

Rent Board Convention Questions 2016

1. Tell us something about yourself and why you have decided to consider running for Rent Stabilization Board Commissioner.

I first ran for the Berkeley Rent Board out of my own deeply rooted experiences as an immigrant and a nearly life-long renter. A sense of place started for me with a roof over my head. At several times in my life, my family and I had to make hard choices about moving away from the community in which we were hoping to settle. Each time – including a time in Berkeley when I lost the roof over my head in the middle of my final college semester – it felt like being uprooted and having to find a new community all over again. Out of these experiences came a strong sense of empathy with those who are a hair away of losing their own home and being displaced from this special city. I felt that everyone in Berkeley deserves a safe, affordable, and habitable home.

In my four years on the Rent Board, I successfully worked to pass a Relocation Ordinance with vastly improved tenant protections, expand the Board's education initiatives for tenants and property owners alike, and the creation of Phase II of Berkeley's Soft Story Ordinance (as well as assistance with similar efforts in Oakland). In my four years away from the Rent Board, I still continued my advocacy on these and other issues as Concilmember Max Anderson's appointee to the Housing Advisory Commission and Councilmember Jesse Arreguin's appointee to the Zoning Adjustments Board, on both of which I currently serve as Vice Chair. The housing crisis that was felt even four years ago has become an unprecedented housing emergency, with a never before seen pressure by developers to take over older housing stock, demolish or flip buildings, and rent or sell them to the ever-increasing cadre of clients who are able to pay for top dollar for it. The Zoning Adjustments Board was never supposed to be the last line of defense for stopping unvarnished and, at times, illegal demolition. Unfortunately, it fell to me to, on three separate occasions, stop staff-recommended proposals to demolish rent-controlled housing stock by reminding a slim majority of my colleagues that we in Berkeley still have strict zoning regulations that are in place to protect tenants from precisely these kind of deplorable practices.

The night after I turn this questionnaire promises to mark a momentous sign of progress, towards which I have been working for the last five years through my positions on the Housing Advisory Commission, Sierra Club (as the San Francisco Bay Chapter Vice Chair), East Bay Housing Organizations (as an active member of the Berkeley subcommittee), and the Berkeley Tenants Union (as a Steering Committee Member), when the majority of the City Council appears poised to double the percentage of inclusionary housing that is affordable to low-income (80% Area Median Income or below) households and increase the Affordable Housing Mitigation Fee to, at least, \$30,000 per unit at issuance of first construction document (though I am continuing to fight for a higher amount).

I have assisted dozens of tenants, property owners, and homeowners with the various housing, zoning, and land use challenges that they have encountered and, in many of these instances, achieve instant results. I may not have been physically on the Rent Board dais since 2012, but have closely followed the good work of the Rent Board and frequently communicated with its elected commissioners and staff. Our collective work on these issues is not yet done. This is why a number of members of the community whose counsel I trust and respect have reached out to me over the last few years and asked me to consider running again for the Rent Board. After much soul-searching – and of course the stamp of approval from my partner, who has veto powers over any decision to run – I am in! I come before you humbly requesting your support so that, together, we can finish what we started eight years ago.

2. How much time are you able to devote to the campaign? A contested campaign can consume 20 hours a week of your time until the election. As a Commissioner, you'll be attending one lengthy evening board meeting a month and a minimum of two daytime committee meetings (plus

preparation time!) Are your hours flexible? Are late meetings a problem? Can you attend daytime meetings?

In my four years on the Rent Board, I had a perfect attendance record of every Rent Board meeting, participated on four committees, and spend an additional 2-15 hours per week on non-committee Rent Board business (e.g. weekly meetings with my interns who assisted me with Rent Board duties and stakeholders such as the Renters Legal Assistance, ASUC External Affairs Office, and CalPIRG, personal affordable housing initiatives and advocacy efforts, and research). In addition, I have frequently had to stay past 11pm at the Zoning Adjustments Board and City Council meetings during discussion of items critical to the work of the Rent Board or Housing Advisory Commission. My work schedule is fairly lenient and allows for telework and flexible day off opportunities, with reasonable notice. Participating in daytime and nighttime meetings has never been a problem for me.

