

**POTRERO HILL DEMOCRATIC CLUB
DISTRICT ATTORNEY CANDIDATE FORUM
Tuesday, September 6, 2011**

Questionnaire for candidates for the office of
District Attorney of the City of San Francisco

Candidate/Campaign Information

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Anticipated budget: \$500,000
Funds raised to date: \$241,000
Percentage of donations \$100 or less: 23%

Thank you for taking the time to complete the Questionnaire for the Potrero Hill Democratic Club's District Attorney Candidates Forum. Candidate responses to this Questionnaire will be available to club members beginning August 12.

Please write a brief response (fewer than 200 words) to each question.

1. Why are you running and why should we vote for you?
As a first generation immigrant, I learned that a safer city begins with building trust and partnerships among diverse communities, law enforcement and the court system, based on a commitment to fairness, openness and justice. It is with these guiding principles that I have managed more than 8,000 members of the LA Police Department, protected the rights of immigrants as Police Chief in Mesa, Arizona and now direct the policies of the San Francisco District Attorney's office.

As District Attorney, I am aggressively prosecuting violent crimes to ensure that those who cannot be rehabilitated no longer remain a threat to society. At the same time, I am diverting low-level offenses to community courts to ensure that victims are made whole and perpetrators face appropriate consequences while being given an opportunity to choose a different path by

receiving the services necessary to do so.

I have over 30 years of experience in working directly with communities- on their streets, and in their homes, community centers and businesses-- to lower crime and reduce recidivism. Under my leadership at SFPD, homicides dropped nearly in half. I am continuing that trajectory working with the community and SFPD to effectively prosecute cases while implementing innovative strategies to reduce crime, reduce recidivism, and prevent youth from heading down the path of a life of crime by keeping them in school and ensuring they graduate.

2. What sets you apart from your opponents?

I am the best qualified and have the most experience to make our city safer for everyone.

I have over 30 years of experience in working directly with communities- on their streets, and in their homes, community centers and businesses-- to lower crime and reduce recidivism. Under my leadership at SFPD, violent crime dropped nearly in half. I am continuing that trajectory as DA, working with the SFPD to effectively prosecute cases while implementing innovative strategies to reduce crime, reduce recidivism, and prevent youth from heading down the path of a life of crime by keeping them in school and ensuring they graduate.

I am the only candidate who has led and reformed large organizations. As the second in command of the LAPD, I commanded more than 8,000 personnel and led major ethics reform within the department in the wake of the ramparts police misconduct scandal. As Chief of Police I was able to cut violent crime in half and reduce the murder rate to its lowest level since 1961. I did this without increasing the jail population.

3. What do you view as the top three issues facing the San Francisco District Attorney's office? Please describe your solutions for those issues.

1. Taking violent offenders off the street, while finding alternatives to incarceration for non-violent and minor offenses.

As District Attorney, I am aggressively prosecuting violent crimes to ensure that those who cannot be rehabilitated no longer remain a threat to society. At the same time, I am diverting low-level offenses to neighborhood courts to ensure that victims are made whole and perpetrators face appropriate consequences while being given an opportunity to choose a different path by receiving the services necessary to do so. This Neighborhood Courts program is also cutting costs, allowing more resources to focus on more serious crimes.

2. Protecting our most vulnerable victims of crime

I have launched a program to address and prevent elder abuse, and am working with local consulates to help increase crime reporting in immigrant communities, because fear of reprisals due to immigration status often leads to under-reporting of crime.

I have also focused resources on prosecuting employers who violate workplace safety and wage laws, with one particularly egregious employer who took advantage of immigrants now facing jail time.

3. Keeping kids out of the criminal justice system

Working to end the cycle of crime, I have partnered with the Bayview YMCA to implement the CARE program to provide school credits to students who have missed school due to truancy or dropping out. By partnering with YMCA of San Francisco, kids receive missed instruction and services that allow them to graduate and stay off the path of crime. With students that are enrolled in the program and proving successful we are also offering paid internships with our office to provide further incentive to stay in school and complete their education.

4. What are some specific public safety strategies currently being implemented in San Francisco that you agree or disagree with? With these strategies in mind, what do you intend to do about public safety if elected District Attorney?

As Police Chief and District Attorney, I've led public safety efforts that have resulted in a reduction in crime to its lowest level since the 1960's.

When I became District Attorney, I uncovered a homicide backlog of over 70 cases. I corralled resources to expand the number of homicide prosecutors and set a goal to eliminate that backlog.

To reduce low-level crime I launched the Neighborhood Courts Initiative. I am placing prosecutors in the neighborhoods at the local district stations to partner with residents using restorative justice to stop the cycle of low-level crime, costing less and getting better results.

