



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

I have been a member of many caucuses over the years, including Labor, where I served as Vice Chair, the African American and Progressive Caucuses.

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

Yes, as both Secretary and Vice-Chair of the California Democratic Party.

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

While I haven't lived in a rural area directly, I have been Chair of the Santa Barbara County Democratic Party, which has many heavily rural communities. I have worked closely with the central committee on rural issues to ensure that these communities are equitably represented.

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

Anyone who has made the drive from Santa Barbara in the Southeast portion of the County to Santa Maria in the Northwest could tell you about the rural character of Santa Barbara County. As Chair of the Santa Barbara County Democratic Party, it was my job to help rural Democrats become politically organized and win races in their local communities. Issues around unequal access to County resources, conservative "old boy" networks running City politics, and the difficulty of holding elected officials accountable are all familiar to me. That experience is priceless.

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

As Chair of the Santa Barbara County Democratic Party, it was also my job to help local Democratic Clubs raise funds for their clubs. It is not easy for rural clubs and rural county parties to raise money, and I believe that the California Democratic Party chair should understand the investment that is required. In my experience, the best model has been to provide electoral resources like staff time, materials, database access and training, directly to our clubs in rural areas. That frees them up to focus on fundraising for their own local infrastructure and year-round program. It's also about changing the CDP to start targeting local races in rural and suburban areas. The State Party doesn't currently do that, relying almost exclusively on the DCCC and our Legislative leadership to target races. Under my leadership, the CDP will supplement these Congressional and Legislative targets with a number of strategic county-level races in diverse parts of the State, including rural Counties. This has to be more than just lip service; elections in rural areas are vitally important. County supervisors, water board elections, and city council elections have profound impacts on the daily lives of people in rural areas, and

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the Democratic Party must be present and visible.

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

As stated above, the vast majority of funds that are deployed by the CDP in election cycles are raised by the DCCC and Legislative caucuses. While this is not my preferred system, it is unlikely to change overnight or in time for 2020. My plan is to raise independent money from small donors and Progressive partners to build coordinated campaigns around key local races, where we are electing a first Democrat in a GOP-dominated County, or flipping Partisan control, for example. We will use these campaigns to attract donors interested in making long-term investments in turning “red” areas “blue” by electing local politicians, training activists and getting more new and young people plugged into professional campaign positions.

As someone who has come up from the grassroots of the Party, I am wary of over-promising top-down money, nor do I believe that fundraising power should be invested primarily in the Chair. I believe that we need to correct the under-funding of organizing in rural areas in a systematic, grounded way that builds political power for local Parties and clubs. In my experience, that is the best way to push culture change in an organization, and a way to ensure that rural areas are empowered in the long term regardless of administration turnover

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

I’m running for chair because our party is not easily accessible to many people, including rural communities. We must reform our party infrastructure to increase access, and build a two-way organizing pipeline between rural county parties and the state party.

From a reform perspective, I believe we need to increase access to ADEMS so that people in rural areas can have a broader chance to participate. This includes holding ADEMs in multiple locations in assembly districts, increasing resources available for conveners, and even changing the voting methodology to be able to ensure wider participation. My commitment is to make sure that rural Democrats are heavily involved in finding solutions, because as the former Chair of a county with some geographically large Assembly Districts, I understand these concerns personally.

I also understand that oftentimes, rural communities are economically disadvantaged, and that the costs of participating in our party’s events is too high. We have to be creative to help ensure that cost does not serve as a barrier to participation. Most statewide organizations are structured in such a way that local chapters fund expenses for delegates participating at a higher level. Neither our Central Committees nor ADEMs,

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which are no longer formal committees within the CDP, are equipped to serve this role. We also have a Democratic commitment to use unionized facilities, which raises our costs. I support the creation of a solidarity fund that can be used to supply grants for travel expenses for Convention and Executive Board meetings. I will also encourage Regional Directors to work more closely with clubs and Central Committees to increase the frequency and improve the content of regional meetings that are more accessible to participants and don't include overnight stay.

Lastly, rural areas are often comprised of lower-income Latinx and other immigrant communities, and I believe our outreach strategy must be accessible to them. That's why I want to ensure the party produces its materials in a variety of languages—because that outreach will help communities throughout California, including our Latinx communities and our Asian immigrant communities in rural areas. Relatedly, we must remove the discriminatory rules excluding non-citizens and under-18's from holding Party office.

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

I believe we have to move a concrete agenda forward, not just work on numbers on a scoreboard. To me, that means that no matter how many Democrats we elect, we're not doing our job if that means that the lives of Californians everywhere aren't improving. Rural voters are important not just because they are often the key constituencies in seats we have yet to flip blue—they're important because they're people whose concerns are less represented in California politics, and they deserve to be heard in our party. Rural constituents are on the front lines of the fight for our environmental values, representation in moving cities and school boards to districts, clean water access, agricultural and labor equity, and access to infrastructure like broadband and safe roads.

