

Questionnaire

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

I am presently a Rent Board Commissioner. When I was first elected in 2014, I dedicated myself to learning on the job and becoming an active, productive member of the board.

Some of my accomplishments as a Rent Board Commissioner include:

- During my tenure and as Chair of the Habitability committee, I was able to update Berkeley's elevator code to improve protections for disabled tenants.
- As a member of the Outreach committee I came up with the "TIP of the Month" program to improve promotion of rent board services on social media and on its website.
- I am also the Chair of the ad hoc committee which is studying the effects of the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act; later this year, the Rent Board will be holding a hearing to put on the record the effects this law has had in Berkeley, the Bay Area, and beyond.
- I am presently in my second year serving as the Rent Board's Vice-Chair and have received the unanimous endorsement of my peers.
- As a rent board commissioner, I was a member of the steering committee that successfully passed Measure U1 which increases funds for affordable housing and displacement protections in Berkeley.
- When the California Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) requested input on its California's Housing Future: Challenges and Opportunities, Public Draft - 2025 Statewide Housing Assessment, I ensured that representatives from the Berkeley Rent Board attended the public hearing in Oakland to encourage the inclusion, in the section of the report dealing with affordable housing preservation strategies, of: 1) rent stabilization, (2) eviction-for-good-cause protections, and (3) a commitment to amend or repeal Costa-Hawkins and the Ellis Act. The request was also submitted in writing.
- I have lobbied in Sacramento on behalf of Berkeley tenants for the repeal of the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act.

The reason I am running for office again is that I believe I still have a lot to accomplish, not only to continue protecting Berkeley's Rent Control and Eviction for Good Cause Ordinance but also to ensure that the progressive voice is heard if Costa-Hawkins is repealed.

2. How much time are you able to devote as a Commissioner? Are your hours flexible? Can you attend meetings until as late as 11:00 pm? Can you attend a two-hour twice-a-month daytime meeting?

I am available to attend meetings as required and have consistently done so throughout my tenure.

3. What experience have you had with Berkeley's Rent Stabilization Ordinance, the Rent Board's staff and the elected Board?

I recently moved into a rent-controlled unit and saw first-hand just how effective the Rent Board is at ensuring that tenants and landlords are informed of their rights and responsibilities. My landlord was required to, and did, provide me with all proper documents, and I have received effective mailings from the board. Additionally, as Rent Board Commissioner, I have developed professional and amiable working relationships with the other elected members of the Board.

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

Affordability - According to the Rent Board's report: Market Median: January 1999

Unit Size	2012 Median Rent	2017 Median Rent	% increase
Studio	\$1,050	\$1,750	67%
1 BR	\$1,325	\$2,027	53%
2 BR	\$1,850	\$2,800	51%
3 BR	\$2,595	\$3,900	50%

through December 2017**, Market rents in Berkeley have increased between 50% to 67% in the last five years.

Eviction and harassment protections - There are too many stories of tenants being harassed and evicted illegally so that a property owner can raise the rent, because they (the landlords) don't feel that they are making enough money. The United States

Supreme Court ruled in *Fisher vs the City of Berkeley*, 475 U.S. 260 (1986), that Berkeley's rent control, as administered by the Rent Stabilization Board, does indeed provide landlords a fair return on their investments.

Habitability - Many tenants fear complaining about their bad housing conditions for fear of being evicted. This situation is especially true for Cal students who accept horrible and many times over crowded conditions because they don't want to end up homeless if they complain.

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

Rent Board Commissioners oversee the operation of the Rent Stabilization Board Agency. The Commissioners establish the cost of registration, create policy, and provide oversight of the Agency's budget. In my opinion, the Rent Board operates fairly and equitably.

6. What experience do you have organizing tenants? Please describe and include any thoughts you have on how to better engage Berkeley tenants.

I have worked on several campaigns during the past eight years. I believe that the best way to organize and engage tenants is through grass-roots organizing, that is, by going door to door to talk to, and with, tenants. I have also done media outreach.

