

Candidate: Cassandra James

Supervisor, District 1

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Questionnaire Responses

Do you seek the endorsement of the Solano County Democratic Central Committee? If so, why?

Yes, I seek the endorsement of the Solano County Democratic Central Committee because of our shared commitment with other people-powered coalitions to fight for vulnerable communities so they have access to a quality life and to thrive. I'm a proud lifelong Democrat and an elected ADEM.

1. Why are you running for office?

I am running for Solano County Supervisor because I am certain that my personal experiences, professional background, and passion will make a meaningful sustainable difference in the lives of our children, aging parents, and ourselves.

My motivation is my two sons, who serve as my guiding light. After witnessing the racial reckoning following George Floyd's murder, my eldest son asked, "what can we do?" This simple question forced me to deeply reflect on how we can move beyond protests and take meaningful action through policy to create sustainable positive change for marginalized and working-class individuals. It was at that moment that I knew I had to run for office.

Specifically, I have developed an expertise in delivering affordable housing, helping the unhoused, and advocating for domestic abuse survivors and women seeking a better life after incarceration. I manage a billion dollar affordable housing budget at the City and County of San Francisco, supervising and partnering with 33 community partners and providers. This professional background prepares me for becoming a Supervisor who will hit the ground running to help vulnerable and marginalized communities while also understanding the complex financial decisions Supervisors need to make, particularly around housing and related services.

2. What is the nature and extent of any prior relevant involvement you have had in the community, civic, and/or political activities? Please include a description of all elected or appointed offices you have held.

For almost two decades, I have been organizing in the most disadvantaged communities in the Bay Area. At 18 years old, I represented Bayview/Hunters Point as an appointee to the San Francisco Youth Commission, one of San Francisco's most marginalized communities and where I grew up.

The center of my organizing, then and now, is to ensure and increase access to deserved resources for historically excluded and underemployed communities, including but not limited to communities impacted by gun violence, justice-impacted individuals, dual-diagnosis (mental illness + substance (use/age)), formerly unhoused individuals, survivors of domestic violence and communities utilizing public benefits. Throughout the years, I have successfully completed relevant training programs to expand my knowledge and maximize my public service capacity.

The programs include:

- **New Leaders Council which provides place-based training and a national network of support and training programs for millennials**
- **Truman Democracy Fellow Program, a bi-annual opportunity for President Truman Scholars that provides training on bi-partisan efforts and tips led by senior officials in electoral elections**
- **Emerge, a premier training program for Democratic women interested in running for public office**
- **Dezie Woods Jones Public Policy Fellowship Program, a program for young leaders to strengthen skills as thought leaders, subject matter experts, advocates and innovators of public policies that positively impact their communities.**

I have lived in Vallejo for thirteen years, in North Vallejo for almost one decade and have increasingly been involved in several community groups and organizations.

For more than a year, I have been a convener of Community Conversations in North Vallejo about the state of the City of Vallejo, which includes but is not limited to city policies, policing, housing, homelessness, funding, and solutions.

Currently, I am an Elected ADEM Delegate, Housing and Community Development Commissioner, Vice President of Black Women Organizing for Political Action (BWOPA) Solano/Napa Chapter, Rapid Response Volunteer with Moms Demand Action Richmond-Vallejo Chapter, Board Member at Vallejo Together, Board Member at Boys and Girls Empowerment Group, Facilitator for BIPOC Stabilization Cohort, member of Sankofa Democratic Club & Stonewall Democratic Club. For the last year, I have consistently participated and contributed to the Working Families Coalition meeting.

3. What elements of your background, work history, education, volunteer positions, and/or other personal accomplishments make you the best candidate for this position?

My professional background coupled with my lived experience unequivocally distinguishes my candidacy from others in this race. I grew up in public housing; went to bed hungry too many nights of my young life; heard rounds of bullets and dodged them by laying down on the floor or the tub in our home; walked through the most dangerous communities in San Francisco; lost family and friends to drug overdose, street violence and the prison system. My candidacy does not align with biases held by some in the county, but in talking to voters, I know I'm speaking for people who are desperate for a voice like mine in county government.

4. What do you hope to accomplish in office? What are your top priorities for this term?

I want to make sure that Greater Vallejo has a voice in the room where decisions are made and demonstrate that I am the one representing and looking out for every District 1 resident. Vallejo deserves its fair share from the County, and my top priority is ensuring that we get the resources we deserve to address our many challenges. This is especially the case for securing regional resources to address our homelessness and housing affordability crisis, as well as public safety resources.

