

## 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 am a first generation immigrant whose family was red-lined and prevented from living in certain areas of Seattle and buying property in the 1950s. My life and my professional career have been grounded in social justice issues, fighting for women's rights in particular, and advocating for the disadvantaged. When I was the Health Officer and Director of Public Health for Berkeley from 1995-2005, we did the first epidemiological study in the region that demonstrated that where one lived mattered—if you lived in the hills vs. the flats, your life was 13 years longer on average. That study changed my life and I began to view everything through the lens of equity. I realized how entwined housing and health are and how much people need stability and hope. Now, in the ten years since I was the health officer, the inequities in every sphere are greater. I think I can contribute the expertise I have in epidemiology, the public policy arena, public health, and administration to strengthen the excellent ordinances we have in place and use them to improve the quality of life for everyone in Berkeley.

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?

I am now retired and have a flexible schedule. During my career, I was on as many as ten-fifteen boards and commissions simultaneously and managed to accomplish my work also. I do have an independent consulting business that is at my discretion.

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

I have had no personal experience with Berkeley's rent control ordinance. In the early 1990's, I was chair of the Parks and Rec Commission, and Lisa Stephens was a Commissioner and Jay Kelekian was staff to the commission. They were both excellent to work with.

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

1) The lack of affordable housing in Berkeley—Berkeley is one of the most densely populated cities in California and zoning restrictions, which the citizens of Berkeley support, have made increasing density expensive and difficult. Nevertheless, there have been opportunities that have been overlooked in Berkeley to create more sustainable transit villages and taking advantage of federal funding opportunities for affordable housing and better integrated transportation modalities, including safer pedestrian/bikeways. I would like an analysis of where we are going in terms of our stated long-standing commitment to community benefits specifically in regard to affordable housing and the wealth of new development that is being built or is being proposed.

2) Vacancy Decontrol—The state's preemption of Berkeley's ability to enforce its own Rent Stabilization Ordinance provides landlords with an incentive to evict tenants in order to raise rents.

3) The Growth of UCB—UCB's long-range plans calls for considerable growth in its student population without concomitant growth in housing for those students. I believe that UCB already ranks near the bottom of UC campuses in its ratio of housing support to student population. The inadequacy of the housing provided places a tremendous pressure on the general Berkeley population to compete for the scarce rental housing stock available.

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?

According to the ordinance, briefly, the nine elected commissioners enact regulations, hear petition appeals, and administer a program to carry out the ordinance. They have some 17 listed powers in the ordinance. I think it is premature for me to suggest changes in how this board operates, however, I am an epidemiologist and am always interested in analysis and policy. Just as the operating practice of the Rent Board staff is one of active enforcement, perhaps the Board's should be one of active study, leading to progressive policy proposals such as the proposal to amend Measure Y.

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

a) Just as healthcare is a right, not a privilege, housing must be a right in a civilized society. In order for all to be housed fairly, there must be affordable housing available. We live in the highest priced region in the United States, so it's even more important for us to make that commitment in order to maintain our vibrancy, our diversity, our humanity.

b) Low-income housing is a necessity and it can be done well. As the Health Officer in Santa Cruz, I bought my home because it was near the water, parks, and I could walk to work. I did not even realize that it was right next to a low-income housing development because it was so attractive and in the seven years that I lived there, I never had a problem.

6. 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 unsettled area and there are no right or wrong answers.

I am in favor of distributing low-income units as parts of all new projects and using set-aside fees to build more low and medium-income buildings around the city. The people of this region have made this one of the most desirable places in the world to live, filled with natural beauty, culture, intellectual life, good transit, and other amenities. We, in Berkeley have an abiding philosophy of social justice, and those who wish to profit and develop projects in our community need to contribute to the good of the commons and one of our most pressing needs now is affordable housing. It makes sense to me that all new developments should devote some units for low-income housing. I believe that affordable/low-income housing can be well-designed and fit well in many neighborhoods in Berkeley. My only reservation is that for maximization of resources, new housing must be high-density and should be near transit resources which leaves out much of Berkeley that is not commercially developed.

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

Whether the Rent Board is "pro-tenant" or "pro-landlord," it has to uphold the ordinance and administer the Rent Stabilization Program fairly. If this is done with transparency, in the public forum, with the potential for appeal and or mediation, then anyone can and should be treated fairly.

8. 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 Berkeley Rent Stabilization Program gives renters stability and security in their homes if they are in good standing and together with the good cause for eviction provisions, protects them against the threat of homelessness. By providing tenants knowledge of their rights and continuing active enforcement, the Rent Board can help people stay in their homes.

9. 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 was the Health Officer for Berkeley for ten years and as such felt that I worked for every person here. The health department was a strong community partner then; we worked closely with schools, faith-based organizations, the Y, LifeLong, Alta Bates, UCB, bars, restaurants, youth sports clubs, etc. I've lived in Berkeley since 1973 and have been involved in civic life the entire time! I think I have good name recognition and I'm a senior to boot! I am on three statewide boards (Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development Hospital Building Safety Board, California Center for Public Health Advocacy, California Pan Ethnic Health Network) and two city commissions (Community Health Commission, Sugar-Sweetened Product Panel of Experts Commission).

I am a life-long learner, a skilled administrator, experienced public policy advocate, and my guiding principal is kindness.

10. Please check links on our website ([berkeleytenantconvention.net](http://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. It is sound public policy to reasonably tax windfall profits to support a critical cause that is related to the source of the profit making. The level of taxation is not onerous and would provide the funding we desperately need to build affordable housing. I particularly like the strategy of an expert panel to advise the City on the use of the funds. I am on the Soda Tax Panel and I feel we have done an excellent job safeguarding those funds for their intended use.

b) I support amending Measure Y to deal with inflation, the rising costs of rents, moving expenses, and to extend the relocation assistance to all tenants evicted for owner occupancy, especially since the passage of the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act which greatly increased the incentive to evict long-term tenants. I also think the two amendments are important to include: protecting families with children during the school year and allowing the Board to adjudicate disputes regarding low-income status.

11. 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 will sign the pledge and think that it is important and fair if the process is fair and transparent.

12. 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 agree to hire a coordinator, in concert with other slate members.

*Please return to [berkeleytenantconvention@gmail.com](mailto:berkeleytenantconvention@gmail.com) by 10 AM on April 5<sup>th</sup>*

*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.*