

Central Valley Progressive Political Action Committee
Endorsement Questionnaire for Fresno City Council Candidates

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Name of Campaign Committee: Veva Islas for Fresno City Council 2018

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Candidate's Signature  Date 3/6/18

Please limit your responses to no more than 300 words per question.

- 1) As a City Council member, describe what you will do in each of the following areas:
a) Improving air quality: (287 words)

Having a strong public transportation system and improved land use policies would help us to cut back on individual vehicle miles travelled by car and thereby decrease vehicle emissions. It is my aspiration to promote a more fair and just public transportation system to support residents of District 7. Likewise, I plan to drive infrastructure investments into District 7 that allow people to walk and bike safely which includes the establishment and repair of sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes and adequate lighting. In order to make active transportation safe, we also have to do something to address the loose dogs that create threats to pedestrians and bicyclists. By limiting sprawl and creating more density we can also minimize our need to drive cars everywhere that we need to go.

We also should incentivize more local entrepreneurs rather than rely on large warehouse operations as a means of economic development in our city because they serve only to bring in additional trucks from outside of our community and contribute to our poor air quality.

In addition, greening our city will help us improve air quality and beautify our city. Greening our city aids the local dispersion of pollution and aids the deposition and removal of airborne pollutants, making the air cleaner. We need to invest in street trees, vegetation including hedges, green or living walls, and green roof tops. We, of course, should opt as much as possible for water tolerant native plants.

We can accomplish much of what I am describing by pursuing cap and trade dollars and other available state grants that prioritize disadvantaged communities. It is important that we take advantage of these dollars because of the number of disadvantaged communities we have in our area.

- b) Improving Fresno's public transportation levels of service: (186)

I would like to ensure that there is an inclusive process to allowing the diverse residents using the public transportation system to have a way to inform its operation and expansion.

Improving service means that we improve routes and enhance the frequency and dependability based on our communities expressed needs. This year marked the first year that the City of Fresno actually embarked in a FAX restructure however this revamp was way overdue.

We should ensure that no neighborhood is un-served and we should also be ensuring that our public transportation system is affordable to all. I would be supportive of continuing to expand individuals such as seniors and high school students in being able to ride the bus at no cost.

We also need to invest in innovative forms of public transportation such as car share and bike share programs. Electric cars help us preserve our air quality while also providing individual transportation options. Many cities the size of Fresno have bike share programs that allow individuals to have access to bikes and electric bikes at the same cost or less than riding a bus.

c) Reducing urban sprawl: (158)

As a public health professional, I feel strongly in the need to create healthy communities. When elected I will work to promote smart growth principles which limit continuing sprawl. In Fresno we have urban sprawl which impacts our health by requiring people to rely on driving to get to school and work which negatively affects our air quality and expounds the time we are sedentary. Sprawl also increases our risk of vehicle accidents and pedestrian injury. There are also negative social consequences to sprawl given that it leads to economic and racial segregation.

Reducing sprawl requires that we invest in smart growth which means that we invest in creating complete neighborhoods with are variety of housing options to meet all resident needs. It also means our neighborhoods are walkable and bikeable; as well as having access to good public transportation systems. It also means that we work to preserve green spaces and develop mixed-use properties which promote healthy living accessible to local amenities.

Reducing sprawl is also necessary to ensure that we have adequate water and infrastructure to serve our existing needs. Future development should be required to pay its way and ensure that adequate resources are available before expanding out boundaries.

d) Supporting high-speed rail: (150)

I am in support of high speed rail. High speed rail will allow Fresno and the Central Valley to connect with both northern and southern California without having to drive a car. Allowing us access to educational opportunities, business opportunities, medical facilities and many other assets located in other parts of our state.

There are a few safe guards however that I would like to see enacted. I would like to see efforts to prevent gentrification of downtown neighborhoods which are also part of District 7. I would like us to enact measures that allow current residents to stay in their apartments and homes and prevent displacement. I would also like to ensure that the employment opportunities created by high-speed rail serve residents of Fresno first and foremost. As a city we need to be proactive in ensuring that we do not displace or negatively impact local businesses as well.