The same goes for campaigning. Those who have ever walked precincts with me know that I don't quit till the job is done. In anticipation of possibly being a candidate in a contest election, I am in the process of turning over the day-to-day operations of my campaign consulting practice to my business partner so that I can fully and singularly focus on returning all nine seats on the Rent Board to progressive control.

3. What experience have you had with Berkeley's rent control ordinance, the Rent Board's staff, or the elected Board?

As a former Rent Board Commissioner and Chair of its Budget and Personnel Committee, I spent four years helping defend, interpret, and enforce the Rent Ordinance. Over this period of time, I developed a close and productive working relationship with our staff and our elected Board. Since 2008, I introduced several dozen items – including policy suggestions, amendments to ordinances and enforceable resolutions, and symbolic resolutions – that have passed the Board (many of them unanimously). I have at times been asked to provide public comment to the Berkeley City Council or other stakeholders that reflected the Board position, and have used this to help effectively shepherd Phase II of the Soft Story Ordinance, Relocation Ordinance, Condominium Conversion Ordinance, an increase in funding to the Rental Housing Safety Program, current Board policy on fraternities, and many others to final adoption. While I have consistently voted in a way that reflects my strong beliefs in the importance of the Rent Board, tenant protections, and affordable housing, I have a working style that is collaborative and focuses on issues rather than personalities.

Since leaving the Berkeley Rent Board, I have continued to regularly meet with stakeholders on both sides of the rent control issue (e.g. Berkeley Tenants Union Steering Committee members, Housing Advisory Commission members of all persuasions, and members of and staff affiliated with the Berkeley Property Owners Association). Through candor about our respective beliefs but a commitment to finding a win-win solution whenever possible, I have helped broker a number of agreements, including several that have appeared before the City Council over the last few years – tenant protections and affordable housing mitigations for owners of fire-damaged buildings who were determined to be at fault; including a provision to help property owners finance seismic retrofits as well as energy upgrades in the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program that the City of Berkeley might imminently enter; and granting Planning Staff administrative powers to place a moratorium on granting new permits to applicants who have yet to abate nuisances or code violations on one more existing properties they own). I look forward to continuing the constructive and effective work that we have accomplished together.

4. Tell us about at least three issues that you consider important to tenants in Berkeley.

An effective soft-story ordinance and tenant protections in disasters. Many rent-controlled buildings in Berkeley are incapable of withstanding a magnitude 6.7 or higher earthquake, of the sort that is expected to occur along the Hayward Fault in the next 20 years. Soft-story buildings, many of which are concentrated

around the south side of the UC Berkeley campus, pose an additional risk of total collapse in the event of seismic activity. Both of these facts, if unresolved, will lead to gruesome results when the next “big one” wreaks its havoc on the Bay Area. To minimize the impacts on lives and livelihood, I have been working with the Housing Advisory Commission, Fire and Disaster Preparedness Commission, and the City Council to push for a strong ordinance that would begin to enforce Phase I (engineering study and tenant notification) and pass Phase II (mandatory seismic retrofitting) of the Soft-Story Ordinance, at the minimal feasible cost to all parties, particularly the tenants. I have worked on this issue both through my advocacy on the Rent Board and in my personal capacity as an elected official. Through the latter, I have organized three Seismic Days of Action, in which a group of neighbors and student leaders knocked on doors of buildings whose landlords are still listed as not in compliance with the 2005 law that enacted Phase I of the Soft-Story Ordinance. We provided information to these tenants on actions they can take as well as helpful disaster preparedness information (in partnership with organizations like the Berkeley Disaster Preparedness Network, ASUC, Renters Legal Assistance, and CalPIRG). These efforts to educate tenants in combination with using media to help our cause has led to anecdotal and physical evidence that landlords, perhaps not wishing to have their noncompliance be exposed further, have begun to implement signage if their apartment building is seismically unsafe. Tired of being called out for not doing enough, the City of Berkeley finally hired a full-time project manager who, in turn, worked with us on the unanimous passage of Phase II of the Soft-Story Ordinance through the City Council in 2013. I have fought vigorously and successfully to urge the Housing Advisory Commission to recommend and the City Council to pass a stronger Relocation Ordinance, which requires landlords to provide financial to tenants in situations where the landlord needs to relocate them while conducting major capital improvements or rehabilitation, for as long as the work continues. When protections were weakened by city staff in response to the certain detractors’ concerns, I worked to insert them back in. Unfortunately, the plight of tenants affected in two Berkeley fires, in 2011 and 2012, and, more recently, last year, demonstrated that more needs to be done. I am currently pushing to insert language into the Demolition Ordinance or another mechanism that would require that the landlord provide reasonable financial compensation for lost property to their tenants in the event that a fire damages their property beyond repair, if the tenant was not at fault. This compensation could come out of the landlord’s insurance policy. The Mayor’s Office has been sympathetic to this current gap in protections, and it is now time to translate that stated sympathy into action. An item that I shepherded through the Housing Advisory Commission on this subject has been approved by the Council in 2014, and I helped stop an attempt to walk back from this new policy a few months ago, following winning a narrow 5-4 vote on the Housing Advisory Commission.

