

Please email your responses to GPAC-VoterGuide@yahoogroups.com. In the subject line, please include "County Board of Education".

Name: Joaquin Rivera

Phone: 510-637-9679

Email: jojorico@pacbell.net

Website: joaquinrivera.org

Line of work: College Professor

1) Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of County School Board.

I was elected to the Alameda County Board of Education in 2010 and re-elected in 2014. I currently serve as chair of the policy and legislation committee and previously was board president and served on the budget committee. I also serve on the JPA Board of Directors of the Chabot Space and Science Center, whose mission is to educate and inspire students on science, the Earth and the Universe. Before joining the Alameda County Board of Education, I served three terms on the Berkeley School Board.

In 2016, I was President of the California County Boards of Education (CCBE), the statewide organization that represents county boards of education. I served on the CCBE Legislative and Nominating Committees and was a member of the California School Boards Association (CSBA) Board of Directors and Delegate Assembly.

I have been a community college chemistry professor since 1990. I have served as President, Vice-President and Chief negotiator of the AFT Local 1493 and as Vice-President of the California Federation of Teachers. I was also President of the Academic Senate. I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez, and a Master of Science degree in Chemistry from the University of California, Berkeley.

I currently serve as the treasurer of the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club.

2) A. Why are you running?

I am running for re-election because I want to continue the work of the past eight years. As a County Board member I'll continue to be a strong advocate in Sacramento to oppose the budget cuts that threaten our children's future and to secure adequate resources for our schools. One of my goals is to serve as a link between the school board members in our area and the County Office of Education to ensure that our school districts receive the services they need in areas such as special education, adequate placement for expelled students, training, etc. Some of my other goals include to: provide coordination and collaboration among school districts on critical education initiatives and to leverage resources; expand academic opportunities in county and court schools; and to secure and expand federal and state resources for our schools through grant writing.

In addition, I will continue my work: ensuring districts utilize sound fiscal practices; helping districts adopt new strategies to close the achievement gap; improving the academic performance of all students; and, increasing parental access to and involvement in their children's education.

B. What do you believe are the main priorities for the County School Board?

The County Office is a service provider. It coordinates services (such as special education, placement for expelled kids, etc.) among school districts. The idea is to empower districts and help them save resources (by economy of scale for example) so they can effectively work on closing the achievement gap. The County Office also serves the most vulnerable and at-risk kids -- incarcerated, expelled and pregnant students. With the LCAP and LCFF now county offices have the responsibility of providing assistance to those districts not meeting the targets for particular groups of students.

The Alameda County Board of Education main responsibilities are: to approve the budget of the County Office of Education, to rule on appeals for inter-district transfers and expulsions, and to approve or deny charter school petitions. The Board works with the superintendent to improve the programs of the County Office of Education and to provide support to the districts we serve.

C. If you are an incumbent, how would you assess your job performance? Please cite specific accomplishments and setbacks.

I am the incumbent and I believe that I have done a good job during my tenure on the Board. I have been an effective advocate for our students, not only at the local level but also in Sacramento. We have worked very hard to improve the quality of our court and community schools. When I was first elected to the Board, the Board packets and the budget were not posted online. I worked with staff to change that and now all those documents are available online. I have held charter schools accountable and have fought against the proliferation of charter schools, particularly in Oakland.

When I was elected to the Board our schools were not accredited. Working with the Superintendent we got our schools WASC accredited so that our students can apply to and attend four year institutions when they graduate from our program. We also opened a new school to prepare young adults that dropped out of school and did not finish high school to take the exam to get a high school diploma.

3) Concretely and specifically, how will you make yourself available to those who elect you? That is, how can we participate in holding you accountable if you are elected?

I have and will continue to make myself accessible through phone, e-mail and community meetings. I have and will continue to send e-mails outlining upcoming issues the Board will deal with to allow my constituents to provide feedback and updates on Board actions.

4) How familiar are you with the School Board's responsibilities under the Local Control Funding Formula? What efforts would you make to hold districts accountable for demonstrating that they have conducted an adequate process for getting public input into their Local Control Accountability Plan? How will you ensure that the LCAP aligns with the state priority areas and expressed community needs?

I am very familiar with the Board's responsibility as it relates to the LCAP. The Alameda County Office of Education has two responsibilities: reviewing the LCAP for all the school districts in the county and developing the LCAP for our own programs. The Superintendent is in charge of overseeing the district's plans. With respect to our own plan, at the direction of the Board, the County Office has developed a process where all stakeholders (parents, teachers, students) provide the necessary input for a complete and comprehensive LCAP. The Board needs to ensure that this group is diverse and includes representatives from free and reduced lunch, English language learners and foster students and families. As a Board member I have made sure that all the stakeholders were involved in the development of the LCAP. It is also important that the whole community has access to the LCAP and have the opportunity to provide input. When we approve the LCAP we make sure that it aligns with the state priority areas and that the budget is aligned with the expressed community needs in the LCAP.

