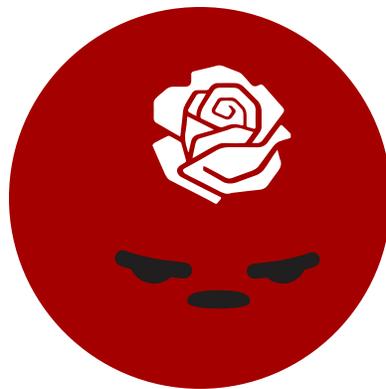


# Frustrated Socialists' Voter Guide

EAST BAY 2018 PRIMARIES



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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

By the time we vote, the field of political possibilities has been narrowed down to a handful of choices. A few are exciting! Many are, well, not. It's lesser-of-two-evils politics at its finest. If you're able to vote, think of it as harm reduction, and use the rest of your year to improve the political landscape in other ways.

This guide is the product of the work by a group of friends who met through the Democratic Socialists of America, but it's not an official list of endorsements or an official document of the chapter. It's also not meant to be a representation of the membership's recommendations or endorsements.

The goal of this guide is to help friends, comrades, community members, and anyone who shares our values to sort through the morass of elections and make their own choices in the voting booth, when you find yourself asking "Who the \$&?% are these people?" We hope you'll take our advice with a grain of salt. We've tried to explain the reasoning behind our selections, and include our political affiliation just as a rough guide to our perspective.

Offices and ballot propositions are listed in the order in which they appear on your ballot, but we were not able to cover every race in the East Bay. We apologize for excluding Contra Costa County races; we hope to expand our team before the next election.

# QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

## Statewide Office

- **Governor:** Delaine Eastin
- **Lt Governor:** Gayle McLaughlin
- **Secretary of State:** Alex Padilla
- **Controller:** Betty Yee
- **Treasurer:** Kevin Akin
- **Attorney General:** Dave Jones or Xavier Becerra
- **Insurance Commissioner:** Ricardo Lara
- **State Board of Equalization, Member 2:** Malia Cohen or Cathleen Galgiani
- **US Senate:** David Hildebrand or Kevin de León
- **US Representative:** Barbara Lee
- **State Assembly District 15:** Jovanka Beckles
- **State Assembly District 18:** Rob Bonta
- **Superior Court Judge, Office #11:** Karen Katz

## Schools

- **State Superintendent of Public Instruction:** Tony Thurmond
- **Alameda County Superintendent of Schools:** Unopposed incumbent

## **Alameda County**

- **Assessor:** John Weed
- **Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder:** Irella Christina Blackwood
- **District Attorney:** Pamela Price
- **Sheriff-Coroner:** Write-in
- **Treasurer-Tax Collector:** Unopposed incumbent

## **Ballot Initiatives**

- **Proposition 68 (Fund water and parks):** Yes
- **Proposition 69 (Gas tax use):** Yes
- **Proposition 70 (Cap and trade fund use):** No
- **Proposition 71 (Date for ballot initiatives):** Yes
- **Proposition 72 (Rain capture tax exemption):** Yes
- **Regional Measure 3 (Toll increase):** Yes
- **Alameda County, Measure A (Fund childcare):** Yes
- **Oakland, Measure D (Fund libraries):** Yes

# STATEWIDE OFFICES

## **Governor: Delaine Eastin**

Eastin is running on a strong platform of universal social programs, including free college, universal pre-k, and fully funding public education for the years in between. She supports ending cash bail, has supported Medicare for All from the start, and as a Union City city councilwoman she helped pass rent control for mobile homes. She supports repealing Costa-Hawkins but loses some of us for backing a now-failed plan to override city zoning and require dense housing near public transit.

## **Lt. Governor: Gayle McLaughlin**

McLaughlin has an impeccable record from her time as mayor of Richmond and is a dedicated socialist. She accepts no corporate money whatsoever, which was key to building the credibility to take on Chevron's century-long grip on the Richmond city government. Once there, she passed California's first new rent control in 30 years, sued Chevron for climate damages, used their money to fund a universal scholarship for Richmond high school grads, pushed through police reforms which slashed Richmond's notoriously high rate of police murder and overall murder, established a successful re-entry program for formerly incarcerated people, and more. She's pro-tenant, a champion for Medicare for All, and has an amazing environmental justice track record.

## **Secretary of State: Alex Padilla**

Incumbent Alex Padilla has done a lot to make voting more accessible to working people. The SF Berniecrats have endorsed one of the Green Party candidates, but they're an extreme long-shot. We'd rather not see Padilla replaced with anyone running to his right.

## **Controller: Betty Yee**

Quoting the SF Guardian: "Yee has always been a solid progressive, from her time on the state Board of Equalization (which she helped overhaul) to her role as state controller. She clearly deserves another term."

