teamsters Joint Council 7, Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), Alliance for Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), Our Revolution, California Democratic Party - Renters Council (CARENT of CADEM) and more. <https://jovanka4casenate.com/endorsements/>

If we endorse you, will you use our name in your campaign materials? *

Yes

No

Maybe

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

31 years

Educational background: What schools have you attended, date graduated, major and degree(s) earned.

Florida A&M University- 1988 BA Psychology. University of Phoenix - 2006 MBA

Employment: List the last three (3) paid positions, indicating name of employer, job title, and length of employment.

1) Mental Health Specialist - Contra Costa County, Wraparound Facilitator, 23 years. 2) Housing/Mental Health Case Manager - Rubicon Programs, 3 years. 3) Mental Health Counselor - Woodrow Place, 3 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.

BWOPA, Richmond Progressive Alliance, ACCE, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., East Bay DSA

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

We appreciate thoughtful responses that demonstrate a willingness to do some research. All questionnaire responses will be posted on the <https://apademcaucus.org> website.

1. Why do you think you are the best candidate to represent the concerns of Asian and Pacific Americans * in this district?

I am the only candidate in this race with a history of fighting for racial justice. As a Panamanian immigrant whose family moved to the United States when I was 9, I understand firsthand the struggles of many first and second generation immigrants. My first hand experience with white supremacy pushed me to organize my community and then run for local office. As a longtime activist against the terror of police brutality on marginalized communities, what is more important than anything else is for us to build cross-racial alliances for social justice. A principle that I have always held dear is that "none of us are free until we're all free."

I believe the best way I can represent Asians and Pacific Islanders is through building these alliances that will bring justice for all marginalized people of color. During my time on Richmond's City Council, I helped build community coalitions for affordable housing at a time when Asian Americans in my community were at risk of displacement due to gentrification. I also worked to create the Richmond Municipal ID program, which gave immigrants the ability to safely identify themselves to the police.

My record speaks for itself. I am also the only fully corporate-free candidate in this race. If elected, you can count on me to put the interests of my community first. My record as an elected official shows that I am more than ready to be a champion of progressive, pro-labor values, while also not being afraid of going head-to-head with corporate interests.

2. One of the most lasting pains of experiencing harassment is when no one around them intervenes or even offers help afterwards. What actions would you take if you witnessed an Asian or Pacific Islander being discriminated against, harassed, bullied, or made fun of? *

As a Black, Queer, Latinx immigrant woman, I have first hand/lived experience with the injustices perpetrated by white supremacy. Over the years, I have also been active as a community organizer in the movement for black lives and racial justice struggles. If I witnessed harassment of any Asian or Pacific Islander, without hesitation I would immediately call it out and come to their defense. Building strong community ties upon a foundation of social justice is absolutely essential in resisting racist attacks. All marginalized peoples need to be looking out for each other if we want to protect our communities from discrimination and harassment.

3. Despite being the largest racial grouping in Alameda County at 33%, Asians are only 10% of locally elected officials and the most underrepresented of all racial groups. Will you commit to increasing the number of Asians in the pipeline and what can you do to increase the number of Asian Americans running for office successfully? *

I pledge to work with Asian and Pacific Islander community organizations to develop leaders that will run for public office. For example, organizations like the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (which I've been endorsed by!) are helping train a new generation of passionate climate organizers. I would like to create a coaching/mentorship program for progressive Asian American community leaders that want to run for elected office. My experience campaigning for both local and state office for nearly a decade as a progressive corporate-free candidate I believe would be very useful in cultivating a new generation of Asian American elected officials. I have supported many local Asian candidates such as Alfred Twu, Camron Sasai, to name a few. I also want my State Senate office to be a place where students and young people of marginalized backgrounds can build the skills that would be useful in pursuing careers in public advocacy. Once elected, I will reach out to Asian and Pacific islander community organizations, and give young people from marginalized backgrounds preference when it comes to staff/internship opportunities.

4. Do you believe that members of the Asian and Pacific Islander communities in the district you are seeking to represent have been seen and heard by the current office holder? *

Please explain your response with examples.

I can say with certainty that Asian and Pacific islander communities are not being represented under our political status-quo. For example, one of the most at-risk communities in the East Bay are APA elders. Gentrification and the increasing cost of rent is pushing many of our elders out of our communities. This crisis is being driven by a political system that has been heavily bought out by real estate developer and landlord interests. It is absolutely essential for our state to create affordable housing and protect the rights of tenants in order to stop this displacement. The heavy influence of developer interests in the politics of the East Bay is a major reason why I think it's so important to run my campaign as corporate-free. APA communities also need affordable quality health care. Rising healthcare costs are locking many immigrants and communities of color out of accessing the healthcare they need. As a mental health professional working for Contra Costa County, I have worked firsthand with many APA community members, and have seen the stress and damage that being unable to access the health services they need has caused. We need representation that is willing to stand up to the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry, and fight for a single-payer healthcare system in California.