Active outreach and education to all Berkeley tenants. Historically, the Rent Board has been on the front lines of educating thousands of Berkeley tenants on their rights and responsibilities and providing legal advice or dispute mediation in the unfortunate events when this becomes necessary. Over the past eight years, I have worked collaboratively with Rent Board commissioners and staff to deploy a set of information tools that are more responsive than ever to the varying levels of familiarity with and interest in the ordinance: easy-to-read postcards, which are sent with more frequency than the tenant newsletters of the past, an increased number of tenant workshops, and a social media policy and electronic outreach. One of the most difficult communities to educate has been the student population, which tends to be transient and alters its makeup once or even twice a year. I began working with the Rent Board on workshops for students even before my election to the Rent Board, when I was the ASUC City Affairs Advisor in 2007- 2008. Since then, I have partnered with Rent Board staff, the Renters Legal Assistance, the ASUC, and even Greek and cooperative housing to organize or participate in workshops targeted to different student audiences and demographics. In my first two years on the Rent Board, I would participate in Calpalooza, UC Berkeley’s annual student fair, and hand out guides to rent control. Following the Rent Board Public Information Unit’s recognition of the importance of this kind of work, the staffing was reconfigured to formalize this effort, which is now done with the full participation of the Rent Board, Renters Legal Assistance, and ASUC.

When I first ran for the Rent Board in 2008, it took me a bit of time to fully “learn the ropes.” To take advantage of the academic reputation that exists around the UC Berkeley campus and create a pipeline for students aspiring to become more involved in crafting Rent Board policies, I began an internship program in 2009. In collaboration with Cal in Local Government, about 20 UC Berkeley students and recent alumni have participated as my interns, many of whom subsequently received college credit and/or a letter of reference upon successful completion. Our weekly Sunday night intern meetings have expanded, becoming clearinghouses of information for and to the student community; the ASUC, Renters Legal Assistance, and occasionally student groups like CalPIRG send a representative to and participate in these meetings, which take place year-round. I have also worked with Rent Board staff to develop its own formal internship program, in which a number of students have participated. Some of these interns have gone on to become chairs of Renters Legal Assistance, be in the final round of the San Francisco City Hall Fellows Program application, or get policy internships in the federal government. You will find a few of them running to become part of the pro-tenant slate!

Effective grass-roots organizing on the local level. While the Rent Board has enforced a set of vital protections for tenants, my experience has been that on issues in which other bodies – such as the City Council – are final stakeholders, it was only through the process of soliciting letters to be written and inviting affected tenants to speak that the policies we advocate for were in fact the ones passed. Should I be selected to be on the slate, I would like to use my next four years to expand the way my colleagues and I connect with tenants at the grass-roots level. As I learned from my work with unions and the Labor Commission, if policy is the vehicle by which positive change is created, human beings are the drivers of this vehicle. A body of tenants, available on demand to show up to meetings and rallies, would help ensure that both the drivers and the vehicles are present, maximizing the likelihood that a desirable outcome will be produced for renters.

