

# State Assembly/Senate

## **John Laird**

State Senate 17th District

Former Secretary for Natural Resources

### *Top 3 priorities citywide*

1. Impacts of Climate Change - Fire and Sea Level Rise
2. Affordable and sustainable higher education
3. The affordable housing crisis

### *1. Who is your Campaign Manager?*

Bill Maxfield

### *2. What is your Campaign Budget?*

\$750,000 in the primary (if a strong race, it will be higher)

### *3. Please share your Top Ten Endorsements:*

Nineteen of twenty-one district Mayors; all overlapping members of Congress; League of Conservation Voters, BAYMEC, California Federation of Teachers, California Professional Firefighters, California State CalFire Firefighters Local 2881

### *4. Would you support or oppose a 3 county ballot initiative for a permanent 1/8 cent sales tax to fund Caltrain?*

Support

There need to be non-care transit solutions as part of the big picture in the Bay Area, and this is a good one. I would support it.

### *5. Do you support funding to complete a valley to valley connection through high speed rail?*

Support

I visited the high speed network in Europe while a state legislator. It is more environmentally efficient, it only requires going to an airport for true long distance travel, and it is a better travel experience. They did not have the challenge California has, of trying to build a system all at once. They did it piecemeal. If there is a realistic way to do that in California, I would support it.

### *6. Would you support a measure dedicated to build and operate a world class, seamless integrated transit system to better serve Bay Area residents, funded through a one cent sales tax, to better serve the transit dependent and those of us still in our cars?*

Support

We need a big jolt to make a significant difference in our transportation system, and this would do it.

7. *Would you support state legislation to facilitate and encourage TOD within a half-mile of fixed-rail development, including streamlining housing approvals and establishing minimum zoning standards/heights?*

Support

I was just given a support or oppose choice on an issue that is very complex. I support transit oriented development. The proposal in front of the state has been narrowed to large urban areas, which makes sense. The one thing that is a problem, is how to make sure that a significant percentage of housing that is created will be affordable. That is a threshold issue for me, and it has not been addressed adequately in the current legislation. I don't think California can build its way into affordability, there will have to be some sort of guidance or assistance to insure that a significant portion of new housing is "affordable". As a legislator, I would work toward that goal in any legislation.

8. *Do you support reform of CEQA?*

Support

Once again, this was a support or oppose question about an issue that is complex. I support ensuring that environmental impacts are understood and mitigated as provided for in CEQA. If we can protect that basic policy without weakening it, then I would look at possible reforms. The Governor I just worked for wanted to do this, but found it a tough nut to crack. I do not support one-off free passes on CEQA for items such as sports stadiums. Reform should be for every body.

9. *Would you support a ballot measure, such as Prop 8, that regulates the amount that healthcare providers may charge for services?*

Support

Once again, this is a support and oppose question about a complex issue. I support universal access to health care and supported single-payer in my past legislative service. That is not possible without keeping health care costs down. That is not possible without an adequate supply of doctors, adequate public health service reimbursement rates, support for rural hospitals, and reasonable costs for generic drugs. I would hope to do this without the need to go to the ballot - unless it is getting public support for adequate funding toward these goals. When I was in the legislature I proposed funding for universal health care for children (prior to Obamacare and prior to SCHP). I supported a state health care reform supported by a Republican governor and a Democratic speaker, that would have been a precursor to Obamacare. I answered this question yes, but it's because I would consider support for this if we can't figure out how to do it legislatively.

*10. Do you support requiring all new buses purchased with federal funds be zero-emission beginning on October 1, 2029 (which is California's deadline for transitioning all transit bus purchases to zero-emission buses)?*

Support

I strongly support this, and was just part of an administration that sought many solutions like this to lower the state's greenhouse gas emissions. This is but one of many things we can and will have to do to lower emissions.

*11. Will you work with the Leadership Group and your Bay Area state legislative colleagues to develop a "Baylands Caucus" focused on a regional vision and plan of action for sea level rise, as well as funding to address our shared vulnerabilities?*

Support

I am coming off eight years as Secretary for Natural Resources where I was the point person for the administration's adaptation plans and efforts. We did science assessments on the effects of a warming climate - including sea level rise, fire, the safety of the grid, and more. We produced a guidance report for state government on the subject. This is a big challenge. It will require a lot of money. It will require bringing the public along. It will require different ways to meet the challenge together - such as a "Baylands Caucus" as described in the question - because it will be hard to meet this challenge solely on a county-by-county or city-by-city level. I stand ready to continue my work on this challenge.

*12. Do you support or oppose a proposed amendment to Proposition 13?*

Support

I appreciate the consequences outlined in this question, but I believe that there is a fair share that must come from the business side of the house to deal with education funding.

*13. Will you support legislation that reduces the volatility of the California tax system?*

Support

I was the Assembly Budget Chair for four years of my State Assembly service. When the Governor appointed a state group to consider this issue after I was term limited out of the Assembly, the Speaker asked me to monitor that group and report back. That group recommended a value added tax, which went nowhere, and was a missed opportunity on this subject.

Our state budget overperforms the economy in good times and underperforms the economy in bad times - due to the volatility described in the question. I support reducing the volatility, but it will not be politically easy, as it creates winners and losers - and it is only really politically possible while the economic sun is shining, and we will inevitably get to a recession in the next few years.

*14. Do you support the creation of a statewide student longitudinal data system?*

Support

I support such systems, but I do not think they are a substitute for individual attention in learning and support making sure both work together.

*15. Will you address the higher education opportunity gap for underrepresented students and increase the number of graduates prepared for innovation economy careers?*

Support

I strongly support addressing this problem. We have a problem with having enough spots in our public higher education system, and having enough financial support that allows every student to succeed regardless of financial circumstances. This is truly an investment in the future. I am a former community college trustee, and believe strongly in this investment.

*16. Tell us about a time when you were opposed to a position of one of your major supporters. What was the issue? How did you handle this situation?*

When I was a Mayor and City Councilmember in Santa Cruz, many of my strongest environmental supporters wanted the city to go to tertiary sewage treatment. We were not on the clean water list - and the local cost share for tertiary treatment would have been prohibitive to working and middle class city residents. Even though I strongly wanted to go to the higher level of treatment, I opposed going to this level because it would not be affordable to a significant number of local residents. The city was sued as a result. Eventually, our Congressman got the city added to the "closed" list. But we did not know that when we had to act and I opposed the move at the time.