

2020 Endorsement Questionnaire East County

Email address *

monith4mayor@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 *

Monith Ilavarasan

City and zip code of residence.

Pleasanton, 94588

What is your campaign website address?

monith4mayor.com

What is your campaign email address?

monith4mayor@gmail.com

What is the office that you are seeking? *

- City of Dublin Mayor
- City of Dublin City Council
- City of Dublin, Unified School District Trustee, Area 1
- City of Dublin, Unified School District Trustee, Area 4
- City of Livermore, Mayor
- City of Livermore, City Council, Dist. 3
- City of Livermore, Unified School District
- City of Pleasanton, Mayor
- City of Pleasanton, City Council
- City of Pleasanton, Unified School District Trustee
- AC Board of Supervisors, District 1
- AD 16, State Assembly Representative
- 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.

2010

Are you an APA Caucus member?

Yes

No

Why are you seeking the Caucus's endorsement?

I'm seeking the Caucus's endorsement because I value the work that they have done to push political participation amongst underrepresented Asian minority groups throughout the Bay Area. An endorsement would strengthen Asian American support throughout Pleasanton for the only Asian American currently still running in the mayoral race.

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

Zarina Kiziloglu - Pleasanton Housing Commission

Isaac Elias - Community Activist & Veteran

Tri-Valley Kongu Gounder Group

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?

Lived here between 2005 - 2010, and then again from 2018 - present

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

UC Davis, graduated July 2014 Double major in Applied Statistics & Managerial Economics

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

FLYR - Principal Product Manager (1 year, 10 months)
Brightwheel - Product Manager (1 year)
Zynga - Data Analyst, Product Manager (2 years, 8 months)

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

Zynga.org
Boost! West Oakland
DSA San Francisco

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

My platform contains progressive stances on building more affordable housing for our essential workers & supplementing our police services with mental health/social work professionals. Pleasanton has a low wage job/housing ratio of ~20, which is one of the worst in the entire Bay Area. Pleasanton also has three specific cases of the death of an unarmed civilian facing a mental health crisis at the hands of the police in the past five years. What differentiates me from my opponents is that I have a platform focused on meeting these crises head on and advocating for those who work in our community and those who are most vulnerable.

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

I want to do everything I can to get increased funding for our schools so they can put in measures to re-open schools safely as soon as possible. I have volunteered in after school programs as part of Boost! West Oakland and have organized and led multiple after school field trips and events. Education is incredibly important to me, and ensuring that the teachers & students in our community are given the resources they need are very important to me.

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

30%

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

Chinese, Asian Indian, Korean

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

The community which cuts across all ethnicities which are most at-risk are those who are not citizens and are residing in Pleasanton on work visas.

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

Top three concerns of APAs in Pleasanton are:

1. School funding

Many Asian Americans move here because Pleasanton schools are some of the best in the country. They want to ensure that these schools get the funding they need to be best in class. In March, a school funding bond measure failed as adequate resources from the city council were not put into getting voter turnout out. Measures like these need to pass in order to keep our schools strong, and it is something that I will fight for as Mayor.

2. Affordable Rent & Housing

There are many Asian Americans in this community who have moved here recently and are currently renting in Pleasanton with the hope of becoming a first time homeowner. Unfortunately, due to our housing policies of the past 30 years, we have a severe gap of the "middle layer" of affordable housing for first time homeowners. In addition, due to the lack of any rent control provisions, many APAs are spending much of their earnings on rent, making it even more difficult to save up to one day own a place. Many APA (including myself) feel locked out of the ladder into a stable middle class due to the dearth of housing options we have here in Pleasanton. Many of the older generation of APA are feeling a concern that their children will not be able to move into the same town as them, and would be forced to relocate to other cities or even other states. Combating this requires a strong advocate for building affordable housing, which means standing up to both the long time homeowners & developers looking to flip land for a large profit.

3. Immigration Services

APAs in Pleasanton predominantly work in the tech sector. Many of themselves, their friends and family members have been rocked by the uncertainty around legal immigration status & visa slowdowns that have been caused by the Trump administration. Many cities around the US (such as SF) have immigration services which help assist community members in navigating the hyper complex world of immigration paperwork. Immigrants often times do not have their interests fully represented at the local level, as they do not consist of a strong voting block. I believe we should look out for every member of the community, and have services which support each other during trying times.

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?

As mayor of Pleasanton I would address anti-Asian sentiment in the following ways:

1. Speak strongly in public (City Council statements, community town halls) to clear up any misinformation spread by hate groups and/or our current administration.
 2. Ensure that our schools are adequately staffed with counselors to field complaints and help anyone who has been effected by abuse. Many of these anti-Asian sentiments happen at our schools (even during these remote times), and we need to make sure that students get all the support they need. We can replace our school resource officers with mental health counselors who regularly check up on students.
 3. Hold more Asian American cultural events and celebrations through our downtown. Growing up in Pleasanton we always had monthly events/parades in downtown Pleasanton, but I don't remember a single one celebrating the Asian American experience. By holding more cultural events we educate the broader populace about the rich, textured culture among different APA groups and show that we as a community appreciate those communities.
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8. Do you believe that Asian and Pacific Americans are adequately represented in local government? What can elected officials do to improve participation?

In Pleasanton, the answer is a resounding no.

Currently although 30% of our population is APA, we do not have a single Asian American on our city council or in the mayor's seat. On our school board, we have a single seat represented by an APA. Beyond that, because the city council appoints those who are on the numerous commissions we have (Parks, Planning, Housing, etc..) we only have a small handful of APA representation amidst a total of 40-50 seats.

As an elected official, to improve participation I would do two main things. Speak directly to Asian Americans throughout Pleasanton and listen to what their key concerns are. Reach out to them and engage with them in a channel outside politics (i.e. cultural events) to show that I want to be deeply engaged within the community.

The second is move forward policies which are important to the Asian American community here. Specifically, move forward on pushing through affordable housing, an immigration services center, and getting increased funding for our schools.

I believe that an APA in a position of power seeking to engage directly with the community and advocate for goals that the community is passionate about will improve participation in local government.

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 election that I am running for, and thus have not had the ability to formally endorse a candidate.

I have supported the following candidates through either monetary donations or volunteer efforts:

1. Ro Khanna
 2. Jane Kim
 3. Kamala Harris
 4. Pramila Jayapal
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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 East County Endorsement Meeting is scheduled for Thu., Sept. 17 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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