5. How can residents with limited English proficiency better access the services provided by the County/State? *

State and County services need to reach our community members with limited English proficiency where they are. I would like to see more outreach from state services to workplaces. It is no secret that labor rights violations occur often in workplaces where many of the employees have limited English skills. As a labor organizer and a Teamster, protecting immigrant workers from workplace abuse and labor exploitation is particularly important for me. There also needs to be better outreach about public health services to immigrant communities. Many immigrants with limited English proficiency, particularly those with APA ethnicity, are unable to figure out what healthcare services they qualify for, like MediCal, due to language barriers. We need to expand interpreter programs and community outreach for state and county healthcare programs. I would also create staff positions composed of passionate individuals from communities with a large immigrant presence that would handle my office's outreach to residents of limited English proficiency. Too often does language serve as a boundary to constituents being able to voice concerns to their elected representatives. Beyond this, I can pledge to fight to ensure that all county and state services have well-funded and expansive translation and immigrant outreach programs. I am also always prepared to reach out to and work with community organizations to find solutions to this problem.

6. Which Asian languages are most commonly spoken in the district you are running in and what plans do you have to reach -- during your campaign -- these non-English speaking community members? *

Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese)

Vietnamese

Tagalog

Hindi

I have already translated my campaign flyers into Chinese, and I am in the process of translating campaign materials and my website into other APA languages. Language accessibility is incredibly important to me, and I firmly believe that no political movement can be fully liberatory until it becomes inclusive and accessible. Recruiting a volunteer base from diverse backgrounds, in particular incorporating young people and students from APA and other communities of color is also very important to me.

7. Please explain your position on Measure B - Proposal to amend Alameda County Charter Section 62 (Recall Elections) on the Primary ballot.

I am in favor of Measure B, as it will help ensure recalls are used only when appropriate. It is far too easy to recall our elected officials, keeping them busy campaigning when they should be doing their jobs. Recently, the right to recall has been exploited to attack progressive politicians in the area, in particular Alameda's DA Pamela Price. Her recall campaign is not centered around any abuse of power, but merely her commitment to criminal justice reform and ending our carceral state. I am a thorough believer that the ability to recall our elected representatives is an important part of our democracy, but it should be used sparingly, and only when a reasonable case for an abuse of power can be made. When someone is elected, let's let them fulfill their responsibilities to their constituents and do their jobs!

8. For the SD 5 & SD 7 candidates: ~23% of your voters are located in Alameda County. Tell us what steps you have taken and/or intend to take to familiarize yourself with the issues of concern in these new (to you) communities, especially those who are of Asian ancestry.

My community organizing has often taken me to Alameda County, so I have had previous exposure to the issues facing communities there. As a labor organizer, I have participated in labor actions in Alameda, from coming out to show my solidarity with campus workers and graduate students at UC Berkeley, to showing out for nurses and teachers in Oakland and other parts of Alameda.

As an AC Transit Director, I also represent constituents in Albany and parts of Berkeley. In this capacity, I am familiar with public transportation issues in Alameda County. I have also always sought to learn more about and advocate for the well-being of AC Transit workers. During the pandemic, I was able to fight to ensure that these workers, many of whom live and work in Alameda County, got hazard pay.

However, I am always looking to learn more about the problems facing the residents of Alameda County. I want to continue building connections with community organizations in the county, and also expand my team to incorporate more Alameda County residents to ensure that the perspective and issues of communities in Alameda are being represented in my campaign's platform. During this campaign and after the election, I also intend on continuing to be involved in local movements for social justice and community organizations in the county.

9. 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? *

APEN. I have actively collaborated with the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) in the past in order to fight for environmental justice, in particular around issues of air pollution and holding corporations accountable.

10. Please list any local Asian American candidates you have publicly endorsed in the past 10 years. *

Jane Kim for San Francisco Mayor
Alfred Twu for Berkeley City Council
Ruscal Cayangyang for Vallejo School Board
Liat Meitzenheimer for Vallejo City Council
Ben Choi for Richmond City Council
Camron Sasai for Pinole City Council
Jenny Wong for Berkeley City Auditor
Nikki Fortunato Bas for Oakland City Council
Janani Ramachandran for Oakland City Council
Sheg Thao for Oakland Mayor

11. Did you receive any assistance in responding to this questionnaire? If so, please identify your source(s) of information. *

No

Thank you for completing our questionnaire.

Please Submit your responses by Dec. 28, 5 pm. We will be holding a zoom endorsement meeting scheduled for January 13, 10 AM -1 PM. We will be interviewing live the candidates for SD 7, AC BOS #4, and AC BOS #5 who complete this questionnaire. Only those candidates completing the questionnaire will be on our endorsement ballot. No changes to your responses can be made after it is submitted.

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