## **Treasurer: Kevin Akin**

We're going to defer to the San Francisco League of Pissed Off Voters for this one.

"The state treasurer handles state debt and bonds and sits with the state controller on panels that manage California's two major pension funds. It's a snoozer of a job with a ton of power."

"Kevin Akin is a retired hospital maintenance worker and longtime activist in the Peace and Freedom Party is running to be the next state banker. Akin is advocating for a state municipal bank, updating the tax code to fund social services, and breaking up the love affair between billionaires' corporations and state legislators."

## **Attorney General: Dave Jones or Xavier Becerra**

As insurance commissioner, Jones touts his record of focusing on white-collar crime and corporate fraud, and he's managed to rack up the endorsements from left-leaning unions. The incumbent, Xavier Becerra, has focused heavily on suing the Trump administration on a host of issues from the travel ban to environmental issues, and has the support of a larger number of unions. But he has also declined to take Exxon to court for hiding evidence of climate-change. In short, neither Democrat candidate stands out dramatically; in fact, several unions have just endorsed them both.

## **Insurance Commissioner: Ricardo Lara**

Lara was a key author of SB 562, the late great statewide Medicare for All bill, as well as the successful sanctuary state law. While Lara could have done more to push SB 562, we'd still like to see an M4A proponent head up the state insurance commission.

## **State Board of Equalization, Member 2: Malia Cohen or Cathleen Galgiani**

At a glance, Cohen and Galgiani look pretty similar. Cohen's got more endorsements, but both are endorsed by a lot of the same types of people and groups: centrist Dems and a smattering of labor. Neither seem like they're looking to push the envelope on leftist politics, but Cohen might be just slightly less of the market-based solutions type of candidate. Chang doesn't have much info out there to really judge him on.

## **US Senate: David Hildebrand or Kevin de León**

Hildebrand is a democratic socialist running a small but solid insurgent campaign against eternal senator and state surveillance enthusiast Dianne Feinstein. Former state senate president de León is mounting a less radical but higher profile progressive campaign and has racked up labor endorsements and the backing of other prominent progressive Democrats. You could back Hildebrand now and expect to vote for de León in November, or try to give de León a boost now, particularly since he's polling third against a vitriolically anti-semitic Republican (Patrick Little) who we'd like to see booted from public life ASAP.

## **US Representative: Barbara Lee**

Barbara Lee is running unopposed, is tremendously popular, and one of the few congressional Democrats to ever vote against the ever-expanding US military.

## **State Assembly District 15: Jovanka Beckles**

Beckles is vice-mayor of Richmond and has an impressive record and platform: she helped pass California's first new rent control in 30 years, and her government sued major-employer Chevron for climate damages, reformed the police department to crush Richmond's notoriously high rate of police violence, while bringing down the overall crime rate. She's a staunch advocate for Medicare for All, expanding rent control, and taxing corporations to pay for social programs. She takes zero corporate money, yet is polling second in a crowded field. We really can't say enough nice things about her.

## **State Assembly District 18: Rob Bonta**

Rob Bonta's fine, and his only opponent is a Republican. Let's move on.

## **Superior Court Judge, Office #11: Karen Katz**

While it was difficult to find much information of substance about either incumbent Tara Flanagan or challenger Karen Katz, Katz is a long-term public defender who promises a deep understanding of the ways low-income defendants and defendants of color suffer disadvantage in the judicial system, while Flanagan is a former prosecutor and private-practice lawyer. Flanagan was fined for a campaign finance violation in her last campaign, but she has the support and endorsement of her fellow judges. We admit this is a low-information endorsement based largely on Katz' career as a public defender.

# SCHOOLS

## **State Superintendent of Public Instruction: Tony Thurmond**

Thurmond has been a popular and reliably progressive assembly representative for the East Bay, and now that he's term-limited there, he's the union consensus choice—including teachers' unions—to lead the state's public schools. His best-funded opponent, Marshall Tuck, is backed heavily by union-busting, school privatization groups such as Govern for California.

## **Alameda County Superintendent of Schools**

L. Karen Monroe is running unopposed

# ALAMEDA COUNTY

## **Assessor: John Weed**

Weed has served eight years on the Alameda County Board of Appeals, hearing complaints from residents who believe their tax assessment was unfair. His campaign promises include creating new ways for low income homeowners to avoid displacement through tax breaks and outreach to teach people their rights when navigating a tax lien. He is also a strong supporter of “split roll” Prop 13 reform, which would end the tax assessment freeze on commercial property but retain it for homeowners. His most visible opponent, Phong La, is a tax attorney who points to his volunteer work helping people avoid foreclosure during the 2008 crash, also supports Prop 13 reform, and is campaigning on customer-service oriented improvements to the office. The other two candidates oppose Prop 13 reform, and Johnson believes tax assessments, and thus city revenues, should be decreased.