My second priority is rooted in environmental justice. I want District 1 residents to breathe clean air, to be safe walking and biking our streets, and to take pride in our community. I aim to work closely with the Napa-Solano Labor Council and other partners to expand labor apprenticeship programs in our community and secure a just transition for workers whose jobs are at risk. I also aim to defend urban limit lines and preserve open space for future generations. We need to invest in and revitalize our existing cities.

My third priority is centered around creating economic development opportunities through collaborating with Vallejo City officials, the business community, nonprofit organizations and other key stakeholders to determine best ways to support small and medium size businesses, facilitate incentives to attractive new industries, and job skill training programs. While also continuing conversations with philanthropic foundations to invest in the city and county.

While the Solano County Board of Supervisors doesn't have direct oversight of the Vallejo Police Department, I will also be closely monitoring the state's intervention in the VPD to ensure that this time, the reforms stick and Vallejoans can be confident that law enforcement is held to the highest ethical standards to protect and serve the community.

5. How much funding do you anticipate needing to raise for this election? From what sources do you plan to raise the funds you need for this election and who has contributed to your campaign to date?

I anticipate needing to raise \$100,000 - \$135,000 for this election. I plan to receive my main financial commitments through small-dollar donations, labor unions, and progressive PACs. I'll hold more than a dozen grassroots house parties. To date, we have received contributions from more than 200 small dollar donors and SEIU 2015 and SEIU 1021.

6. Please list any endorsements you have already received.

Partial list of key supporters include SEIU 2015, SEIU 1021, SEIU-UHW, Planned Parenthood, CA Democratic Party Renters Council, Solano County Supervisor Wanda Williams, Vallejo City Council Member Mina Diaz, Vallejo School Board Trustee Carlos Flores, Vacaville City Council Member Mike Silva, Fairfield City Council Member K. Patrice Williams, Suisun City Council Member Princess Washington, Benicia City Council Member Kari Birdseye, Former Stockton Mayor & Special Advisor (to Gov. Newsom) for Economic Mobility and Opportunity, Michael Tubbs, BART Director Lateefah Simon and CDP Environmental Caucus Chair Igor Tregub. The full list can be found on my campaign website.

7. Have you hired, or do you plan to hire, a campaign consultant? If so, who?

Yes, I have hired a campaign consultant; The Next Generation, led by Doug Linney.

8. California, Solano County, and local Jurisdictions are all facing substantial demands on their budget. What ideas do you have to help deal with the fiscal issues we face?

If financial cutbacks become necessary in my term in office, I will request a hearing for a budget presentation by the County Administrator and department heads to discuss shortfalls and recommendations. Prior to the hearing, I will meet with the County Administrator, budget director, and auditor to better understand the budget shortfall, required reserve levels, and all possibilities of spending cuts or ways to defer certain expenditures. In addition, I would proactively contact all of the unions to request a meeting and would have an inclusive process to listen to unions, and community members on their recommendations and potential impacts. Staff should use information to do a full cost-benefit analysis before I make any decisions. I would start with non-essential items and programs with the least impact.

9. What are the major issues faced by the constituents in your jurisdiction, and how do you plan to address them?

There are several major issues faced by the constituents in my jurisdiction. The primary issues are economic opportunities, public safety, housing and homelessness. The primary major issue is the lack of affordable housing. I plan to address housing the unhoused in this county, as well as the broader housing crisis which includes analyzing data on housing needs, homelessness trends, and gaps in housing services. The data can inform policy-making and resource allocation for more targeted and effective planning. In addition to data collection, I plan to focus on housing-first approaches that prioritize providing stable housing as a foundation for addressing other needs including incorporating Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (BARHII) framework of addressing housing through a public health lens with regional plan and learning more on how Bay Area Housing Finance Authority can address. Housing affordability. This also includes forging partnerships with nonprofits, housing authorities, developers, and community organizations to leverage resources and expertise in creating housing solutions. Continuum of Care and the Joint Power Authority, develop clear and transparent protocols and guidelines for encampment cleanups within the county. This includes establishing procedures for notifying individuals in advance of cleanups, protocols for handling personal belongings, and policies to ensure fairness and respect during the cleanup process. Housing and labor policies are closely intertwined and have mutual effects on workforce participation, income inequality, economic development, and overall quality of life. Addressing housing affordability, stability, and access can positively impact economic growth and managing our public safety concerns.