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

I want to be the organizer-in-chief of the California Democratic Party, and that means building effective, substantive lines of communication between the state party and its affiliates in rural counties and their local Democratic clubs. I believe that the institutions that will be best equipped to organize our party will be the ones actually on the ground, doing the work, and aware of local concerns. I oppose top-down attempts to avoid the hard work of supporting and growing the County party organizations.

Providing training opportunities, training curriculum, online tools, written material and staff support for County Parties will be a hallmark of my Chairship. We all know what the best practices are- year-round voter outreach and leadership development. My proposal of shifting to issue and legislative advocacy in between elections dovetails perfectly with

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rural organizing, encouraging and supporting activists to engage with voters on -issues- over a long term, building relationships and engaging potential community leaders.

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?

I want to make sure that county parties have the resources they need to be able to publicize their own endorsements at the local level for elections. The CDP can be responsible for raising the resources necessary to advocate for endorsements for constitutional offices and legislative seats, but one of the opportunities we have to make the most difference is in local, supposedly “nonpartisan” races where ideology actually really matters. Furthermore, we must focus on our farm teams- building up grassroots candidates who truly represent their communities. I am proud of the tough negotiating I did as chair of the Santa Barbara Central Committee to ensure that local organizers would be hired to lead canvassing operations and require all candidates to be included in GOTV, not just top ticket, big money races. As Chair I will continue to negotiate with powerful organizations on behalf of our local races and candidates.

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

I want to empower caucuses to be more of a factor by giving them more staff support and online tools. Caucuses should be effective bridges to their communities of interest, and should also be organizing platforms to help the party make its decisions on issues and messaging. I believe the Rural Caucus should be directly involved in working with leadership and staff to develop messaging and communicate around issues relevant to rural voters.

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

Yes, for both local and nonpartisan races.

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?

Access to clean drinking water is a major crisis for many communities, but especially rural communities in the Central Valley. Regardless of whether the crisis is addressed through a dedicated tax or using existing reserve funds, it needs to be addressed, and the Democratic Party should express that sentiment through existing processes and then use our advocacy capacity to inform the legislature of our feelings.

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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?

Water District politics have long been important in Santa Barbara. Our local Party has worked hard to recruit progressives to run in these races, supporting them heavily in our coordinated campaigns.

Ultimately, because I believe in bottom-up politics, my focus will be on supporting a local process of candidate recruitment. Three specific things the CDP can bring to this effort are:

- **Ensuring there is a strong, party-centered coordinated campaign that water board and other local candidate campaigns can plug into to save costs and maximize the impact of volunteer voter outreach.**
- **Convening existing Democratic elected officials under the Party umbrella to share policy ideas and help prepare potential candidates on the issues.**
- **Providing curriculum and staff for training candidates in campaign nuts and bolts.**

This is also an important part of the two-way organizing strategy I want to build between the state party and the county parties—to help county parties build the capacity and the infrastructure to identify, recruit, endorse, and help elect more and better Dems.

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?

I believe that access to high-speed internet should be a right for all Californians, and one of the things we must do is hold major telecommunications corporations accountable to their promises. Before the Trump tax cuts were passed, companies like AT&T promised to use their windfalls from the tax cuts to invest in rural broadband infrastructure and close the digital divide.

I believe we need to hold telecom companies accountable to their promises, and encourage them to live up to their commitments, whether that's through legislation or other means. Either way, the Democratic Party must be on record, unequivocally, about the need to support the deployment of broadband everywhere.

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? (See attached)

I support the resolution's goal of transitioning PG&E to a public utility accountable to

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ratepayers and the victims of their own negligence. I generally favor public utilities and services over privatization.

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

Thankfully, the Citizens Redistricting Commission has a lengthy input process whereby individuals, organizations and communities can provide input regarding how to draw districts that fit with the Commission's objectives.

In both local redistricting (for County Supervisor, City Council, etc) and legislative district changes, we have to be careful. Having been through this process as a Party Leader, I've seen how the press and others twist any proposals about maps from official Democratic groups as attempts at undue influence. It may be more effective to have our activists wearing other "hats" while intervening in the discussions over maps.

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?

Right now, our platform on rural communities says that we encourage elected official to ask themselves about the impact of any new policies on rural California, and make sure it will work for people in rural areas. But we can't just ask our elected officials to do that—we have to do that. When we talk about health care, we need to make sure we're not just talking about whether you can afford to go to a doctor or a hospital—we need to make sure we're talking about whether there's even a doctor or a hospital in your community at all. When we talk about technology policies we can't just talk about net neutrality—we have to talk about whether there's internet access in every community. We can't just talk about infrastructure in terms of rail and public transportation—we have to talk about flood control and water storage. It requires being proactive to address the concerns or rural voters, rather than treating them as an afterthought.

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

In the California Democratic Party, it's our job not to prioritize. It's our job to accomplish everything that needs doing. These are all essential needs, any one of which can seriously impact a rural family's quality of life.

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

I believe that a commitment to organizing and advocacy will help bridge the divide by making all aspects of our Democratic Party work on issues of importance to everyone, including rural voters. I will ensure there is rural representation on committees and do

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what I can to empower and uplift rural Californians, who have so long been under-represented in our decision making processes.

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