- 2) What specifically do you plan to do to ensure that Fresno's stock of affordable, safe and decent housing increases significantly while you're on the City Council? Include in your answer if you support and would you strengthen a comprehensive routine interior code inspection program for rental housing? (237)

As I mentioned in an earlier response, I do see the new growth opportunities of Fresno promoted by such amenities as High-speed Rail, having a potential negative impact for lower-income families who could be displaced. I believe that we should support measures that allow existing residents to stay in neighborhoods where they live and not be priced out because of improvements. I also believe in the importance of having explicit, enforceable policies that require affordable units are built before or in parallel with the market rate projects.

There are challenges in increasing housing options in locations such as District 7 because it has been largely built out. However, other cities have successfully pursued programs to recycle vacant and blighted properties into new, good quality affordable housing as well as parks and other neighborhood amenities. Park Grove, in District 7, is exactly the type of affordable housing that the City of Fresno has done right and should replicate.

I'd like to ensure that the City of Fresno fulfills its commitments, like it's housing element and anti-displacement task force and ensure representation by impacted residents in this decision-making.

Strengthening a comprehensive routine interior code inspection program for rental housing is very important for the safety of tenants. In addition, having routine interior code inspections help in the prevention of injury among our firefighters or first responders who may be called upon to respond to hazards created by structural deficiencies.

- 3) Evaluate the successes and failures of City Hall's approach to ending homelessness and what, if anything, you would do differently. Include your position on the new anti-camping ordinance. (186)

There are several areas where the city has failed in regard to creating a successful policy to end homelessness. First there has been no attempts to respectfully engage the homeless population directly and hear their needs and interests; without fully appreciating the homeless context in Fresno we will fail in successfully addressing it. Secondly, beyond having affordable and alternative housing options we are woefully underserving the mental health and substance abuse treatment and recovery needs specific to the homeless population. There are partnerships that need to be leveraged and resources that need to be secured to be effective in meeting the mental health and substance abuse treatment needs.

The new anti-camping ordinance in Fresno is shameful. It does nothing to resolve our growing homeless population. Targeting homeless camps and throwing out property without due process is just wrong. We must treat all people with respect and protect their rights. Using tax dollars to implement the anti-homelessness ordinance is inefficient those dollars could be better used to support hygiene facilities or housing. When elected, this ordinance would be something that I would like to work to reverse.

- 4) What do you see as the most important components in cultivating a productive and cooperative and useful relationship between the Board of Supervisors and the City Council? (130)

District 7 encompasses many county islands which necessitates a collaborative relationship between the County and City in order to meet the needs of residents. There have been many instances where resident's requests to do road repair, for instance, have gone unresolved because of the jurisdictional boundaries between the County and City. Cultivating a productive relationship means that I, as a representative for my constituents, make efforts to establish rapport and respect with the Board of Supervisors. In this instance it also requires that we as the City be willing to leverage resources in cooperation with the County to address the road repair needs.

Improved relationships would also allow us to also tackle other regional issues that impact both city and county residents, like homelessness, urban sprawl and create shared solutions.

- 5) Police accountability in Fresno has been a longstanding concern of the progressive community. What exactly do you propose to require greater accountability of the police to the citizenry of Fresno, especially in interactions within neighborhoods of color and the LGBTQ community? (155)

I believe that there are several steps to greater accountability of our police force. First, we need to require greater transparency and that means access to data. We cannot identify areas of improvement if we don't know what our police department is doing. Secondly, I believe strongly in the need to build in civilian leadership or review to create checks and balances. Participation in this oversight committee needs to be representative of the community served. Thirdly, I feel strongly that we need to continue to build the capacity of our law enforcement officers to deal respectfully and accordingly with the community that they are hired to serve and protect. This could entail continued learning around cultural competency and implicit-bias training. I think models of community policing can be beneficial. In addition, I believe in the need to ensure that we are hiring law enforcement officers who are reflective of the community that they are serving.

- 6) Given national attacks on immigrants, what steps should the City Council take to support our vibrant immigrant community, especially our undocumented neighbors and DACA recipients? (152)

As the child of immigrants, I can say unequivocally that the immigrant community wants to feel first and foremost safe and accepted. Continuing to suppress immigrants to the fringe and shadows only serves to allow them to be exploited and abused. Injustices carried out on any one people creates threats to us all. I would like to work to make Fresno part of the Sanctuary City movement. This would allow our immigrant community to be able to report crimes and violence committed against them. A sanctuary status would also help to eliminate barriers which prevent the full participation of our immigrant community in public decision making.