7. Market developers argue that building more market rate multifamily units is the only way to lower the price of housing. What is your position on this theory? Please discuss your thoughts on how Berkeley can increase the housing available and affordable to tenants living on very limited income such as those living on government benefits, retirement pensions, and others with very limited resources.

This argument is a red herring as it implies that the theory of supply and demand works in the landlord/tenants rental housing industry. Building more market-rate multi-family units has not worked in the 22+ years since Costa-Hawkins was enacted. Homelessness has only increased, especially among UC Berkeley students, and many long-time Berkeley residents have been forced to leave because of rising housing and rental costs. The high cost of rent means that more and more tenants are paying a larger percentage of their income to cover rent. Low-income wage earners including many seniors on fixed incomes and many Cal students are unable to afford market-rate units. Now is the time for the city of Berkeley to step up and start building more affordable housing. The people of Berkeley can make this happen by voting to

approve a bond measure to raise money specifically for the purpose of building affordable housing units.

8. Is a pro-tenant Rent Board capable of treating tenants, small, and corporate landlords fairly.

Yes. Berkeley's Rent Control and Just Cause Eviction Ordinance is very specific and the Rent Board follows it to the letter. The Rent Board has been sued on several occasions and has always prevailed against those lawsuits. No one gets special treatment; not landlords, not tenants.

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

Rent and eviction controls limit homelessness; so long as renters are able to remain in their units, they do not end up homeless. However, once a tenant, for whatever reason, loses his or her protected home, there is little the Board can do to remedy the situation, unless the tenant can prove that he or she was evicted illegally.

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 tenants to be my constituency and my base of support. I am affiliated with Berkeley's Progressive Alliance, Berkeley Citizens Action, Berkeley Tenant Union, the Wellstone Democratic Club, and the Bay Area Alternative Press.

Qualities I bring are:

Four years' experience as a Rent Board Commissioner;

Understanding of how the system works;

Energy and enthusiasm;

A record of regular attendance at Rent Board meetings;

Eagerness to make a positive difference in the affordability crisis affecting many renters throughout Berkeley.

11. Do you support the repeal of the Costa-Hawkins Housing Act? If it were repealed, what changes do you believe Berkeley should make to its Rent Stabilization Ordinance?

I am very much in favor of repealing the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act. The law is one-sided and provides protection to only one set of stakeholders: property owners, investors and developers—but not tenants. The talking points used by property owner

associations, developers, and even candidates for Governor include the statement that “outright repeal of the Costa-Hawkins law could deter new construction. Getting rid of these protections overall, I think, may have unintended consequences on housing production that could be profoundly problematic.”* This statement is very misleading as the City of Berkeley, despite its strong rent control has seen a huge amount of construction since Costa-Hawkins was enacted over 20 years ago. The negative impact of this law has been shouldered by renters who have no protections and who have seen their rents shoot through the roof. If this law were repealed, the Berkeley Rent Board would have the opportunity to change Berkeley’s rent control law to include single family homes and condos rentals, and advance the date of construction for buildings subject to rent control and good cause eviction. At present, Berkeley’s law says that only buildings built before 1980 can come under rent control. If Costa-Hawkins were repealed, the 1980 date could be moved forward, to a date that the Rent Board determines to be best for the Berkeley community. This would likely have the effect of improving the lives of many, many tenants, by providing them protections against egregious rent increases (from which they currently have no protection).

12. The Convention asks all candidates to sign a pledge NOT to 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 is fair?

Yes, I will sign the pledge. I believe the pledge is important because the goal of the convention is to nominate progressive candidates who support Berkeley’s Rent Control and Eviction for Good Cause Ordinance. When candidates run against or endorse against the slate, they are going against the Tenant Convention’s mission to have its nominated Rent Board candidates elected into office. Yes.

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 may replace the coordinator by a democratic process.

Yes.

*Stronger rent control supported by just one major candidate for California governor
<http://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article204015334.html#storylink=cpy>