10. What are the major issues facing public employees in your jurisdiction, and how do you plan to address them?

In the realm of affordable housing and public infrastructure funding (and the staff requirements behind it), I strongly support ACA 1, which lowers the threshold for voters to approve bonds to 55%. Also,

Solano County is a philanthropy desert and strongly supports working with family foundations and philanthropists to coordinate public-private partnerships. Lastly, I support the regional effort that is currently underway through the CERF working group to apply for funds on a regional basis.

As a county supervisor, it would be imperative to work towards improving employee retention rates, fostering a more positive work environment, and retaining valuable talent within county departments. I would like to partner with colleagues on the Board of Supervisors and the largest union in the county to analyze data related to employee turnover, including demographic information, reasons for leaving, and tenure. The data and analysis should be tailored to meet the needs of such departments and provide a pathway for our shortcomings. I would like to learn more from Human Resources on outreach efforts that are being conducted throughout the County and region including minimum qualifications that may prevent a journey-level employee from upward mobility.

11. What are the major issues facing historically under-represented groups in your jurisdiction, i.e., Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+, etc.? Are there issues specific to one or more groups in particular? How do you plan to address them?

The City of Vallejo was sued due to the lack of diversity on the city council and that suit led to districts. Transparency is important because we must be able to communicate with and trust our elected officials by fostering good relationships between the community, elected officials and other stakeholders. Also, Vallejo is home to the nineteenth deadliest police force in the State of California and homelessness has become an intersectional problem throughout the city and beyond. I plan to address the issues by having ongoing state of the district updates to address concerns and understand the priorities of residents and neighbors.

12. What are the major economic issues facing your jurisdiction? How will you balance the concerns of union members, working families, local businesses, and regional/national corporate firms?

Currently, I sit on the working families coalition that consist of all named stakeholders to address the economic issues facing the county and Vallejo. The major issues are around jobs and housing including the possible toll for transportation in the area. I have been a part of these meeting for the last year.

13. What are the major issues facing children, youth, and their families in your jurisdiction? How do you plan to address them?

Several major issues facing children, youth, and families in Solano County including education and access to Quality Schools, the need to comprehensively address mental health challenges including access to mental health services, counseling, and support for families dealing with mental health issues. The need to address housing affordability issues to prevent homelessness among families, providing holistic support services for homeless families, and implementing initiatives to reduce housing insecurity. Lastly, the lack of accessibility to youth enrichment programs and safe programs for them to be a kid. I plan to address some of these issues by collaborating with schools, nonprofits, healthcare providers, and community organizations to develop and advocate for policies that address the needs of children, youth, and families including advocating to allocate more dollars to ensure we have programs in place for children including forming partnerships with state agencies and foundations to access additional funding and resources that can be directed towards addressing these issues.

14. What are the major issues facing your jurisdiction, relating to the environment and the climate crisis? What are the specific impacts faced by marginalized and under-represented communities? How do you plan to address them?

The major issues facing my jurisdiction relating to the environment and climate crisis are the increased transportation and flannery building in the area. I will review and ensure I gain a strong understanding of sustainable development practices, including green building standards, mixed land use planning, and efficient transportation systems to reduce sprawl and hold firm on urban limit lines. I believe the county must consistently and systematically review environmental impacts and implement measures to reduce air pollution. I'm strongly in favor of promoting public transportation and supporting clean energy initiatives. As a county supervisor, building partnerships, advocating for environmentally friendly policies, allocating resources effectively, and engaging the community in decision-making processes are essential steps toward addressing and mitigating environmental challenges within the county.

15. *What are the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions in your jurisdiction? What specific steps would you take to lower greenhouse gas emission from government, commercial and residential sectors?*

The major drivers of green house gases are the cars on our roads. These is a need to move to electric vehicles and expanding public transportation in an affordable way.

16. *What role would the use of renewable energy sources, enhanced energy efficiency, conservation, and other methods play in your response to the climate crisis? What is your opinion on the recent proposal by the California Public Utilities Commission to change rooftop solar incentives?*

The major question at hand in regards to the CPUC is the affordability to economically low income families. As we move to greener ways, it is to incentivize for developers, investors and ensuring that the county can lead in shifting how the county services and employees access renewable energy.

