

Eleanor Walden

(Rather than write a statement addressed to the points 1 – 12 on the Convention Questionnaire I prefer to write a statement that incorporates the issues and opinions I hold on the topics.)

Background and interest in Rent Board: I have worked on housing issues as an advocate for affordable and subsidized housing for many years. I successfully organized renters to lobby for low income housing in Atlanta, GA before coming to California. I was appointed to the Rent Board in 2002 to serve out a term and was elected for one term in 2004 – 2008. Since then I have served as the Co-chair of the Residents' Council at Redwood Gardens where I live. My role in the Council has been to work with tenants, owners and staff to facilitate greater visibility of management policies and to advocate for the rights of tenants. In this particular facility there are five controlling interests other than the tenants to be considered. Redwood Gardens is situated in the City of Berkeley on University of California property, the building is owned by CSI, and (in the past) was managed by a separate agency, John Stewart Corp, and is under the jurisdiction of HUD the Federal Housing and Urban Development Department. As a Chair person on the tenant Council I had to keep in mind the concerns of all parties involved with my principal allegiance to the tenants. This is similar to the responsibility that Rent Board Commissioners face when called upon to treat landlords with the same fairness as tenants. I am also the Housing Chair of the Berkeley East Bay Gray Panthers.

Experience with Rent Board and tenant issues: Since I only previously served one of the two allowed terms on the Rent Board I would like to apply to serve for another term. I am familiar with the crisis of housing in the nation, the Bay Area, and Berkeley in particular. As a member of NAHT, National Alliance of HUD Tenants, I represented Redwood Gardens at the national conference in Washington DC last summer. I am a source for numerous articles on housing published in Berkeley Planet, East Bay Express, Berkeleyside, Indy Voice, San Jose Mercury, and other papers, some of which have been picked up by national news.

Commitment to Rent Board principals: Since Berkeley is one of the few municipalities to have retained a Rent Control Ordinance, though being the target of attacks by corporate landlord interests; I am personally dedicated to its preservation and development. Without the Rent Board tenants are helpless against the greater power of the money and political connections of the landlord class.

Broadening the scope of the Rent Board: I believe that the scope of the Rent Board should be broadened to include more tenants in other sections of housing affordability. This would include aspects of Section 8 housing and others under the supervision of Berkeley Housing Authority and in the interests of low and moderate-income people. While I don't have a plan to implement that goal at the present I believe that candidates running on a pro-tenant slate should consider some of those questions, and include other forms of tenancy in the effort to make our city a better place to live. I support affordable rental housing being required in all new structures and that principal be implemented

with the greatest diligence in all areas of the city. The weighing of the economic structure to benefit the wealthy and super-wealthy has become undeniable since 2008. The majority of young adults earn income no greater than that of their parent's generation yet the cost of housing has gone up benefitting the wealthy more than the majority. Geographically Berkeley is one of the most desirable places to live in the country; in previous years Berkeley also had one of the most desirable social climates with great ethnic diversity and income diversity. A main element in the skewing of the housing profile to favor the wealthy that rich climate has been drained. Homelessness is growing to an extent not seen since the 1930's it is not enough to click your tongue and deplore the situation while we still have a Rent Board and a population willing to use the concern with just housing policy to address the housing crisis.

The Rent Board is one of the few resources for fair housing that is still in place. To the goal of serving renters, addressing the issues of homelessness, preserving available housing, and promoting new affordable housing, the Rent Board MUST expand its influence and increase its affirmation of tenants. Exactly what those issues are and the ways in which an active pro-tenant Rent Board can support them should be the backbone of the discussion of this year's campaign.

Ballot measures a) Safe and Affordable Homes, b) Increase relocation payments under Measure Y: On the face of the issues I would be in favor of any measure that would aim to expose the reality of the rent structure, as Stephen Barton has done so eloquently in his report, and to support the goals of preserving the rent controlled housing stock for the benefit of a mixed income population, and to promote, by every means necessary, to compel private development to provide moderate and middle income housing. In order to be well versed in these issues I would need to read them more carefully and discuss the issues with others.

Available time and flexibility: My position as Co-chair at Redwood Gardens will expire this month and I would like to continue to use my experience and interest in housing where they are most needed. I am retired from active employment and would be able and willing to campaign with a progressive rent board slate. Meeting times day or evening are not a problem. I am disabled and use a motorized wheelchair that I transport either by bus, cab, or my own car.

Agreement if nominated not to endorse against the slate and to hire a coordinator:
I agree to these pledges.