

Rural Caucus questionnaire

A road map is provided by the Rural Platform of the California Democratic Party. And, while we understand they do not speak for the Party and cannot make pledges, here is the questionnaire we sent out:

- 1. Are you a member of the Rural Caucus. Have you been a past member?**
Yes, I recently joined the Rural Caucus and all the CDP caucuses.
- 2. Have you ever attended a Rural Caucus meeting (not as a candidate)?**
I have not attended a Rural Caucus meeting. Several of my supporters from rural communities have been to meetings and have shared their insights and ideas with me.
- 3. Have you ever lived in a rural area in California?** No. I grew up in Fort Worth, Texas. I attended Austin College in Sherman, Texas – a community of approximately 30K residents.
- 4. What are your experiences with rural California voters- specifically what races, organizing, coalitions have you been involved in?**

I recently visited all 58 counties in our state (in 58 days!). Through this recent travel, I have learned that our rural communities and regions are not monolithic. I have enjoying listening and learning about the concerns and struggles in some of our rural areas. In the Central Valley, there are concerns about clean and safe water, healthcare, immigration and educational opportunities. In our rural areas in the far North, concerns are much different, and our politics can be very challenging for Democrats in Republican dominated regions.

In 2018, I was proud to play a central role in the successful campaign to elect Katie Hill to Congress. The Antelope Valley is in many ways a reflection of the State – a combination of both urban and rural communities. The campaign gave me a very real understanding of the need to show up and listen to rural communities and then act to address their needs.

- 5. The party relies on fundraising to get programs into traditionally non-targeted races, what is your experience with fund raising? Have you raised money in rural areas?**

I have a strong fundraising background through my leadership position as President of the the LA County Federation of Labor. I have raised money for labor-endorsed candidates and ballot measures that we have supported. I have also worked on coalitions for housing, transportation and clean water measures and have substantial experience raising funds for these efforts. Over the years, I have built relationships with our statewide labor unions, partners and foundations and believe I can be a strong ally for our rural communities and help raise funds to register voters, get-out-the-vote and support Democratic candidates.

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

I have already announced a campaign to hold Trump enablers Kevin McCarthy and Devin Nunes accountable in the Central Valley in 2020. This effort is not only protect and preserve the gains of 2018, but to also begin to lay the groundwork to build upon those gains in 2020 and beyond. Through my own campaign, I was proud to invest more than \$30K into this effort through 3 County Committees (Fresno, Kern, and Tulare) and hope to do more soon.

Further, our County Committees, Democratic Clubs, and grassroots organizations must be stronger than ever before and we must give grassroots leaders the tools they need and want to compete year-round at every level of the ballot. I will hire a high-caliber Director of Training and Development in the first 100 days with the appropriate team to follow. Through a variety of tailored training methods and venues, the team will assist grassroots leaders with: (1) organizational leadership, management, and fundraising, (2) local candidate recruitment and development; and (3) program development to include, but not limited to, voter registration, phone and walk programs, and social/digital media support.

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

First, it is too expensive for many Delegates to participate in their Party. Annual dues. Convention fees. Caucus dues. Transportation costs. Hotel costs. Food costs. It all adds up. We should, however, acknowledge the steps that have been taken to defray costs through various waivers programs. In fact, we must do more to publicize these options. But, we must continue to reduce cost barriers for students, seniors, and workers in low wage jobs – the Californians we are striving to uplift. I will review the direct costs to Delegates, commit to an immediate 25% reduction through either a reduction in dues/fees or a Party scholarship program, and provide a progress report at the August 2019 Executive Board Meeting.

The Party's Conventions and Executive Boards are too often in our State's urban centers, while little attention is given to rural parts of the State. While legitimate reasons such as transportation accessibility and the costs or availability of union accommodations are often cited, every Democrat in every corner of the State counts. So, I will announce plans to bring an Executive Board meeting to a rural community – likely in the Central Valley – in the first 18 months as Chair.

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

I have been proud to travel to all 58 counties in the course of this campaign. To continue the connection with every part of our Party, I will personally visit Delegates in all 58 counties every year I serve as Chair. In addition, I will commit to ensuring that leaders from rural parts of the state are a part of the Party's standing committees.

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

I will hire a high-caliber Director of Training and Development in the first 100 days with the appropriate team to follow. Through a variety of tailored training methods and venues, the team will assist grassroots leaders with: (1) organizational leadership, management, and fundraising, (2) local candidate recruitment and development; and (3) program development to include, but not limited to, voter registration, phone and walk programs, and social/digital media support.

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

As previously stated, I have already announced an effort to register voters and hold Trump enablers Kevin McCarthy and Devin Nunes accountable in the Central Valley in 2020. This effort is not only protect and preserve the gains of 2018, but to also begin to lay the groundwork to build upon those gains in 2020 and beyond. Through my own campaign, I was proud to invest more than \$30K into this effort through 3 County Committees (Fresno, Kern, and Tulare) and hope to do more soon.

Also, through our Training and Development Department, we support County Committees, Democratic Clubs, and grassroots organizations to build year-round programs to win local races up and down the ballot – County Supervisor, City Council, School Board, Water Board.

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

After almost 15 years of leading campaigns, I have learned that a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter approach to messaging does not work. And for our rural specific–areas, the messaging and approach will have to come from grassroots leaders in rural communities. I will listen and follow their lead to ensure we get the right message to the right voters in the right manner at the right time. It’s really the only way.

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

Yes. See above.

12. Do you support the concept of the Governor’s proposed Clean and Affordable Drinking Water Fund?

I support the necessary steps – specifically tools to acquire the appropriate funding – to ensure that every Californian has clean drinking water. Anything less is unacceptable.

13. 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?

Through our Training and Development Department, we can train County Committees and others to recruit and elect the right candidates to run for these important seats.

- 14. 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?**

In the 21st Century, access to broadband technology in rural communities is critical. We should move beyond the digital divide. I will work with appropriate stakeholders to raise this issue and bring attention to this issue.

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?

I support holding PG&E accountable for any/all negligence in a way that protects the workers, ratepayers, and taxpayers.

- 15. What are your plans for the Party to combat gerrymandered rural districts?**

Our Party should proactively engage in the process to ensure that the voices of 9M Democrats are a part of the conversation on what compromises the all-important “community of interest” determination. I have a documented track record of leading those efforts.

- 16. What do you think the California Democratic Party can do to advocate for rural economies and ensure that rural concerns and interests are included in policy decisions?**

First, we should uplift the voices of leaders within the Rural Caucus. Second, we can ensure that leaders from rural communities are a part of our standing committees. Finally, I will ensure that I keep a close connection to rural communities – specifically by visiting and listening to them every year that I am Chair.

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

While all of them are important, I would apply the following ranking: (1) jobs and poverty, (2) fire resiliency and infrastructure, (3) affordable housing and healthcare, and (4) education, homelessness, and immigration.

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

I am dedicated to reminding our Party of the need for a flexibility in our message to Democrats that works in both urban and rural parts of the State. I am committed to showing up and

listening to rural communities and ensure those voices are at the tables where the decisions are being made.