5. What is the role of the Rent Board Commissioners? What powers do they have? What changes do you think should be made in how the Rent Board operates?

From its inception in 1980, the mission of the Rent Board has been “to regulate residential rent increases in the City of Berkeley and to protect against unwarranted rent increases and evictions and to provide a fair return to property owners. The Board works to ensure compliance with legal obligations relating to rental housing; and to advance the housing policies of the City with regard to low and fixed income persons, minorities, students, disabled, and the aged.”

The Board has numerous tools available at its disposal to support this mission. The most important powers in its possession its quasi-judicial powers to make determinations in landlord-tenant disputes, the power to provide influence on housing policy to the City Council and other entities in the City of Berkeley, and to educate and outreach to tenants and property owners on their rights and responsibilities. Aside from their authority around regulation of rents, enforcement of the minimum warranty of habitability, promulgation of just-cause eviction protections, and resolution of hearing appeals, Rent Board commissioners have a second power and charge. When they negotiate with due diligence and an understanding of the other stakeholders, they can have a great deal of influence in areas where the Berkeley City Council might be the final decision-making body, such as around seismic retrofitting and the Soft-Story Ordinance, recycling and composting in multi-family units, and the Relocation and Demolition Ordinances.

There are no major policies to which I can point as examples of something that should be tweaked. Historically – and particularly in the last ten years – the Rent Board has provided top-notch customer service to tenants and property owners alike. The policies, as stated before, are faithful to the letter and spirit of the voter-approved, popular Berkeley Rent Ordinance. The only changes in operation I could suggest is to further enhance the professionalism of the Board, such as establishing rules around commissioners’ leaving meetings early for something other than an emergency or civic service conflict, improving the layout and

user-friendliness of the City of Berkeley website (which, in turn, serves the Rent Board), and exploring other entrepreneurial ways to work with the many constituents that the Rent Board serves, including students.

I also strongly support recent efforts by Councilmember Arreguin and the Rent Board to expand policies that attempt to crack down on the creative ways a small minority of property owners have used to evict long-term tenants (often who are on a limited income), which are collectively referred to as “constructive eviction.” The intent is to develop an Anti-Harassment Ordinance to protect tenants, which is patterned after San Francisco and other municipalities. These could be accomplished through a few tweaks of existing Rent Board regulations and most likely will not require amendments to the Rent and Just Cause Eviction Ordinance to be placed on the ballot.

6. (a) How do you feel about affordable housing? (b) What do you think about low-income housing?

(a) Affordable housing is increasingly becoming the one of only solutions to stemming the tide of rent and cost of housing increases in the Bay Area’s white-hot market and of the resultant loss of diversity in the wonderful community that we are so lucky to call our home. I have devoted the last decade of my life to generating additional opportunities for such housing, including my service as Vice Chair of the Housing Advisory Commission and Chair of its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Subcommittee and member of the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) Subcommittee, through which we have allocated tens of millions of dollars into financing new and rehabilitated affordable housing opportunities for low-income individuals and families. I have also led the fight to get the Berkeley City Council to vote for a \$28,000/unit housing mitigation fee in October 2012 (which, unfortunately, was subsequently reduced to \$20,000/unit at the urging of some large developers), to increase this fee level to at least \$34,000/unit following tonight’s City Council meeting, and to create a robust Demolition Ordinance which protects Berkeley’s stock of relatively affordable (though, not necessarily strictly affordable per HUD Guideline Definitions), often rent-controlled housing. My statewide efforts have led to a California Democratic Party endorsement of bills that would have expanded the abilities of California’s cities to provide additional affordable and inclusionary housing, though unfortunately some of these were vetoed by Governor Brown. It is imperative for the Rent Board to continue to work closely with the Housing Advisory Commission and affordable housing stakeholders on these issues of mutual concern.

