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Current occupation: Clinical Professor, U.C. Berkeley School of Law

Motivation

Why did you choose to run for this office?

I am running for re-election to the Berkeley School Board because I am committed to doing what I can to promote equity and excellence in our public schools. My career as an educator and public interest lawyer has been devoted to the representation of indigent clients in our criminal justice system, and training the next generation of social justice lawyers to provide high-quality representation to clients desperately in need of such advocacy. Most of my clients throughout my career have been death row inmates in the Deep South. I mention this work because while I find it extremely rewarding, I was motivated to run for the School Board in 2014 because I wanted to find a way to interrupt the pipeline that sends students to juvenile facilities, and then to jails and prisons. I wanted to do what I could to ensure that every child who enters a Berkeley public school has the opportunity to meet their full potential, regardless of their race or the socio-economic status of their family. That is the great promise of public education, and it is privilege to work towards that ideal.

Qualifications

Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for being a School Board Director.

I have served as a School Board Director for the past four years, and I am proud of the work we have done to level the playing field and provide meaningful opportunities for all of our students. I am an educator myself, as well as a parent (I have three kids in the public schools), and both my wife and I are graduates of the Berkeley public schools. At Berkeley Law, I served as the Associate Dean for Experiential Education, and in my work as a Board member, I have promoted project-based learning and career technical education that gives our students skills to compete and succeed in today's world.

Priorities

What do you believe are the major issues facing the District? What are some specific tasks (e.g. specific legislation, policies, et.) you intend to accomplish while in office?

We have a number of urgent priorities facing the District. Among them are the following:

Rising state-mandated pension costs will continue to require difficult budget decisions in the coming years. Like most Districts in California, we will need to make cuts, and my priority is always to cut as far away from the classroom as possible.

We need to continue to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, and I am very proud of our extensive efforts to revise our expulsion policy and invest in restorative justice. We need to have some serious, concrete discussions, with all stakeholders, about a) what meaningful alternatives will meet our goals and b) how much they will cost. (We have started to have these conversations.) We also need to continue our work around discipline matrices at each school level, so we are all on the same page about what responses are appropriate for various student behaviors, and which resources are available at each school site. We can't remove tools from teachers and administrators without replacing them with anything, but we also can't keep suspending (and occasionally expelling) a starkly disproportionate number of black and brown students. This needs to continue to be one of the District's highest priorities.

We have re-vamped the ninth grade at Berkeley High in order to provide a smaller, more personalized experience for all students at the school. We will need to closely monitor the first year of implementation to ensure that our excellent staff and teachers have what they need to make this significant change a success.

We have a new Executive Director of Special Education, and we need to revamp our systems to ensure that we reduce racial disproportionality in special education identification; provide better, more consistent service to our students with disabilities; and contain our costs.

We will be renewing our maintenance parcel tax and construction bond in 2020, and this will require extensive planning and community discussion, which is already underway.

What specifically do you think the School District can or should do locally to fight climate change? To reduce the District's carbon footprint to zero?

There is a lot we can do, and we have hired a consultant to work with the District community to improve our sustainability efforts across the board. We can buy electric school buses, install more solar panels, improve recycling and zero waste systems in our many facilities, use greener cleaning supplies, infuse climate change education in our curriculum at an early age, and much more.

The Berkeley City Council may need temporary facilities for meetings during Council Chamber refurbishment. Are you in favor of allowing the City Council to use School Board Facilities to hold meetings when not being used by the School Board? Do you think the City should pay for this use?

We have reached an agreement with the City for the use of the School Board meeting room, and details will be announced as soon as the deal is signed in the early Fall. I am glad that we could work out terms that were agreeable to the City and to the District.

How do you think issues of homelessness in Berkeley impact the schools? Do you have suggestions on solutions to Berkeley homeless issues? Is there a role the school system can play in easing the homeless crisis?

Absolutely, homelessness impacts our schools. Most of all, it impacts students without stable housing. When students are tired, hungry, scared, distracted, and/or traumatized, it is extremely difficult to learn. We have many homeless students, and we are currently working with consultants from the county office of education to address how we serve those students, and how we can do more to support them. I am intrigued by the idea of using our facilities as shelters for homeless students and their families, which is being piloted in San Francisco.

Do you have issues or concerns regarding the interactions between Berkeley Police and students? If so, do you have suggestions for solutions?

As a member of the BUSD Policy Committee, I have been working with staff and community members on a policy that governs interactions with the Berkeley Police, and students. We will also likely begin to work on an MOU with BPD that covers some of these areas as well. We want to make sure that all interactions with the BPD are respectful, constructive, and keep our students and staff safe.

What are your positions on the three Berkeley Ballot Measures?

\$135M Affordable Housing Bond?

Strongly support. I am excited about the possibility of such a bond increasing the number of extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income affordable housing units in Berkeley, which will help alleviate our dire homelessness crisis as well as the crisis in lack of affordable housing for people who work in the city (including our teachers).

Police Commission Charter Amendment?

My understanding is that this is not going to be on the November ballot.

Amending the Rent Control Ordinance to Cover Newer Buildings?

I have not had time to review this measure, so I don't have a position yet.

Endorsements

Who are you endorsing for the Senate, for Governor, for AD15, and for the Berkeley City Council?

I am not endorsing in any local races with open seats. I have endorsed Kate Harrison and Lori Droste for City Council. I am supporting Kevin De Leon for Senate, and Gavin Newsom for Governor.

Who has endorsed you?

I have been endorsed by the Berkeley Federation of Teachers, the Alameda Building and Construction Trades Council, Robert Reich, Nancy Skinner, Tony Thurmond, Mayor Jesse Arreguin, Councilmember Kate Harrison, Rent Board Commissioners John Selawsky and James Chang, and many more elected officials and community leaders. A complete list is at tyalper.org/endorsements.

Anything Else

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

I was honored to receive the Green Party endorsement in 2014, and I would be honored to receive it again in 2018.

Are you a member of the Green Party?

No.

Pledges - Have you signed either of the following pledges?

A. For democracy: <https://movetoamend.org/candidate-questionnaire>

B. For peace: <http://www.peacelegislators.org/pledge-form/>

I have signed the “Peace Legislators Pledge.”