In addition, and although it was previously voted down, I would like to revisit establishing a legal defense fund that is supported by the City. This would go a long way in making sure that those immigrants who are positively contributing in our community are not being unfairly targeted.

I believe the City of Fresno should play a central role in dis-incentivizing immigration raids in our community and I feel strongly that our local law enforcement officers should play no role in enforcing federal policies.

- 7) The city has uneven park and green space distribution. What are two specific ways to address this issue, ensuring more access to green space, particularly in low-income neighborhoods? (200)

District 7 is a park poor neighborhood. Our parks have not been improved and they have not been well maintained. The newer park, Martin Ray Reilly, is just off the freeway and unnecessarily exposes patrons to pollution from passing cars. So, without a doubt we need to ensure greater investments into developing our park and recreational spaces in our community.

Two specific ways to address the lack of adequate parks space in our community include 1) creating a Parks Commission to provide oversight on the operation of our park system. This commission should be reflective of the diversity of our community. This commission would help to ensure that we are not in a position where we have an outdated parks system by ensuring that we complete with the recommendations outlined in the Parks Master Plan. 2) We need to restore park funding to prerecession levels. We also need to establish creative partnership and innovative funding mechanisms that generate resources to further improve our parks. This could be accomplished by ensuring that we draw down all available grants and funding from state and federal resources as well as consider some tax measures which generate funding for our park programs.

- 8) What is your stand on unions and unionization? What will you do to support city workers? (131)

I stand with Labor. To be sure there are a lot mechanisms and policies that we as a city need to establish to better support our workers but here are a few things that I feel important. I believe that we should honor the service of our city workers from police officers to administrative workers. Balancing our budgets should not be on their backs. I also believe that we need to position our local Labor force to be the first employed in the development of new projects and that those jobs should pay prevailing wages. We need to have project labor agreements that are just and fair and we as a city should work to institutionalizing community labor agreements that will ensure we are being fair and consistent in every employment opportunity.

- 9) What is your position on medical marijuana and recreational marijuana dispensaries within the city? (114)

I am in total support of medical marijuana dispensaries. I also believe that we should allow the operation of recreational marijuana dispensaries and that they should be operated responsibly. I am for establishing a legal age of 21 similar to alcohol. I am also in favor of zoning where cannabis will be cultivated, regulating how it is cultivated - meaning that it should be grown as organically as possible without the introduction of chemicals and pesticides. Moreover, I believe that businesses operating within the legal requirement of all business should receive commensurate business deductions. Additionally, we should be allowing and supporting various forms of distribution including mobile delivery, brick and mortar dispensaries and wholesale.

- 10) In conclusion, tell us what you consider to be the top three progressive priorities of your campaign (these can include issues addressed above, or add details not yet addressed in this questionnaire). (286)

I believe strongly in government by the people and one of the most important policies that I will try to advance is making community meetings accessible to the diversity of community residents that we have in Fresno. This means holding meetings in community and not just at city

hall. It means making materials available in the varying language needs of our community. It means providing simultaneous interpretation during meetings so that people can speak in the language that they are most proficient. It also means that we intentionally work to ensure that the diversity of our community is reflected in the representation of the various committees and commissions of the city whether it is the planning commission or the bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee. I am a proponent of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Secondly, I would like to move the city to truly create a more business friendly operation for everyone and not just the well-resourced. The mobile vendor on the street should have just as much promotion and support as Amazon. This means that we create easy on-roads for businesses to start-up and operate. It also means that we equitably operate the fees for permitting businesses.

Thirdly, I would like to ensure that we consider the importance of health and move forward a health in all policies approach in our local government. This is about ensuring that we do not create policies, systems and environmental challenges that continue to unfairly disadvantage some groups over others.

Finally, I want to add that I believe in the importance of supporting other progressive candidates, especially women and people of color and other underrepresented groups because we need progressives in office to move forward progressive policies locally and regionally.

Thank you so much for your time and energy in completing this questionnaire. Your answers will be distributed to our members prior to our March endorsement meeting through the CVPPAC Web site.