5) How will you deal with violations of the law over which the School Board has direct control? Specifically, Education Code section 41372 requires that when a district fails to meet its obligation to spend at least 55% of expenditures on current classroom expenses, the deficiency needs to be set aside and paid to teachers and instructional assistants the following year. The Superintendent's office has either waived the provision or, when she has refused to waive it, has not mandated the funds be used in the proscribed manner the following year. Would you enforce this provision?

At the county level we have a unique situation where both the county board and the county superintendent are elected. The law gives the county superintendent control over the county office of education programs, including this section of the Ed Code. Although this falls under the purview of the Superintendent, not the Board, I am in favor of enforcing this provision.

6) A. Alameda County has had several "fiscally challenged" districts over the past few years, with Oakland perhaps being the most notorious. Are there systemic reasons why this is so, and how can the County School Board address these if they do, in fact, exist?

B. What role can the County School Board play in addressing this issue?

Sacramento's broken budget process has placed a tremendous burden on our education system. They do not provide enough funding for school districts to do their job of educating their students.

A role of the county board of education members is to advocate for fair revenues from Sacramento and D.C. I have been a strong advocate to oppose the budget cuts that threaten our children's future and to secure adequate resources for our schools. In the budget process, some items should be non-negotiable. That was the idea behind Proposition 98, to secure funding for education. However, governors and legislators have broken that promise in the past. The first step is to make Proposition 98 irrevocable so that its funds cannot be "borrowed" or "funneled" into the general fund at the expense of the quality of education for our students. Also, Prop 98 should be a floor, not a ceiling, for education funding.

However, even fully funded, those dollars are not enough. California has a lower per pupil spending than most states. I have worked with fellow board members statewide and with other partners in the education community, parents, Unions, etc. to educate the public about the devastating effects this inadequacy is having for our youth and the need to find new sources of revenue to fund our schools and colleges.

As a Board member, I have also worked to encourage collaboration between the different county's school districts to bring in additional resources to help protect the most vulnerable children in our county.

I am also strongly in favor of going from the 2/3s vote to simple majority to increase revenues at the local level. The majority should not be held hostage to the minority. We need to work hard to pass these type of initiatives at the ballot box.

We should also get rid of term limits so our legislators can develop the necessary expertise on school finance and other education issues. This would stop the Capitol from being held hostage to special interests who now control the institutional memory (and rewrite history to fit their means).

Now, having said all of that, I also want to ensure that districts utilize sound fiscal practices. While that function lies with the superintendent, I have worked with the board to develop strategies that can support the superintendent as she assists the districts and to hold her and her staff accountable for the proper oversight of the districts in the county.

7) The School Board and the Superintendent provide fiscal oversight for Alameda County's school districts, including Oakland Unified School District. Explain what actions the Board can take to strengthen districts' financial stability. What are your thoughts on state receivership?

The Superintendent is in charge of reviewing the fiscal performance of the districts, not the county board. As a County Board member I have paid close attention to the review of the districts I represent (Albany, Berkeley, Emery and Oakland) and have been in direct contact with the superintendent and her staff. The county office of education should provide districts with technical support to strengthen district's financial stability.

I'm not in favor of state receivership. I believe in local control and that the state should help those districts in financial crisis and not take over.

8) A previous County Superintendent's message on the ACOE website stated that "it is true that we lack the funding needed to do the job right." What proposals do you have for increasing funding to our schools? Please include proposals that can be implemented at the County level and also proposals for which you advocate when contacting State-level officials.

I believe this question goes to the heart of inadequacy in school funding. As I have mentioned before, it is necessary that we bring increased funding to our schools and county offices of education. With the LCAP, additional responsibilities have been placed on county offices of education but unfortunately there hasn't been an increased in funding to do this work.

We must reform Prop 13 and close the commercial tax loophole. We also need to go from the 2/3s vote to simple majority to increase revenues at the local level. We should place on the statewide ballot a proposition to increase funding for our schools.

9) What is your position on charter schools? Will you support charter school applications turned down by local school districts? Do you have any interaction with the California Charter School Association?

I am not pro charter schools. During my tenure on the county board I have reviewed many charter school applications that have come to us on appeal or countywide charters that have come directly to us. Although I have voted for some of these, I have voted against most of the charters that have come before us. The few charters I have voted for provide a unique and innovative instructional program. I have voted to close charter schools not meeting the standards for operation. I have gone in front of the State Board of Education to support the local school district and testify against one of the charter schools we turned down on appeal. In addition, charter schools should be under a union contract. Now, having said that I recognize that charter schools are not going away and we must find a way for charter schools and district schools to co-exist. I have met with the regional representative of the California Charter Schools Association but I do not have any formal relationship with this group.

10) A. What is the role of the County School Board in appeals from parents and students from the local districts? How might the Board impact the difficulties in many districts with special education?