(b) Low-income housing is a subset of affordable housing that, by HUD definition, is such in which a household earning no more of 80% of the Oakland Metropolitan Area’s Median Income spends no more than 30% of its income on rent. As discussed above, I am currently at the forefront of our collective fight to restore Berkeley’s pre-2009 levels of required inclusionary low-income housing that developers must provide on an otherwise market-rate project to 10% of units being affordable to low-income households (80% Area Median Income (AMI) or below) and an additional 10% of units being affordable to very low-income households (50% AMI or below). I have also formulated suggestions to the City Council to give developers the opportunity to seek an affordability mix that allows for even deeper levels of affordability, such as, for example, extremely low-income (30% AMI or below) units, so long as the aggregate level of affordability across all the affordable units averages to, at most, the equivalent of what is being proposed at tonight’s City Council meeting. Also at tonight’s meeting there are several proposals to incentivize “workforce” or moderate-income housing, which are typically known as housing affordable to households that make between 81% and 140% of the AMI. There is no question that there is a significant jobs-housing imbalance, which affects every part of the socioeconomic ladder. However, it is important, from where I stand, that we hold the line and remind the City Council that the community will only support moderate-income housing *in addition to* and not *in lieu of* a more equitable low-income housing allocation that we have fought so hard to achieve. To maintain Berkeley’s diversity and, indeed, its secret sauce, we must first craft viable policy solutions that benefit those who are in the most dire need of housing, and these are the individuals and families trying to get by on 80% of the AMI or less.

7. The Berkeley Housing element says, "*Ensure that below-market-rate housing is distributed as evenly as possible throughout the community.*" What are the pros and cons of distributing low-income units as parts of new projects, and what are the pros and cons of using set-aside fees from those projects to build mixed low- and medium-income buildings around the city? We want to emphasize that this question is an unsettled area and there are no right or wrong answers.

This is indeed an unsettled area, and my goal is to increase both the inclusionary unit percentage and Affordable Housing Mitigation Fee to a level where they are on par with, at minimum, the level that was found by the 2015 Berkeley Affordable Housing Nexus Study to be "maximally feasible." The pros of distributing lower-income units as parts of new projects include a social integration that some studies show can and do occur when households with multiple socioeconomic levels live in the same building, as well as the potential that exists to place new lower-income units on the market immediately upon the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy. The pros of using set-aside fees from those projects to build mixed low-income buildings (at this time, no federal funding exists to fund medium-income buildings) is that leveraging of funding that has been estimated by experts to be somewhere between 3:1 and 5:1 in their efficiency to succeed in providing new housing. In addition, there may be a social benefit to an affordable housing project's residents if wraparound, employment support, and/or other services and programs are built into the project. However, it takes longer for nonprofit housing developers to leverage all the sources of funding that they receive to a point where predevelopment and, later, development of the project can occur. On the Zoning Adjustments Board, I have supported projects with inclusionary affordable units, particularly when they are built along transit corridors, and have pushed developers (to the extent that I am able, because we currently have an abysmally low floor of 10% affordable units on an otherwise market-rate project) to voluntarily increase the number of such units. I believe that most developers thus far have opted to provide inclusionary units rather than paying the fee into the Housing Trust Fund because of the imbalance between this low floor of 10% (if developers build just 1% more very low-income units on the project, they are entitled to a 35% increase in density, the way the State Density Bonus is laid out) and the current fee of \$28,000/unit (or even the previous, "discounted," fee of \$20,000/unit). Increasing the required inclusionary percentage to 20% (minimum) and the fee to \$34,000/unit (also, minimum) will, I think, make it more likely for the developers to be somewhat cost-indifferent between this decision and thus be in a better position to respond to which of the two strategies the community desires.

8. Is a pro-tenant Rent Board capable of treating both large and small landlords fairly? Explain.

I do not for one minute believe that a pro-tenant Rent Board is inherently unfair to landlords large or small. My observations of the Rent Board at work have given me a great deal of admiration for the equitable fashion in which it attempts to balance the needs of tenants and the wishes of property owners. I myself have on a number of occasions while on the Board, been in a position where I had to vote against a tenant and in favor of a small property owner on a matter being appealed to us.

