

1. Are you a member of the Rural Caucus? Have you been a past member? What caucuses have you joined in the past?

Yes, I have been a member of the Rural Caucus, and I will be again this year. I have been a member of all the caucuses in the course of my prior campaign for Chair in 2017.

2. Have you ever attended a Rural Caucus meeting (not as a candidate)?

Yes. I brought Tulsi Gabbard to the Rural Caucus meeting at the 2018 Convention.

3. Have you ever lived in a rural area in California?

Throughout my youth I lived all over the USA, including in rural areas. While I haven't lived in a rural area in California, I have experience training, supporting, and fundraising for rural candidates.

4. What are your experiences with rural California voters- specifically what races, organizing; coalitions have you been involved in?

I have trained Democratic Women from rural communities to run for office. I grew the Emerge CA program to include a Central Valley contingent because I know that our rural Californian communities have specific needs and a different political climate than their urban and suburban counterparts. In 2018, I visited Nevada County to campaign for Hilary Hodge and to support her in her race for Supervisor.

5. What is your experience with fundraising in rural areas?

We know that rural California politics is largely dominated by Republicans. In many races, especially at the local level, the ballot is non-partisan; yet, in reality, both political parties are involved. Small dollar donations from city centers can and do make a huge difference. In order to build a Democratic bench in purple and red counties, we must support our rural County Central Committees. I have been a featured speaker at, and supporter of, rural County Party fundraisers. For example, I am a platinum sponsor of Butte County's 2019 Chavez-King dinner. Although median income in rural California is half of what it is in cosmopolitan areas, the cost of running a campaign does not scale accordingly. As Chair, I will be committed to empowering rural candidates and Central Committees to increase their local fundraising capacity, as well as enabling financial support of purple and red counties by blue counties. A little support can go a long way.

6. What is your fundraising plan for Election 2020 and what portion of those funds would be allocated to the rural districts?

With limited time remaining before 2020, small dollar donor acquisition is highly unlikely as there is not sufficient time to develop and implement a robust and reliable stream of funding. The majority of funding for 2020 will need to be secured through individual major donors with the capacity to give. Once the funds are raised, resources should be utilized to support coordinated grassroots efforts facilitated by a paid organizer position that will be dedicated specifically to rural California. Implementing a precinct captain program for rural communities with well-funded early training is key to our success in 2020 – at the local level as well as in the upper echelons of government. In many cases, our rural city councils, commissioners, and Supervisors run unopposed when there are qualified Democratic challengers who don't step up because they lack the knowledge to run a campaign. We need to train Democratic candidates to run for ALL offices in every corner of California.

7. How can you make the party more accessible for rural delegates and activists?

We need to reconsider our tradition of hosting CDP conventions in some of the most expensive tourist areas in California. Creativity can alleviate logistical concerns, such as looking at college campuses, fairgrounds, and other non-traditional locations that can accommodate our numbers. I am committed to holding at least one upcoming E-Board meeting in a rural California community, and in regions where union facilities are few and far between, I will use the tools available to me as chair to ensure that the California Democratic Party works with UNITE HERE and local entities to empower rural hospitality workers to organize and unionize for fair wages and labor rights. We also need to offer financial assistance for delegates who are directly impacted by a lack of affordable and reasonable transportation options from rural areas. Any investment we make in ensuring underrepresented voices get a seat at the table will pay off tenfold in the quality of our discussions and decision-making.

Once we secure broadband for every rural area in California, we may be able to look to technology to modernize access and ease the travel burden for all delegates.

8. How will you lead the party, substantiating to voters that rural California is a priority?

We know from voter registration that rural Democrats feel left out of California's dream. Despite Democrats holding every statewide constitutional office, as well as a supermajority in the state legislature, rural Californians are far more likely to register as Republican or No Party Preference because they feel left out of Sacramento's Democratic equation. We cannot continue to let Sacramento and large urban areas dictate policies that are good for cities but bad for rural CA.

9. How will you help build our base in rural counties?

Our rural Central Committees are the linchpin to continuing to build our base in purple and red counties. Rural Democrats are the best ambassadors to their neighbors, expressing our vision and shared values with an increasing population of people who are choosing to register as No Party Preference. A permanent network of community connections is a far more effective, efficient, and sustainable mechanism for establishing a local Democratic infrastructure and ensuring Democratic victories than parachuting organizers in from the big cities just prior to elections.

A little support will go a long way. Rural DCC and Chartered Club leadership and delegates report that they would like help in identifying funding to pay for the services of professional treasurers. They would like additional training in navigating the Party structure, filing paperwork, organizing, and helping to manage their data.

10. What plans do you have for outreach heading into the 2020 election to help Democrats win in rural communities up and down the ballot?

In the past, the CDP has only been willing to help via media purchases, such as door hangers, mailers, and TV ads. In the future, we need to invest in local community organizing capability. People, not advertisements, win votes in local elections.

Local organizers who maintain community relationships between election cycles can help us build out Democratic registration and participation by acting as ambassadors to potential voters. They can help potential candidates seek leadership opportunities before they declare to run. As Chair, I will not lose focus on supporting local DCCs, local organizers, and candidates in rural communities.

11. What are your plans for communications and rural specific messaging?

As Chair, I would like to work with the Rural Caucus to ensure that our Party's messaging does not exclude the needs and interests of rural Democrats. I will rely on you to inform and educate our leadership on the needs and concerns of the rural constituencies that you represent, and to make sure that our message is inclusive and compelling to rural Dems.

