

2020 Endorsement Questionnaire East County

Email address *

chris_peeples@yahoo.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 *

H. E. Christian (Chris) Peeples

City and zip code of residence.

Oakland, 94611

What is your campaign website address?

www.votersedge.org/ca/vote/peeples (Not up yet, should be up in a week or so)

What is your campaign email address?

chris_peeples@yahoo.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: At-Large Director, Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District

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.

52 years

Are you an APA Caucus member?

Yes

No

Why are you seeking the Caucus's endorsement?

I am a very strange politician, I neither solicit or spend money on my campaigns. With 1.4 million constituents, 800,000 of whom are voters, I would need to raise \$250,000 in order to run a traditional campaign with mailers and campaign offices. As a result, I depend on getting endorsements from every group with a mailing list of more than 200, like Democratic Clubs, The Labor Councils and environmental groups and doing well in the press endorsements. I have been a member of the APA club for years and have always admired their organization and activism. I have gotten your endorsement in the past and would appreciate getting it again.

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

The Sierra Club

League of Conservation Voters of The East Bay

Central Labor Council of Contra Costa County and Contra Costa Building Trades

Contra Costa Democratic Central Committee

Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club

(The entire endorsement list will be on votersedge)

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?

45 years

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

HS Diploma, Riordan High School, San Francisco, 1966, BA in Politics from Crown College, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1970, JD U.C. Hastings College of the Law, 1978, many continuing legal education courses and transportation courses from TRB (Transportation Research Board, a part of the National Academies), Rutgers University's National Transportation Institute and others.

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

At-Large Director, Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, 23 years
Of Counsel, Law Offices of Alfred L. Rinaldo, 25 years
Attorney, Law offices of H. E. Christian Peebles, 30 years

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

Sierra Club
MGO (Metropolitan Greater-Oakland Democratic Club, Oakland)
WRDC (Wellstone Renewal Democratic Club)
Alameda County Democratic Lawyers Club
American Public Transportation Association
California Hydrogen Business Council
SPUR (San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association)
350 Bay Area
Voices for Public Transportation
ORCA (Oakland Radio Communication Association)
PANIL (Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League, Oakland)
City of Alameda Democratic Club
El Cerrito Democratic Club
John George Democratic Club
Bay Area Climate Emergency
Hayward Democratic Club
League of Woman Voters
ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Resource Alliance)
BLUG (Berkeley Linux Users Group)
BALUG (Bay Area Linux Users Group)
East Bay League of Conservation Voters
UCSC Alumni Association

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

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

I have been doing the job for 23 years – successfully I believe. My Board agrees, they have elected me as president five times. I have chaired every committee that the AC Board has. I have helped select 5 AC General Managers (what transit calls its CEOs), twice running the selection process as President of the Board. Since I retired from the practice of law 10 years ago, I work at my At-Large director job full time. I have seen the District through 3 serious recessions.

I have been attending the premier transportation conference in the world – The Transportation Research Board - for over 20 years now and am a "friend" of its environmental justice, alternative fuels and public involvement committees. I have attended a number of courses given by the National Transportation Institute at Rutgers University. I attend one or two webinars almost every week. I have testified numerous times at the California Air Resources Board and the California Energy Commission. I have lobbied both the US Congress and the California Legislature for over 20 years. I have attended, and in some cases spoken at, numerous other conferences.

For years I have served as a bridge between the academic community and AC Transit (primarily through the TRB (the Transportation Research Board) and ITS (Institute for Transportation Studies) at UC Berkeley and UC Davis).

I have chaired or co-chaired the last 4 AC Transit parcel taxes, each of which passed with more than a 2/3rds vote.

I have worked on every "self help" county transportation sales tax in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties for the past 30 years. I worked on the first Alameda County transportation sales tax (1986's Measure "B") and helped get 11% of that tax for AC Transit. Prior to being on the AC Transit Board, Supervisor Carson appointed me to the Expenditure Plan Development Committee for the 1998 Measure B. It failed, but the 2000 (with substantially the same expenditure plan) passed with more than 2/3rds. I worked on 2014's Measure BB which allowed AC Transit to do a substantial increase in service.