## **Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder: Irella Christina Blackwood**

Blackwood boasts of discovering and eliminating \$5 million in government waste and fraud for San Francisco. She promises to bring increased transparency and rigor to Alameda County finances, which indeed suffer from opaque spending, frequent accusations and revelations of corruption, and constant budgetary shortfalls. Her opponent, Melissa Wilk, has served within the office as a high-ranking staffer and points to her role in pushing through a ballot initiative to fund affordable housing, opening satellite offices, and streamlining property tax paperwork as some of her accomplishments thus far. In short, Wilk seems like the unobjectionable next-in-line, but we'd like to see someone without strong existing relationships to the Oakland political establishment give the city's finances some thorough scrutiny.

## **District Attorney: Pamela Price**

Price is a civil rights attorney running against an incumbent who's claimed Alameda County doesn't have mass incarceration and who took tens of thousands of dollars from the police union before clearing a cop of murdering a pregnant woman. Price is serious about reigning in Oakland's notoriously corrupt police and ending mass incarceration. She and Jovanka Beckles have co-endorsed one another and campaigned together. The rule of thumb here is: Vote for the DA the police don't like.

## **Sheriff-Coroner: Write-in**

Ahern has a cozy relationship with ICE and he is running unopposed. Write in your favorite anarchist. Or socialist. Or literally anyone else.

## **Treasurer-Tax Collector: Unopposed**

Hank Levy's running unopposed.

# BALLOT MEASURES

## Proposition 68: Yes

*Bond to fund “Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All” programs*

Funds a bunch of great stuff, ultimately paid for through property taxes. The list includes levee upgrades, groundwater cleanup, clean water protections, wetlands restoration, and parks upgrades. There’s a requirement that at least 15–20 percent minimum of each project be spent in low-income areas, and the money ultimately comes out of property taxes. The only foreseeable objection is that it’s funded through a bond rather than direct taxation, meaning the cost is inflated somewhat by interest payments to investors. It’s common practice, though. California desperately needs improved water management, and this is the chance to do it.

## Proposition 69: Yes

*Requires new transportation revenues be used for transportation*

Republicans are hoping that a November ballot measure to repeal the state’s gas tax will goose GOP turnout and help them hold House seats (and lower taxes). If this measure fails, they’ll say “There’s not even a guarantee gas tax money is spent on transportation!” Which is to say it’s cynical and silly. Our policy expert says vote yes.

## **Proposition 70: No**

*Requires legislative supermajority to use cap-and-trade reserve fund*

Republicans in the state legislature demanded this ballot initiative to give themselves future leverage in spending climate mitigation funds collected by the state's new cap-and-trade law. Supermajority spending requirements are a complete disaster overall, and we can't imagine extra need for Republican approval will make climate regulation better in any way, well, ever. This is a hard no.

## **Proposition 71: Yes**

*Sets effective date for ballot initiatives*

This is a procedural change, designed to ensure that, in a close ballot initiative, no changes to the law are made until after all the votes have been counted. At present, by default ballot initiatives go into effect immediately after the election, and hypothetically a change could be made to law that was later rescinded after belated mail-in and provisional ballot counts were completed. Instead, this would delay any change for a maximum of 43 days after the election, giving time for final counts and recounts.

## **Proposition 72: Yes**

*Omit new rain-capture from property tax reassessment*

There are a few existing property upgrades, such as solar panels, fire sprinklers and wheelchair ramps, which are excluded as valid reasons to increase property taxes on homes. The law was designed to encourage more people to add these features to their homes and to separate those goods from luxury remodelling. This would add home rainwater capture to the list as an incentive to ease demand on wells and reservoirs. The measure has literally no opponents.

## **Regional Measure 3: Yes**

*Raises the toll on the Bay and Richmond bridges by \$3 (in \$1 increments) by 2025; uses funds raised to improve transit*

RM3 funds a ton of desperately-needed upgrades to BART, buses, and roads (including expanding BART to San Jose), but does so at the expense of a flat levy that will fall hardest on workers who commute by car into SF. Ideally these improvements would be funded by a progressive tax, but sending it back to the drawing board could leave us with shitty transit even longer.

## **Alameda County, Measure A: Yes**

*Levies a 0.5 percent sales tax to fund preschool and daycare*

Sales taxes fall proportionately harder on working class people, who spend more of their income on basic goods. But half a penny on the dollar is a small tax, and we desperately need public childcare.

## Oakland, Measure D: Yes

*Raises property taxes slightly (\$75 per year for a single-family home) to fund Oakland public libraries*

Libraries are a major public good, and anyone who owns a home in Oakland probably has an extra \$75 per year (and there's an exemption for low-income and senior homeowners). Redistribute that money to universal social goods!