Historically, the Rent Board has been considerate of the concerns of property owners, and numerous meetings have been initiated by elected officials or Executive Director Kelekian in order to resolve disputes. A real case study we can look at to point this out involves the carefully crafted 2005-vintage rendition of the Condominium Conversion ordinance. After the 2004 decision in *Tom v. San Francisco* prompted Berkeley to lift its restrictions on Tenancies in Common (TIC) conversions, the Berkeley City Council – upon the advice of the Rent Board – allowed up to 100 condominium conversions annually, while strengthening the Just Cause Eviction provisions by prohibiting tenant evictions solely because he or she is unlucky enough to be residing in a unit about to be converted. Opportunities for further compromise were on the table when the Berkeley Property Owners' Association decided to instead pursue the initiative route with measure I. The dismal failure of this measure has brought its proponents back to the negotiating table, and, at this juncture,

the conversion ordinance continues to be reworked in an effort to reach near-parity between the desires of tenants and property owners.

Certainly, it is the responsibility of the Rent Board to examine and reexamine some of its policies to ensure that their true effects still align with their stated outcomes. Certainly, when this is not the case, the policy must be recalibrated. But, so long as the Rent Board continues to do this, no one will ever be able to accurately level the accusation that the Rent Board is remiss in taking into account the interests of property owners.

9. How do you think that rent and eviction controls are related to homelessness? Can the Rent Board have any effect on the homeless situation?

The Rent and Just Cause Eviction Protections Ordinance, to this day, remains the most effective policy in Berkeley to prevent the scourge of eviction and displacement, and to mitigate the impacts to tenants who are paying rent and abiding by all other provisions of their lease when evictions still take place through no fault of their own (e.g. Owner Move-In and Ellis Act evictions). As a key member of the Homeless Task Force, I see firsthand every day how intertwined the issues are of housing and homelessness. The Rent Stabilization Program, coupled with the strong eviction protections that tenants in Berkeley (though, especially in recently years, certain unscrupulous property owners have been taking advantage of even those) may not be able to directly assist those individuals who are just transitioning out of homelessness (units with Section 8 vouchers, which tend to be more attainable to them are exempt from Rent Board registration). However, the program and eviction controls can and do help those who are on the brink of losing their homes by often giving them at least a modicum of stability and predictability in how their rents are raised, as distinct from their counterparts who live in units that are not covered by rent control.

10. What do you consider to be your constituency or base of support? What organizations are you affiliated with? What qualities would you bring to the slate?

I consider my strongest bases of support to come from:

- Students and young professionals, with whom I continue to work in various capacities. I am the recipient of the 2012 Cal Berkeley Democrats Alumnus of the Year Award, the 2012 California Young Democrats Leadership Award, and the 2015 Black Young Democrats of the East Bay Founders' Award. During the 2012 election, I was partly or wholly responsible for securing an endorsement by the Black Young Dems of the East Bay, Cal Berkeley Democrats, East Bay Young Dems, South Alameda County Young Dems, and many leaders within the ASUC, CalPIRG, and the Renters Legal Assistance.

- Labor and unions, stemming from my past experience as Chair of the Berkeley Commission on Labor and continued work on an issue-by-issue basis (most recently to raise Berkeley's minimum wage and support a prevailing wage for trades contracted to work on developments in Berkeley's Downtown and elsewhere). I frequently work together with the leadership of the Alameda County and Contra Costa Central Labor Councils, SEIU Local 1021, Alameda County Building Trades Council, AFSCME Local 57 (primarily on labor equity issues as they relate to transportation), and many others.

- Seniors and people with disabilities, for whose causes I have consistently fought on the Berkeley Rent Board, Housing Advisory Commission, and Zoning Adjustments Board, Sierra Club, and my former board position on the Savo Island Cooperative Board.

- The environmental community, thanks to my proven track record on the Sierra Club and in working to craft policies on sustainability and energy efficiency. In 2012, I opened the door for future ability of the

Sierra Club to endorse candidates for Rent Board by securing their endorsement of the entire Rent Board slate that year.