In Contra Costa County during the run-up to the 2018 Measure "X," I represented all four bus transit agencies on the Contra Costa Transportation Authority in the drafting of that measure and worked with environmental, labor and social justice advocates to get as much for bus transit as we could. Measure "X" failed. I worked with the same coalition on March 2020's Measure "J"'s, Measure "X"'s follow up. It was much better for bus transit than Measure "X." I worked on that campaign mostly in West County, where "J" passed by more than 2/3rds. Unfortunately it failed in the rest of the County.

I have been riding AC Transit buses for almost 45 years. Twenty two years ago I gave up my car and now go everywhere by transit.

My opponents do not have the background I have in transit policy or my experience in actually running a transit agency. They also do not have the decades of experience and relationships I have with elected officials at the local, state and federal level. I leverage those relationships to help AC Transit and our riders.

I have two opponents, Dollene Jones and Victoria Fierce. Ms. Jones is a retired bus operator making her 7th run for the Board, 3rd against me. She is quite earnest, but in her races against me I have always gotten the endorsement of her union, and have again this time. In 2 of her previous runs I got the endorsement of her Democratic Club, now called the Stonewall Democratic Club.

Ms Fierce is a YIMBY who works for a non-profit that sues suburbs that do not allow apartments. She has no background in transit, although she has started attending (virtually) AC Transit meetings.

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

I am extremely proud of the fact that AC Transit has the most advanced zero emission program in the world. I have been the lead director on that program for 20 years and have spoken at academic and industry conferences nationally and internationally.

Last February the AC Board approved the purchase of 20 more hydrogen fuel cell electric buses and 25 more battery electric buses so that we could run 30X30X30X30 test. AC will pair 30 fuel cell electric buses with 30 battery electric buses and 30 diesel electric buses (hybrids) and 30 diesel buses, run them on the same routes with the same operators with operators switching buses every few days. The buses will be heavily instrumented and the analysis will be done by NREL (The National Renewable Energy Laboratory, part of the US Department of Energy), CTE (Center for Transportation and the Environment) and a Stanford mechanical engineering professor and his graduate students. The transit industry around the world is watching this experiment and eagerly awaiting the results.

I am very proud of the fact that our support of hydrogen fuel cell electric buses has been vindicated. When AC first began experimenting with zero emission bus is almost 20 years ago, hydrogen fuel cell electric buses seemed like the only alternative. AC had experimented with battery electric buses using NiCad batteries and they had not worked. With the advent of lithium ion batteries, some skeptics argued that battery electric buses were "the way to go."

The industry does not agree. In February 18 transit agencies wrote to the California Energy Commission urging support and financing for fueling infrastructure for hydrogen fuel cell electric buses. The writers included two agencies (Foothill Transit in Southern California and San Joaquin Transit in Northern California) that had been early adopters and proponents of battery electric buses. They have come to the conclusion that battery electric buses are not suitable for all of their routes and that they need to also have hydrogen fuel cell electric buses. Foothill (early adapter of Proterra battery electric buses) has ordered 20 New Flyer FC buses from the State list. North County Transit (San Diego) has ordered 10 – 5 for delivery in 2021 and 5 for delivery in 2022 and Golden Empire Transit (Bakersfield) has ordered 8 with more in the future. All three of them have RFPs for the fueling stations that they are at the point of interviewing applicants.

There have been serious problems with battery electric buses leading to lawsuits and rejection of buses.

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

According to AC's most recent Title VI report, 32% of the District's population identifies as Asian or Pacific Islander.

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

South Asian (large parts of Ward 5 (Fremont and Newark) are over 70% Asian or Pacific Islander) Chinese
South East Asian (mostly in Oakland and Richmond)

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

The South East Asian community in Richmond. It is very poor, with many non-intact families. It has to deal with the educational problems of the West Contra Costa School District. It also suffers from some of the worst air quality in the Bay Area with the refineries, train yards and freeways. There are also major water quality problems in a community that practices subsistence fishing.

