

State Assembly/Senate

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CA State Senate

Attorney

Top 3 priorities citywide

1. affordable housing and homelessness
2. transportation needs
3. addressing the causes of economic inequality, including: lack of affordable quality childcare; early childhood education and unequal schools; affordable college; and the root causes of many of these issues - campaign finance. These are priorities because they each impact the ability for all people in our state to share in the California Dream.

1. Who is your Campaign Manager?

Jessica Dickinson Goodman

2. What is your Campaign Budget?

I accepted the voluntary expenditure limits for this race. I intend to raise \$930,000 in the Primary. Since I've been raising money for this campaign in March of this year, I have raised over \$225,000 from over 1,350 individual donors - 70% of which are \$50 or less.

3. Please share your Top Ten Endorsements:

1) CA Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis; 2) State Controller Betty Yee; 3) Congresswoman Jackie Speier; 4) Congressman John Sarbanes; 5) State Senator Connie Leyva; 6) Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson; 7) State Assemblywoman Rebecca Bauer-Kahan; 8) Santa Clara County Supervisor Susan Ellenberg; 9) San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera; 10) Los Altos Councilmember Neysa Fligor.

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

Support

Yes. Our region suffers from demoralizing traffic congestion, pollution and commute times. It is clear that when it comes to addressing our abysmal transportation system, we cannot continue to kick the can down the road. We must be creative in our approach to moving people and goods around our community, rather than returning to the same old, same old band-aids. I will advocate for investments in our state and local infrastructure, while also requiring adequate oversight to ensure the funding is used wisely. I will work with the VTA and regional governments to strengthen the management and maintenance of our transit systems, including BART, Caltrain, our buses and light rail, to better serve our region and stop interruptions in service or delays.

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

Support

I support high speed rail or other forms of transit from the Central Valley to Santa Clara County, and I support the electrification of Caltrain and investments in Diridon station as a key transportation hub.

I have watched my own son make the hard choice to move his family away from the South Bay because of expensive rents and home prices. We desperately need more affordable housing in the South Bay, but we need an all-of-the-above housing policy that includes high speed rail opening up parts of the state to reasonable, humane commutes that are not possible today.

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

Global warming is a brutal reality for all of us, but particularly for our children and grandchildren. Public transportation reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases air quality, decreases the stress and misery of freeway commuting, and will allow us to build the foundation of the better world we want for the next generation. Big ideas cost money and while I am concerned about the inherently regressive nature of sales taxes, the long-term benefit of this work is profound.

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 support transit-oriented development, of course. And that means building more and denser buildings -- townhomes and low-rise apartment buildings, quiet duplexes and mid-rises surrounded by parks. We don't have to reinvent the wheel: the world is filled with beautiful, dense, rich cities, with fast, organized, effective transit. We just have to build the political will to get there.

There is a housing crisis in our state and Sacramento has a role to play in solving it. The solution to the housing crisis is not a one size fits all policy, but every community has an obligation to contribute to solving it. I oppose measures that unilaterally remove local zoning restrictions without community input. There are hard conversations we have to have around zoning: the racist history of red-lining still holds too many of our communities back; California was built for a much smaller population than currently calls our state home. Good solutions are complex, and more likely to serve all of our communities.

8. *Do you support reform of CEQA?*

Oppose

CEQA is a very important law which requires that environmental impacts of projects and policy changes be revealed and mitigated. But unfortunately, it has become a tool serving motives that have nothing to do with protecting the environment. There are too many barriers preventing the development of affordable and middle-income housing. All levels of government have to work to reduce the bureaucracy and outdated rules that often stand in the way of building homes. When I was Santa Clara County Counsel, I required the county to perform all environmental impact reviews, which helped reduce costly litigation and built trust in the process for all stakeholders. That's why I believe we should streamline the permitting process in localities and enact a law assigning a state agency to produce environmental impact reports and oversee CEQA enforcement. This will ensure that new projects, including affordable housing, are not delayed.

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

Support

I believe we should have a single state executive branch agency overseeing for-profit hospitals and other health care providers, which would help reduce health care costs for all Californians.

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 would like to see California's deadline moved up on this.

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

Yes, climate warming affects all of us and isn't bound to political jurisdictions. We all must work together to address this. I will need more information and would like to confer with scientists and engineers to assure that sea walls will provide the kind of solution we're hoping for. Often, these kinds of barriers increase tidal damage in other parts of our connected ecosystem, much like a marina wall to preserve sand on one beach ends-up depleting another entirely.

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

Support

We should reform Prop 13, but we need to do so in a way that does not bring massive administrative costs for counties and make it difficult to enforce. Split-roll should not penalize small businesses.

Answering this kind of question is where having a long memory comes in handy. I remember when Prop 13 was sold to the California electorate: it was proposed and promised as a protection for seniors from rising property taxes. It was never intended as permanent protection from property taxes for corporations, only a small sliver of whom actually benefit from it today.

Every other state in the union regularly reassesses property taxes for businesses. That has not had negative economic consequences. Instead, it will provide more tax revenue for important projects like building the massive transportation and affordable housing projects I've advocated for in other answers, not to mention improving our schools.

But there isn't just one way to fix Prop 13. Solutions with high administrative costs that would drive businesses to Los Angeles aren't going to win my support. We need to reform Prop 13, but in a way that works for our community.

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

Oppose

I applaud Governor Jerry Brown for creating the Rainy Day Fund. While I support a tax on the top 1% of earners, I am open to other means of generating income to the state. An over-reliance on one source of funding could collapse our state economy during a recession.

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

Support

I believe data is useful in informing decision-makers and I would support such a system as well as higher teacher pay and help to disadvantaged students.

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 am a proud product of the public education system. From junior high in San José to UC Berkeley to UC Hasting for law school, I know how quality affordable public education can change lives. Public education is what helps move people from poverty to prosperity -- which my family experienced when we moved to this valley when I was 11. But students today can't work their way through Cal and Hastings waiting tables as I did.

Community college should be free for the first two years. The UCs and CSU systems' tuition should be lower for all students and we need to increase capacity in both systems. And we should continue to provide resources so that students who are excited by the possibilities of STEM -- no matter their gender, class, zip code or race -- are welcomed into that profession with open arms.

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?*

Some of my supporters don't agree with me on major issues, but they all know that I listen with an open mind. For example, when I was County Counsel, I convinced all of the Santa Clara County Supervisors to agree to file a petition with the Supreme Court to overturn Prop 8, the anti-marriage equality initiative. Later, one of the County Supervisors received criticism from his constituents and was concerned about why I had made the recommendation. I was able to convince him, honestly, of why it was important for him to support the lawsuit: the threat of litigation. So while I had other reasons, such as equality and first amendment considerations, I also knew that they were specific reasons that would resonate with him to come to the same conclusion.

Additional Question asked on 10/15

17. *Are you in favor or in opposition of a ballot measure that will prohibit campaign contributions from advocates for development and tie the San Jose Mayoral term to the Presidential Election Cycle?*

Oppose

I oppose this ballot measure. While I support moving the Mayoral election to a Presidential election year, in order to increase voter turnout and engagement in the democratic process, I do not support the part of the measure relating to "special interest" money. As many are aware, I am a strong advocate for, and have worked in the field of campaign finance regulations and policy for many years. I care about transparency in contributions, from all sources contributing to candidates and making independent expenditures. This measure, however, distinguishes between various "interest groups" and therefore is a measure being used solely to advance the power and influence of one interest group over others. I cannot support a measure that is being used for special interests without full transparency of that fact.