The Board hears the appeals from parents and students and makes the final decision of whether to sustain or overturn the local district's decision. When reviewing inter-district transfers I believe the Board must consider the impact on the school district including overcrowding and impacts to the special education program.

B. Transfers, expulsions, other decisions of the local boards are sometimes overruled at the County level. What is the criteria for overruling a local decision?

I believe that the decisions of the local boards should be sustained unless the student's rights were violated, the proper procedures were not followed or the decision was discriminatory or arbitrary. As a Board member I consider the student needs vs. the district needs in order to make a decision.

11) A. How much money do you currently have for this race?

\$2,000

B. How much money do you plan to raise?

\$20,000

C. Where will the money come from?

Friends, past donors, labor and supporters of public education

D. Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any).

Corporations and any conservative groups (including anti-choice, anti-environment, groups against gay rights, pro-gun and against undocumented residents). I will also refuse to buy spaces in slate cards that promote those causes.

12) What endorsements have you received thus far?

I have received the following endorsements:

Organizations:

Berkeley Democratic Club
East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club

Elected Officials:

Senator Nancy Skinner
Assemblymember Tony Thurmond
Assemblymember Rob Bonta
Board of Equalization Chair Fiona Ma
Former Senator Loni Hancock

Karen Monroe, Alameda County Superintendent
Sheila Jordan, former Alameda County Superintendent

Ken Berrick, President, Alameda County Board of Education
Yvonne Cerrato, Vice-President, Alameda County Board of Education
Amber Childress, Trustee, Alameda County Board of Education
Eileen McDonald, Trustee, Alameda County Board of Education
Fred Sims, Trustee, Alameda County Board of Education
Aisha Knowles, Trustee, Alameda County Board of Education
Jacki Fox Ruby, former Trustee, Alameda County Board of Education
Marlon McWilson, former Trustee, Alameda County Board of Education

Ty Alper, Berkeley School Board Director
Pamela Doolan, former Berkeley School Board Director
Shirley Issel, former Berkeley School Board Director
Nancy Riddle, former Berkeley School Board Director
Miriam Rokeach, former Berkeley School Board Director
Michele Lawrence, Former Superintendent Berkeley Unified School District
Jack McLaughlin, Former Superintendent Berkeley Unified School District

Jesse Arreguin, Berkeley Mayor
Sophie Hahn, Berkeley City Councilmember
Kate Harrison, Berkeley City Councilmember
Linda Maio, Berkeley City Councilmember
Susan Wengraf, Berkeley City Councilmember

John Selawsky, Berkeley Rent Board Commissioner, former Berkeley School Board Director, Berkeley Library Board member
James Chang, Berkeley Rent Board Commissioner
Igor Tregub, Berkeley Rent Board Commissioner

John Bauters, Emeryville Mayor
Christian Patz, Emeryville City Councilmember

Dan Kalb, Oakland City Councilmember
Annie Campbell-Washington, Oakland City Councilmember
Abel Guillen, Oakland City Councilmember
Jean Quan, former Oakland Mayor

Shanti Gonzalez, Oakland School Board Member
James Harris, Oakland School Board Member
Jody London, Oakland School Board Member
Rosie Torres, Oakland School Board Member
Nina Senn, Oakland School Board Member

Peggy McQuaid, Albany Mayor
Marge Atkinson, former Albany Mayor

Paul Black, President, Albany School Board
Pat Low, former Albany School Board Member
Ron Rosenbaum, former Albany School Board Member

Ann Crosbie, Fremont School Board Member
Amy Miller, Dublin School Board Member
Valerie Arkin, Pleasanton School Board Member
Jamie Yee Hintzke, Pleasanton School Board Member
William McGee, Hayward School Board Member

Meredith Brown, Peralta Community College District Trustee
Karen Weinstein, Peralta Community College District Trustee

Bruce Dennis, President California County Boards of Education; Trustee, Riverside County Board of Education
Juliana Feriani, past President California County Boards of Education; Trustee, Tuolumne County Board of Education
Heidi Weiland, past President California County Boards of Education; Trustee, El Dorado County Board of Education

John (Jack) Bedell, Ph.D., past President California County Boards of Education; President, Orange County Board of Education

Dr. Ramon Flores, past President California County Boards of Education; Trustee, Ventura County Board of Education

Dana Dean, President-Elect California County Boards of Education; President, Solano County Board of Education

Mark Lisagor, Board of Directors, California County Boards of Education; Trustee, Ventura County Board of Education

Herman G. Hernandez, Board of Directors, California County Boards of Education; President, Sonoma County Board of Education

Joel Cohen, former Member Alameda County Democratic Central Committee

13) What is your political party affiliation and how committed are you to that affiliation?

I'm a democrat and I'm very committed to that affiliation.

14) Anything you would like to add?

I want to thank the Green Party for your endorsement 8 years ago when I first ran for this office. I hope that I have earned your support again.