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

1. Housing

California has not built enough housing to keep up with its economic growth for the last 40 years. As a result housing is very expensive and in short supply. In the 1950s and 60s, most people paid about 20% of their income for housing – rent if you were poor, mortgage if you lived in Hillsborough in a \$250,000 mansion. Now it is common for people to pay 50% of their income for housing and that \$250,000 mansion is worth \$3,000,000. For people who do not have generational wealth, this creates a difficult and precarious situation. For people at the lower end of the economic spectrum, like many newly arrived emigrants, it makes getting ahead almost impossible. For the people at the lowest end of the economic spectrum, it creates homelessness.

2. Education

For the past 40 years California has dis-invested in education. California used to be in the top 2 or 3 in the US in per-pupil spending in K – 14 education, it dropped down to 48th or 49th and has gotten back up to the mid 30s (and may go up more if Prop. 15 passes). This has led to the more well off school districts engaging in substantial parent fund raising and poorer districts having a flurry of charter schools and many children being left behind. Higher education used to be 80% funded by the state, . Now the University of California is only about 40% funded by the state. For an economy heavily dependent on high-tech and “knowledge” work, this is totally inadequate and makes it hard to “work ones way up.” It is one of the reasons for the appalling income inequality and lack of social mobility in modern America.

3. Economic Insecurity

This is very different by class and is related to the two above. If one is a Silicon Valley engineer with the latest Mac Book, a 27 inch screen, gig-speed WiFi, a spare room to turn into an office and the ability to work at home, one is in a very different position than a new immigrant who used to work in a restaurant, but both are badly affected by homelessness, income inequality and an economy that seems totally irrational and seems to be dependent on the whims of the Federal Reserve.

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?

AC Transit has strict policies against discrimination and they are strictly enforced. When I was first on the Board, there were occasionally reports of some of our operators treating Asians disrespectfully. Investigating and proving those issues was difficult. Some years ago, AC installed cameras in all of our buses. After some initial resistance (and sabotage), a few operators were cleared of baseless accusations and the operators accepted the cameras. As a result, the courtesy of our operators has greatly improved. If AC gets a report of anti-Asian verbal or physical attacks (by either an operator or a fellow passenger) it pulls the video. If the attacker is an operator and the attack is verbal, there is an internal discipline process. If the attack is physical, there is both an internal discipline process for employees and a referral to law enforcement for both employees and passengers. This is less of a problem far away from Trumpland.

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

No, they are not. Elected officials can be open to meeting with Asian and Pacific Americans either individually or in groups such as this Caucus. Elected officials can participate in community events frequented by Asian and Pacific Americans. I have always participated in Oakland's Chinatown Street Festival, the Festival of Globe in Fremont, the festival at the yearly Berkeley Buddhist temple and many other Asian and Pacific Islander events. Elected officials also need to be sensitive to the fact that many first generation immigrants come from places where if you stick your head up, it gets smashed down, so it is important to seek input from those groups.

Elected officials can also insure that materials are made available in Asian and Pacific languages. (AC Transit puts out materials in 11 different languages and has gotten awards from the Federal government for its language inclusion.)

Elected officials can also endorse Asian Pacific American candidates running for office – see below.

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.

State Controller Betty T. Yee
State Assembly, 18th District, Rob Bonta
Board of Supervisors, 3rd District, Wilma Chan
Alameda Assessor, Phong La
City of Alameda Councilmember, Tony Daysog
Fremont Mayor, Lily Mei
Fremont Councilmember, District #5, Raj Salwan
Oakland Councilmember, District No. 2, Nikki Fortunato Bas
Oakland Councilmember, District No. 4, Sheng Thao
Oakland Mayor (Ret.) Jean Quan
BART Director, District 8, Janice Li
Alameda School District Governing Board Member, Mia Bonta
Oakland School District Board Member, District 2, Aimee Eng
Oakland School District Board Member, District 4, Gary D. Yee
Parelda Trustee, Area 4, Nicky González Yuen
Richmond Councilmember, Ben Choi
El Cerrito Councilmember Rochelle Pardue-Okimoto

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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