- Several neighborhood associations and defined community groups (e.g. Berkeley Neighborhoods Council, Friends of Adeline, the Oceanview and other parts of West Berkeley, LeConte, Alcatraz-Ashby, Bateman), as I have been heavily involved in fighting for protections of neighborhoods and Aquatic Park in response to various upzoning initiatives. I have also led the charge to deny several permits in those neighborhood associations by the Zoning Adjustments Board when, in my view, the proposed developments were vastly out-of-scale with the local zoning and would create unmitigatable detriment to neighbors.

- Progressive Democratic Party activists, whose causes I have taken up through my work on the local, county, and state party level and who helped elect me in 2011 and 2013 (top vote-getter) to serve as a California Democratic Party delegate and in 2012 to serve as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. (Since 2015, I have been an appointed Delegate of the California Young Democrats, Board of Equalization Board Member Fiona Ma, and the California Democratic Council, respectively). In 2012, I helped secure endorsements of all local and regional Democratic clubs and committees except the Berkeley Democratic Club for the entire slate or at least 2 of the candidates I ran with. I also applied for a Democracy for America endorsement and secured \$250 checks for each of the four candidates on the slate.

- Communities of color, in particular Asian-Pacific Islanders, Latinos, with whom I have worked closely on issues like making support of the DREAM and TRUST Acts a plank of state Democratic party. In addition, as a member of the NAACP Berkeley Chapter, I have been invited to present to the organization at several town halls on the housing policies for low-income families on which I work through the Housing Advisory Commission. I have helped shepherd several of the NAACP's priorities to the Berkeley City Council, and they are either being considered or have passed.

- Homeowners, who have benefitted from initiatives I have organized for their benefit, such as the 2011 Bay Area Foreclosure Prevention and Resources Workshop, which received a Certificate of Congressional Appreciation from Rep. Barbara Lee, or who have worked with me on the Berkeley Unified School District's Facilities Oversight Committee and the Berkeley Climate Action Coalition. A number of small property owners, whom I have assisted with garden-variety housing, zoning, and neighborhood quality of life issues. In addition, over the past eleven years in Berkeley, I have built relationships with influential neighbors who might not typically vote in Rent Board elections or are more moderate than myself. I have succeeded at changing the perceptions of some of them towards the Rent Board and allow them to see it as a reasonable body that equitably enforces the ordinance for property owners and tenants alike. While these relationships vary from the personal to the professional, they are an asset I could again provide to the tenant community by persuading these leaders to support the members of the pro-tenant slate, just as I did in 2012.

The following are some of the organizations with which I am affiliated:

Berkeley Housing Advisory Commission (Vice Chair); Berkeley Zoning Adjustments Board (Vice Chair); BUSD Facilities and Infrastructure Committee; Cal Alumni Association; Berkeley Citizens Action (Formerly, Steering Committee); Berkeley Tenants Union (Steering Committee); President, East Bay Young Democrats; Berkeley Progressive Alliance; NAACP – Berkeley Chapter; Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter Vice Chair, Northern Alameda County Group Conservation Chair, and Political Committee; Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club (Formerly, Coordinating Committee); Savo Island Cooperative Housing (Formerly, Community Board Member); Parliamentarian and Pacific Region Director, Young Democrats of America; Former Vice President of Membership, California Young Democrats; Current Associate and Former Alternate Member to Jesse Arreguin, Alameda County Central Democratic Committee; Legislative Liaison, Regional Council, Bend the Arc; A Jewish Partnership for Justice; Delegate and Legislation Committee Member, California Democratic Party; New Leaders Council, Oakland Board Member and

Community Engagement Co-Chair; Berkeley Emeryville Albany League of Women Voters; John George Democratic Club; Oceanview Neighborhood Watch (Co-Founder and Steering Committee); Asian Pacific Alameda County Democratic Caucus; Steering Committee, Berkeley Climate Action Coalition; Black Young Democrats of the East Bay

What I bring to the slate can best be summarized by the following:

- 1) Absolute drive and commitment to the mission of defending the voter-approved tenant protection ordinances and other progressive legislation put into place by the Berkeley community (including ensuring that we win 100% of the seats up in this election and pass progressive ballot measures such as the Windfall Profits Tax).
- 2) The professional and personal relationships with hundreds of the Bay Area's top influencers and progressive organizations that I have built up over the course of more than a decade of committed advocacy to various progressive causes, which, in turn, will translate to money, endorsements, and other forms of support for the progressive slate.
- 3) Generosity with my time, knowledge of electoral politics, and understanding of nuanced policy priorities and the tough decisions that will be faced by every Rent Board candidate and commissioner at some point in every campaign and their course of service on the Rent Board. The camaraderie, support, mentorship, and advice that I provide to every ally facing these questions when they seek my assistance.

11. Please check links on our website (berkeleytenantconvention.net) to two potential ballot measures affecting tenants that will be on the ballot in November: (a) Safe and Affordable Homes tax, and (b) Amending Measure Y to increase relocation payments and prevent family evictions during the school year. Explain your position on both.

- (a) I fully support the Safe and Affordable Homes tax, and have advocated and campaigned for it long before it was seen as "cool" to do so. In 2014, I actively participated in a since-aborted effort to place it on that year's November ballot, and returned among the highest number of valid signatures for this ballot measure. Now that it is likely to be placed on the November 2016 ballot through an act of the City Council, I am actively engaged – through the Housing Advisory Commission, Berkeley Tenants Union, and the East Bay Housing Organizations – to build support for it. I was very pleased to see the Mayor join six of his colleagues yesterday and publicly come out in support of it. I am committed to building the case to support it to the two remaining members of the City Council who are still on the fence, to campaign for it and ensure that the ballot measure succeeds in November, and to defeat any attempts by others to present flawed counterproposals with weaker language that appear to have been floated in order to compromise the chances of the Safe and Affordable Homes tax from passing. I support it so strongly because as a member of the Housing Advisory Commission who every couple of years has to make the painstaking decision to cut or deny the funding requests presented to us by various nonprofit housing providers, I know firsthand what an incredible community benefit it will be to receive approximately \$4 million per year (conservatively estimated based on current projections) into the Housing Trust Fund, should this measure pass.
- (b) I am also fully committed to helping place an amendment to Measure Y on the ballot and ensure its passage so that relocation payments are increased and family evictions are evicted during the school year. As a member of the Berkeley Unified School District's Facilities Oversight Committee, a neighbor to several families with school-age children, and an informal counselor to several families who sadly were in a situation where they had to be uprooted in the middle of the school year due to an owner move-in eviction, I understand how disruptive and traumatic these are and how detrimental they are to the very framework of our community. The amount of relocation assistance passed by the voters in November 2000 has never been increased, but in that time median market rents have increased by 160%. It is time to act on this now!

12. The Convention asks all candidates to sign a pledge to not run against or endorse against the slate the Convention selects. Will you sign it? Do you think that the pledge is important? Do you think it's fair?

I categorically pledge to only run for reelection if the progressive Berkeley community endorses my work by selecting me as one of the five candidates for the pro-tenant slate. I think this pledge is fair and one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure the strongest possible slate and that campaign moneys can be spent as efficiently as possible in case of an attack by those who do not share the same pro-tenant interests that we do.

13. If you are nominated by the convention, will you agree, in concert with other slate members, to hire a coordinator with full authority to make campaign decisions in consultation with the slate? The slate will retain the power to determine an overall budget and replace the coordinator.

I unconditionally agree to hire a coordinator with full authority to make day-to-day decisions. This is a terrific idea that is long overdue. There are proven campaign managers and consultants out there that would charge only a nominal rate based on preexisting professional relationships, which I would be happy to recommend to the slate should I have the honor of being nominated.

Please return to berkeleytenantconvention@gmail.com by 10 AM on April 5th

Late responses will be distributed at the convention but may not be in time for the screening by community groups. ALL responses will be posted on the website.