17. *What are the major issues in your jurisdiction related to poverty, income inequality, affordable housing, homelessness, and food insecurity? How do you plan to address them?*

We are no different from any other county and I would like to address this issue by working with the regional cities and counties to fully address the concern

18. *What are the major issues facing your jurisdiction related to public health services and access to affordable health care? How do you plan to address them?*

The major issues facing my jurisdiction related to public health services and access to affordable health care is the lack of accessibility to health services and also the shortage of healthcare workers. I see myself supporting the future of work by introducing and/or supporting legislation that allocates funding to programs aimed at training and educating healthcare workers and expanding initiatives like Futuro Health that provide accessible education and training for prospective healthcare workers especially in historically underserved communities. I will also advocate for funding to invest in programs that reduce the financial barriers to education in healthcare fields. I will support initiatives to gather data and conduct research on the factors contributing to the healthcare worker shortage and use evidence-based approaches to inform policy decisions and identify effective strategies for addressing workforce challenges. In addition, working with a collaborative to ensure that we can increase accessibility to our community clinics and hospitals.

19. *Are you in favor of following science-based advice from health experts on pandemics and vaccine mandates? Which entities, if any, do you feel are best suited to issue public health mandates?*

Of course. Public health mandates should come from county health officers, the California Department of Public Health (and the Governor working on their advice), and the CDC, working on the best available science, including recommendations from WHO.

20. *Do you support a woman's right to make reproductive healthcare choices? Please explain.*

I am 100% pro-choice and proud to be the only candidate endorsed by Planned Parenthood Mar Monte in this election. I support comprehensive reproductive health care in Solano County.

21. *How would you respond to concerns that some public employees, and specifically members of law enforcement, are affiliated with extremist groups, including those that advocate violence against the government and racial, ethnic, LGBTQ+, and other under-represented groups? What steps would you take to address this issue?*

It's deeply troubling and something I've spoken out about. I support Attorney General Bonta's oversight of the Vallejo Police Department, which was required in part due to racial profiling in the department. I support collective bargaining rights and would respect any processes that public employees have negotiated through their unions, but ultimately, we can't have racists or homophobes in positions where they can do harm, especially not law enforcement. People associated with extremist organizations should not be in a position where they can act on prejudice and hate, and it's in everyone's interest to see them leave public employment.

22. *Members of the public are exhibiting declining levels of faith and trust in their elected officials at all levels, leading to increased tension and reduced civil discourse. What will you do to restore public confidence and encourage productive civic participation in your jurisdiction?*

I will conduct targeted meetings with businesses, students, faith-based and community-based organizations. I will have bi-monthly community meetings to provide updates and receive feedback from residents. Also, it is my goal to create a neighborhood advisory council for residents to lead and organize to assist me with drafting district priorities. To develop greater trust, connectedness, and cohesiveness I will sponsor different community events such as a movie in the park, backpack giveaway, homeless connection, resource fairs (with stakeholders), etc. and including a monthly district newsletter.

23. *How long have you been a registered Democrat? Why are you a Democrat, and how do your reasons relate to the office you seek?*

I am a lifelong Democrat and have been registered as a Democrat since I was eligible to register. I am Democrat because of shared values of fighting for the common American and we live up to the American Dream. This is a democratic district that value diversity, experience and knowledge this office can facilitate and move forward policies to collectively ensure that everyday folks have access to live and thrive in their county.

24. *Have you read and do you support the current California Democratic Party platform? Are there any parts of the Party platform that you do not support? If so, why.*

I have read the California Democratic Party platform and support it.

25. *Have you ever publicly endorsed a candidate other than a registered Democrat? Are there circumstances in which you would do so? Please explain.*

No, I have not ever endorsed a candidate other than a registered Democrat.

26. *If you discovered that negative campaign methods, such as the use of attack ads and mailers, misleading phone and text messages, or similar tactics, were being used against an opponent, what would you do?*

Raise Awareness to the necessary extent through the proper protocol. I don't want lies spread on my behalf.

27. *Please share any other information you think will assist the Central Committee in considering your endorsement.*

I am certain that we all need a second chance, and sometimes a third chance. Every day we all fail forward and the degree of our failure looks different and the consequences sometimes mean being justice impacted. Like far too many of our neighbors in Vallejo, my partner is formerly incarcerated, and his journey toward rehabilitation and redemption is a great inspiration to me. I see and know how hard he works to repair the harm caused in his past and to be a model citizen in our community. I see the labor movement as a space where second and third chances are possible. As the Solano County Board of Supervisor for District One I look forward to partnering with you on strategies to help formerly incarcerated people find stable training and employment opportunities through the union. We all know that Vallejoans, regardless of ideological beliefs, are concerned about the City's state of public safety. Whatever steps are necessary in the short term, I am convinced that the root problem cannot be fully determined and addressed without providing equitable culturally competent supportive services, education, housing and economic opportunities for people released from prison in a supportive community. Together we must and will break the cycle.