

2020 Endorsement Questionnaire

Email address *

benfortransit@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 *

Ben Fong

City and zip code of residence.

Albany 94706

What is your campaign website address?

www.benfortransit.com

What is your campaign email address?

benfortransit@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.

14 yrs

Are you an APA Caucus member?

Yes

No

Why are you seeking the Caucus's endorsement?

I am seeking the endorsement of the Asian Pacific American Democratic Caucus of Alameda County as a member, proud Asian American, and proud Democrat. I want to represent the APA Caucus well in the election and represent our community on the Board. Having the Caucus' support would help me demonstrate the strength of my message and my campaign to voters. I am honored to be considered by the Asian Pacific American Democratic Caucus of Alameda County.

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

Berkeley Democratic Club
Alameda County Assessor Phong La
Senator Scott Wiener
BART Director Rebecca Saltzman
East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club

More endorsements at:

<https://www.benfortransit.com>

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?

Many years

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

Stanford University 2008 BA Political Science

Princeton University 2010 MPA Public Affairs

UC Berkeley 2017 MBA

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

Spin, Director, 2017-current (Bikeshare and sustainable transportation company)

U.S. Department of State, Foreign Service Officer/Diplomat 2010-2015

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

Berkeley Planning Commission

A Fork in the Road (charity - Founder)

Stanford Asia Pacific American Alumni Club (Board member and President)

Berkeley Community Scholars (Board member)

PPIA (Alumni board member - organization helping underrepresented minorities get into public policy school and positions)

East Bay Young Dems

Sierra Club

ACLU

Stanford Club of the East Bay (Co-founder and President)

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

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

When my great grandparents lived in Oakland Chinatown and San Leandro, they faced racial discrimination. I'm fighting for AC Transit because public transit doesn't discriminate and I want to uplift our community. I have the strongest endorsements from city officials and I want to improve coordination between AC Transit and our city governments to ensure that AC Transit is serving our community.

As a Cal and Stanford-educated transportation professional who has brought sustainable transportation to dozens of cities, I have a background that enables me to both implement effective policy and run a reliable and sustainable transportation service. I have served Berkeley as a Berkeley Planning Commissioner from 2016-2019 and helped redesign the Adeline Corridor, implement transit demand management (TDM) measures incentivizing public transit, and serve Berkeley's underserved communities. I am a former diplomat in the Obama Administration with tours in Mexico, India, and across the Asia Pacific working on environmental and health issues, including on combating the Ebola pandemic in 2014. I will bring this expertise to the Board.

I am also the only AC Transit Ward 1 candidate who identifies as Asian and Pacific Islander. It is long overdue for an APA community member to represent the APA population, the largest population group in Alameda County, on the AC Transit Board.

Finally, I have the strongest transportation and policy background among my peers and I believe this is the technical background we need on the Board. Despite my non political background, I have been able to create a coalition of supporters including Sen. Scott Wiener, Assessor Phong La, and endorsements from Contra Costa Young Democrats among many others. I will continue to take this momentum into November.

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

Public transit is the only way we will reduce our CO2 emissions and climate change. We must reinvest in AC Transit, not make cuts. Some transit infrastructure I would propose include dedicated bus lanes on San Pablo and the Bay Bridge, bus stops infrastructure that works in concert with protected bike lanes, and improved transportation demand management incentives to encourage public transit use. AC Transit's Zero Emission Plan has AC Transit transition to zero emission buses by 2040, however I believe we need to accelerate that timeline to 2030 if we are to combat climate change and global warming.

I have a strong record as a leader in environmental protection. As a Foreign Service Officer, I promoted environmental protections and environmental cooperation on a global scale. As an environmental officer and U.S. Delegate to the multilateral organization APEC, I helped negotiate a reduction in tariffs on 50+ environmentally friendly goods such as wind turbines, solar panels, and parts that help filter contaminants across 20 countries. During my time on the Berkeley Planning Commission, I have introduced and supported bills aimed at reducing parking requirements, TDM measures, improved bike parking and bike infrastructure, improving density bonuses, and others. I have been a leader in sustainable transportation working in bikeshare and electric vehicles.

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

31% in Alameda County, 17% in Contra Costa County

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

Chinese, Filipino, Japanese

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

Low-income APA families are most-at-risk for becoming homeless, food insecure and unable to access jobs, school or health appointments. We need to provide better job and financial opportunities in their neighborhoods so they can be close to work and home, public transportations must be a reliable option in these neighborhoods. Given the unemployment crisis, we need buses to get people to job opportunities.

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

Increase in APA families experiencing poverty: Between 2000 and 2015, the APA low-income population grew by 46%. Gentrification and displacement pressures have been forcing APA residents out of neighborhoods they have settled. We need to protect our APA communities from the negative effects of gentrification.

Lack of affordable housing and housing assistance in East Bay: The East Bay, like the rest of California, is experiencing a housing crisis. We need to ensure that our low-income APA community members are able to pay rent or find affordable housing before facing eviction and becoming pushed out of their neighborhoods.

Rising Anti-Asian Sentiment: With some groups targeting Asians as vectors to bring Covid the USA, Asian Americans have faced increased harassment and racism. We need to ensure that we combat racism and ensure safety from racial discrimination.

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?

When my great-grandparents lived in Oakland in the early 1900s, they couldn't buy a house due to racial discrimination. We are going backwards with the rise in anti-Asian discrimination.

As a candidate I will condemn all anti-Asian verbal and physical attacks against my APA community. Elected officials need to quickly condemn any form of racism and hold other elected officials to do the same. Public official messages play an important role in public outreach and promoting tolerance and respect in our communities. We must monitor racist statements and actions and prosecute injustices as hate crimes. If elected to the AC Transit Board. I will advocate for racial bias training for our transit professionals so they are cognizant of anti-Asian and other racist statements against people of color and to report all bias-related incidents. We should also ensure a number or website is posted on buses so riders can report anti-Asian and additional bias-related incidents that occur on our public transit systems.

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

No, I do not believe Asian and Pacific Americans are adequately represented in the East Bay. APIs makeup 26% of the total population in the Bay Area meanwhile they only hold 10% of local government elected officials. 71% of Bay Area elected officials are white despite only 40% of the total population identifying as white. The APA community has historically not been politically empowered or represented in the East Bay causing public policies to be passed without their opinions. It is our elected officials' responsibility to engage and support all communities in our district, especially the growing APA community. Elected officials can include APA organization in the public policy process and hold regular meetings to hear their ideas or concerns. During the election cycle, we must not forget about the APA vote and provide solutions to voting practices that prevent APA residents in voting.

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.

This is my first time running for office so few people have asked for my endorsement, however I have publicly supported many APA candidates.

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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