

2020 Endorsement Questionnaire

Email address *

vernacastro@gmail.com

APA Democratic Caucus of Alameda County



PLEASE COMPLETE AND SUBMIT BY SEPT. 9, midnight. Please take time to review the questions before filling in the boxes since you cannot save the responses for later completion. Thank you for your interest in being considered for an endorsement by the Asian Pacific American Democratic Caucus of Alameda County. Please answer each question in 250 words or less. Be honest and direct. Please note: your questionnaire will be posted on our website for Caucus members and the public to review.

Personal Information

Candidate Name *

Verna Castro

City and zip code of residence.

94501

What is your campaign website address?

2532 Santa Clara Ave #196, Alameda, CA 94501

What is your campaign email address?

vernaforschoolboard@gmail.com

What is the office that you are seeking? *

- Alameda City Council
- Alameda School Board
- Berkeley, Mayor
- Berkeley, City Council, Dist. 2
- Berkeley, City Council, Dist. 3
- Berkeley, City Council, Dist.5
- Berkeley, City Council, Dist. 6
- Berkeley, Unified School District Trustee
- Berkeley, Rent Stabilization Board
- Oakland, City Council, Dist. 1
- Oakland, City Council, Dist. 3
- Oakland, City Council, Dist. 5
- Oakland, City Council, Dist. 7
- Oakland, City Council, At-large
- Oakland City Attorney
- Oakland USD, School Trustee, Dist. 1
- Oakland USD, School Trustee, Dist. 3
- Oakland USD, School Trustee, Dist. 5
- Oakland USD, School Trustee, Dist. 7
- AC Transit, Bd. of Directors, Ward 1
- AC Transit, Bd. of Directors, Ward 2
- AC Transit Bd. of Directors, At-Large
- EB Regional Park Dist. Bd. of Directors. Ward 1

Regional Council, Bd. of Directors, Area 1

AD 15, State Assembly Representative

AD 18, State Assembly Representative

Peralta Community College District, Bd. of Director, Area 2

Other:

Are you the incumbent?

Yes

No

Are you a registered Democrat? The APA Democratic Caucus can only endorse registered Democrats

Yes

No

How long have you been a registered Democrat? If less than 5 years, please explain your reason for becoming a Democrat.

41 years

Are you an APA Caucus member?

Yes

No

Why are you seeking the Caucus's endorsement?

I am Pacific Islander, both of my parents are Chamorro indigenous to the island of Guam. I am a 34 year public school educator - 27 year high school teacher, 19 year athletic director, 24 year coach, 8 year current P.E. High School Program Administrator. I desire to be a voice for our APA communities to further the gains we are making, to uplift those who need the support. As a school board member, I intend to work with board members to enact inclusive policies that represent our communities with Asians being the largest racial group in Alameda County at 31.08%, in the city of Alameda 30.4% are Chinese, Filipino or Korean, 31.1% Asian and Pacific America (2012-16 5 yr estimate) and Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial group in the US electorate. I am thrilled our state superintendent has recommended Asian Student K-12 as well as Native and Indigenous studies to provide rich heritage for for all our students.

List ONLY the top 5 endorsements that you have received. (Please reference your website if you want to alert us to more).

Assemblyperson Rob Bonta, AUSD President Mia Bonta, Gary Lym, AUSD Board Trustee, Alameda Councilperson Jim Oddie, Aimee Eng, Oakland Unified School District Board Director

If we endorse you, will you use our name in your campaign materials?

Yes

No

Maybe

How long have you lived in the district which you are seeking to represent?

1 yr.

Educational background: What schools have you attended, date graduated, major and degree(s) earned.

UC Berkeley, Urban Education Administrator Credential 2004, Stanford University, A.M Urban Leadership 1984, University of San Francisco, B.A. Liberal Arts 1983

Employment: List the last three (3) paid positions, indicating name of employer, job title, and length of employment.

San Francisco Unified School District, P.E. High School Program Administrator (8 yrs current), SFUSD Athletic Director (19 yrs), SFUSD P.E. Teacher (27 yrs)

What are the names of any community or nonprofit organizations with which you have been an active volunteer in the past 3-5 years.

Empowering Pacific Islanders Community Collective and Pacific Island Roots

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. What differentiates you from your opponents for the elected office that you are seeking?