To stop the cycle of crime, I am holding offenders accountable while providing pathways out of a life of crime, by creating and implementing programs that combine close supervision with job training, education, and substance abuse interventions to protect public safety and reduce repeat offenses. For example, I am partnering with the Chief Probation Officer on the new Probation Accountability Court (PAC), initiative to hold probationers accountable and create pathways out of the cycle of crime. Instead of sending probationers to jail for minor violations, a trip that will further

diminish their ability to access a crime-free future, PAC intervenes quickly to correct their behaviors through a mix of sanctions and incentives.

5. Considering the current budget crisis, do you support reducing spending on corrections and if so, how? If not, how do you propose to fund the current corrections system?

We need to be more efficient in the use of the resources we do have. My most important, innovative cost saving strategy is the implementation of Neighborhood Courts. The average misdemeanor case costs \$1,500 to resolve. Rather than hearing low-grade misdemeanor cases and other non-serious cases in the criminal courts, we can save a tremendous amount of money. The Neighborhood Courts use a panel of community arbitrators to hear a case and determine what response is appropriate to restore the community and assist the individual to assure they will not re-offend. The average cost for a case to be handled in the Neighborhood Courts is only \$300 – a dramatic cost savings. I have already opened Neighborhood Courts in the Mission and the Bayview. We will be expanding to the Park and Taraval stations next month. My goal is to take this program citywide within a year.

I am also working to bring in more funding from state and federal grants as well as private donors. With the State moving towards sending large numbers of inmates back to local communities to serve their time and be supervised, we have an opportunity to change the way we sentence individuals. Our innovations, if done well, will attract outside funding and help support getting people services and support to reduce the likelihood that they will commit a new crime.

6. Do you believe that San Francisco should be a Sanctuary City, and how will you work with state and federal agencies to enforce the City's Sanctuary City policy?

I support Sanctuary City and strongly believe that it is not the role of local law enforcement to carry out federal immigration policies. Having successfully reduced crime in Mesa, Arizona by working cooperatively with immigrant communities, I know firsthand that trust is the basis of any functional relationship between communities and local law enforcement, and if there is fear that local law enforcement will facilitate immigration status-based arrests and deportations, people will not come forward to report crimes and justice will not be served.

As Chief of Police in Mesa, Arizona, I became an outspoken advocate against racial profiling and for immigrant rights. I spoke out against the extremist anti-immigrant views of Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. I faced threats and harassment from anti-immigrant groups and the Minutemen for speaking out. I was told that I would be fired for my testimony before Congress that

refuted claims that immigrants were more likely to commit crimes.

Secure Communities is one more effort to deputize local law enforcement to carry out federal immigration law, and I oppose it as currently being implemented. For this reason I drafted a proposal last year for ICE to limit the application of Secure Communities to serious and violent offenders. Unfortunately, that proposal was rejected. I am also a declarant in four separate lawsuits to protect immigrants' rights in the states of Arizona, Utah, Georgia and Alabama.

7. Is there any instance in which your office might seek the death penalty?

Although I am personally opposed to the death penalty, it is the law of the state. However, I support Senator Hancock's bill, SB 490, to abolish the death penalty and provide instead for imprisonment for life without the possibility of parole. As a representative of each and every San Franciscan, I believe it is incumbent upon me to have a serious analysis of each case that qualifies for capital punishment, and I have retained the same procedure used by Kamala Harris. Although she indicated she would not seek the death penalty, she still felt it important to have a process in place for evaluating these cases. I agree with Kamala Harris and have preserved her procedure and abide by it in evaluating cases.

8. What is your position on Loni Hancock's SB490?

I support Senator Hancock's bill.

9. How would your office address the truancy problem in San Francisco, particularly of children in elementary and middle schools?

In my experience as a former high school drop out, as well as someone who created multiple successful youth intervention programs, the best way to reduce truancy is to help truants become more active in the school community. For instance, while I was at LAPD, I personally knocked on hundreds of doors in neighborhoods with the highest truancy and drop out rates in South Central LA, speaking directly to families to see how we could help keep their kids in school. Under my leadership, police personnel worked with school officials to reduce truancy by approximately 50 percent.

As DA, I have implemented the CARE program to provide school credits to students who have missed school due to truancy or dropping out. By partnering with YMCA of San Francisco, kids receive missed instruction and services that allow them to graduate. I have also partnered with the YMCA and the Bayview Hunters Point YMCA to provide paid internships for San Francisco youths who are participating in the CARE program. These young

students receive skills training and mentoring in the DA's office to prepare them to be productive, contributing members of our community.

I will also be launching a program at Burton High School this fall to work with incoming ninth graders at risk of being truant. We are providing funding for case managers to work with the students to prevent them from being truant and helping them get off on the right foot in high school. If they never fall behind they are much more likely to graduate and lead a productive life.

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*Please return your responses to this Questionnaire by **Thursday, August 11, 2011**, to contact_us@phdemclub.org. Thank you again for your participation.*