12. Will you commit CDP funds for training, GOTV and electioneering in rural California?

In a word, yes.

13. Do you support the concept of the Governor's proposed Clean and Affordable Drinking Water Fund? Already several State Senators have said they will not vote for anything resembling a tax. What can the Party do to press our electeds to fulfill the mandate of clean drinking water for all Californians?

Clean water as a right should not be a contentious issue within the California Democratic Party. Like Flint Michigan being left to suffer for years after water contamination was proven, our rural communities in the Central Valley and throughout California drink and cook with toxic and carcinogenic water. One of the key roles of our CDP Chair is to hold electeds accountable.

With respect to water policy and funding, Californians are forced to either impose a fee-based solution or can seek a bond like in 2018, which would need to cater to agricultural industries and large municipal interests, neither of which address the problem without environmental and consumer impact. All the while, people are still drinking dangerous water. There is no perfect solution, and Californians will have to decide whether a more broad bond-based approach that benefits most (and some undeservingly so) is preferable to a targeted fee that places the burden on individual consumers. Neither is ideal, but I favor the solution that most quickly addresses the problem with the least impact to our environment. It's easy to wait for the right answer when your water is safe to drink.

14. In 2020, 24 Water Districts will elect new, or re-elect existing, Board Members. How will you inspire/encourage/support Democrats to run for these seats?

It is critical that we encourage Democrats to run for Water Board seats. I have nearly a decade's worth of experience training candidates to run for office up and down the ballot. To date, the CDP has done a poor job of investing in the local organizing structures that educate, recruit, and support candidates for positions like the Water Board. I am committed to investing in people and shoring up our capacity to support candidates in local races.

15. How can the Party help achieve broadband equity and influence the stakeholders to invest in broadband in our rural counties? Would you make this issue a priority and support the efforts of the Rural Caucus?

Lack of broadband in rural areas creates a multitude of inequities, including limited access to healthcare, education, and entrepreneurial opportunities. The Rural Caucus is at the forefront of this issue, and I am happy to aid and assist the Caucus in their efforts to hold telecom companies accountable for their promises to invest in broadband across California.

16. It is very disconcerting that the only "creditors" so far left out in the wind in the PG&E bankruptcy proceedings are the fire victims. How do you feel about the State of California taking over PG&E? Do you support the PG&E Resolution and Legislation co-authored by Lowell Young, Glenn Glazer, and Peter Leinau?

I believe that utilities should be held in the public interest, and absolutely support the resolution.

17. What are your plans for the Party to combat gerrymandered rural districts?

It's critical that we have a seat at the table when these decisions are made at all levels. To my knowledge, the only districts that remain gerrymandered in California are at the local levels, like boards of supervisors, school districts, and other municipal seats that run at-large elections. However, the California Citizens Redistricting Commission has failed to apply (in rural areas) their one mandate to map partisan districts according to "communities of interest."

The CDP must support community activists' work to better educate the Commission's members about their rural communities and present to them mapping regarding commerce and diversity. For example, AD 5 has nine rural counties that are mostly in the Sierra foothills. The northern tip of the district starts in South Lake Tahoe and extends south to Chowchilla in the Central Valley. Yosemite National Park is wide swath of wilderness, not a community of interest. The communities of South Lake Tahoe have little in common with the communities of the western Central Valley of Madera County. The distances are vast, and yet the Commission doesn't see the divide, only geography.

18. What do you think the CA Democratic party can do to advocate for rural economies and ensure that rural concerns and interests are included in policy decisions?

The best way to ensure that rural concerns are considered when policy decisions are made is to ensure that rural leaders have a seat at the table. We need strong voices advocating for broadband, access to healthcare in rural areas, and ecologically sound approaches to addressing wildfire prevention and water security. I commit to hearing and amplifying the voices of rural leadership within our party.

19. In what order would you place these rural priorities: health care, affordable housing, education, jobs, immigration, homelessness, poverty, fire resiliency, and infrastructure?

When we are fighting cancer without adequate healthcare, fire resiliency is important, but doesn't necessarily come to mind. When our home has been burnt to the ground, education inequality may not be our top priority. All of these issues impact people in rural communities and they all must be addressed systemically and systematically in order to improve the lives of rural citizens. While we cannot prioritize all policy goals simultaneously, we must get out of the scarcity mindset. Not only do we have a moral responsibility to address all of these issues now, we have the capacity if we prioritize people over profits.

20. How would you help bridge the urban-rural divide?

A strong rural Democratic Party in California can show how we can bridge the divide across the rest of the US. Rural Democrats share the same core values as their urban counterparts, but they are impacted by all of the issues listed in question #19 in starkly different ways. Therefore, their priorities reflect these differences.

One-third of rural California voters are now registered as No Party Preference. They feel neglected by both the Republican and Democratic parties. Some are even afraid to join the Democratic Party because they fear losing their jobs or (if small business owners) customers. Investment in people and local organizing capacity will enable our County Committees to reach out and connect with voters on shared concerns and values, allowing us to build our base and enabling us to win elections in these areas. Rural California boasts some of the most progressive and policy astute Democrats in our Party – articulating the mantra that progressive policies benefit rural Californians. It's time to promote and support these leaders because they are the mechanisms and tools we need to bridge that divide.