1. My 34 years experience in public education as a teacher, athletic director, department chairperson, program administrator, on school site council, site PTA, site union building representative.
2. Working with communities (parents, community based organizations and other agencies) within and outside of school to wrap services around students who need support.
3. Ive created Parent Advisory Council in Sports, Community collective with parents, teachers, students, community members to support racial groups
4. Focused on student health and wellness for 34 years and intentional on subgroups who need supports. Some communities it is the southeast asian, others it is the Pacific Islander groups while others it is our African American or Latino groups. Closing the health disparity fitness gap so students can be empowered to make wise decision while improving or maintaining their health related fitness level.
5. Ive worked with marginalized students my entire career and in poverty areas of the city and helped them to rise to challenges physically, mentally and academically through PE and Athletic programming with community support.
6. I am a 2nd generation Pacific Islander who was marginalized raised by a single mother (mother and father were in a WWII internment camp in Guam) with 5 children, who grew up poor. I was able to navigate the systems of inequities to attend elite universities and return to public schooling to give back. I empathize and I then am able to help them be at their best.
7. I worked with all communities but especially loved working with my immigrant APA community and the students and teachers that knew I was gravitated towards me. I was able to help many in their school and teacher professional growth and even to pursue administration careers.
8. I have helped students in the poorest communities, raised by a grandmother or foster parent, I have helped them get through school, graduate and go to college.
9. I have lived the immigrant life, my history with my family goes back generations with colonization and in America I grew up navigating systems of inequity to rise through challenges and I am driven to help each and every child navigate to their dream, their reality. We are taught to sacrifice, work hard, have integrity, value family, persevere, build community then give back so that we can be contributing members of society - this is why our parents left their beloved homeland to come to the US. With that understanding, it is also vital that we acknowledge, honor and dignify cultures so it is preserved. I intend to do this and uplift our students and communities to build bridges.

2. Describe one issue for the district you want to represent for which you have provided leadership and about which you are passionate.

Health and wellness Policy. Especially during this time of COVID, it is critical students are provided wellness supports in order to make it through the day. All students, teachers, other staff and communities need a coordinated care of support to serve their basic needs. Eventually the goal is institute a wellness center in each school (coordinator, nurse, therapists and other support providers).

3. What percentage of the district you [or intend to] represent are of APA heritage?

36% and 9% are 2+ more races. If we disaggregate the 2+ more races I am certain some are Asian and Pacific America students.

4. Please identify the three largest APA ethnicities in your district.

36% Asian are the only APA showing in the demographic data. First thing on the job is identifying students who are APA so that they may receive the needed services.

5. Please identify the most at-risk APA community in your district and explain why.

Pacific America students although not identified in the overall demographic data, I know they exist in the Alameda Point Collaborative housing projects because I have gone out there and have seen them living in poverty. Often they are misidentified and choose to say they are the other race, 2+ or more races or not identified.

6. List the three top concerns of members of the APAs in your district.

1. east and west wealth divide. Asians are on the BayFarm side or east with wealth, schools out perform other schools. Asians on the west side of the island are in lower performing neighborhood schools. West side have more needs because students come in less prepared and do not have the resources that the east parents provide their children.
2. English Language learner classification, students are often misclassified coming into the school, in the wrong class for their designation or do not get tested out of the EL class and may remain in the class longer than they should.
3. Pacific Islander students are misidentified and often fall through the cracks. We need to set up systems to identify students once they enter into the schools so they receive the necessary resources to succeed.

7. During the COVID-19 pandemic, reports of anti-Asian verbal and physical attacks have arisen. If you are the incumbent, how have you addressed this? If you are a candidate how will you address this?

Hate is hate and should not be tolerated. There should be a 0 tolerance discrimination policy for against Asians and Asian descent especially when Alameda's motto of "Everyone Belongs Here" is one of pride for the community. To begin local govt should take swift action against racial attacks by prosecuting those who persecute innocent people. Some ideas I have is inclusive school policies created to expand public outreach to students and communities, promote tolerance through student voice and community based organizations partnerships, and counter hate speech and crimes by aggressively investigating and decisively taking action in ways that will teach the student whether it be restorative justice or other action. More reason to institute a Wellness Center to address individuals, preventative strategies and activities to promoting and encouraging inclusiveness and tolerance, people of color how to advocate for themselves. I would also create policy that introduces anti-bias education for all: teacher and leader training, students and parents anti bias campaign as well as enact policies to heal harm so communities can move forward positively. Policies that support curriculum and practices on inclusion and diversity that represent the students we see in the schools. Still, the task of dismantling discriminatory practices rooted in "othering" and replacing those systems of oppression with our Everyone Belongs Here Motto will take collective and intentional policy action affecting all school communities.

8. Do you believe that Asian and Pacific Americans are adequately represented in local government? What can elected officials do to improve participation?

Asians are the fastest growing race in the electoral, so it makes sense to have representation in office. If we do not elect Asians and Pacific Americans our rights will be stripped. If this is not done this will marginalize our groups. Currently, I do not believe there is adequate representation to date. Elected official can outreach to set up mentorship programs, fund APA so that they may go into public office, set up leadership institutes to train prospective elected officials, host events and fundraiser to celebrate, acknowledge and invite young folks to watch and learn. Leadership must reflect the people it serves. I would be the 1st ever Pacific American board member in Alameda.

9. Please identify all Asian Pacific American candidates whom you have personally endorsed over the past 5 years including this election cycle. If there are none, please explain.

None. I lived in Contra Costa County for many years and there were very few APA candidates in my area running for office.

10. If you were faced with a situation that involved an Asian Pacific American community, would you seek consultation with our Caucus as a resource?

Yes

No

Thank you for completing our questionnaire.

Please submit your responses by Sept. 9, 2020 midnight. Our North County Endorsement Meeting is scheduled for Thu., Sept. 24 beginning at 6:30 pm on Zoom. Only those candidates submitting the questionnaire on time will be on our endorsement ballot. No changes to your responses can be made after it is submitted.

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