

2020 Endorsement Questionnaire South County

Email address *

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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 *

Justin Sha

City and zip code of residence.

Fremont, CA 94536

What is your campaign website address?

justin4fremont.org

What is your campaign email address?

justin4fremont@gmail.com

What is the office that you are seeking? *

- City of San Leandro City Council
- City of San Leandro School Board
- City of Hayward City Council
- City of Hayward, Unified School District Trustee
- City of Fremont, Mayor
- City of Fremont, City Council, Dist. 1
- City of Fremont, City Council, Dist. 5
- City of Fremont, City Council, Dist. 6
- City of Fremont, Unified School District, Dist. 1
- City of Fremont, Unified School District, Dist. 4
- City of Fremont, Unified School District, Dist. 5
- City of Union City, Mayor
- City of Union City, City Council
- New Haven School Trustee, Area 1
- New Haven School Trustee, Area 2
- New Haven School Trustee, Area 3
- City of Newark, Mayor
- City of Newark, City Council
- City of Newark, School Board
- City of Newark, School Board, Short term
- Eden Healthcare District
- Washington Hospital Healthcare District
- Oro Loma Sanitarv District

Ohlone Community College

Alameda County Water District

AD 20, State Assembly Representative

AD 25, State Assembly Representative

Ohlone Community College, 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.

I have been a Democrat since I first registered to vote.
.....

Are you an APA Caucus member?

Yes

No

Why are you seeking the Caucus's endorsement?

I am an Asian American millennial and lifelong Democrat. I am running to be a bridge builder between the Asian community and the broader community, and having the endorsement of the APA Caucus would help me achieve that goal.

I have advocated for Asian American issues my entire life. I have been an advocate in the larger community and have spoken up about anti-Asian racism as well as bias against immigrants. I have also spoken up for Asian issues within the LGBTQ community, and I have worked to ensure that Asian American issues (which are diverse) are represented and have a seat at the table at the Affirmative Action Committee of the California Democratic Party; I am an elected Assembly District Delegate and was appointed to that community by our Party Chair Rusty Hicks.

As an Asian American and member of our next generation, I would be honored to receive the support and endorsement of the Asian Pacific American Democratic Caucus. An endorsement from the Asian Pacific American Democratic Caucus would be an affirmative endorsement of not only our Democratic Party values but also our faith and leadership in our next generation.

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

Fremont Unified District Teachers Association

Tri-Cities Democratic Forum

Gay Asian Pacific Alliance

South Alameda County Young Democrats

East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club

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?

19 years

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

UC Hastings College of the Law, 2018, JD; Dartmouth College, 2015, AB (History); Mission San Jose High School, 2011

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

VP of Customer Success, Droisys (1 year)
Adjunct Professor (Business Law), Ohlone College (2 years)
VP of Business Development, ShaTech (1 year)

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

Chairman at 501(c)(3) Asian American Millennials for American Advancement (current)
Board Member at 501(c)(3) Ohlone College Foundation (current)
Volunteer at 501(c)(3) CIO Scholarship Fund (current)
Volunteer Driver at Meals on Wheels (Life ElderCare) (pre-pandemic)

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

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

Fundamentally, I offer substantive policy differences in terms of vision moving forward. I am in favor of affordable housing, and I am in favor of upzoning the 800 acres of land proximate to the Warm Springs BART area. The truth is that my generation of Asian Americans and young people cannot afford a home of their own. We need brave leadership and strong ambassadors to address the regional issue of housing and “the missing middle” to ensure that our young people who grew up here can afford to still live here. Not everyone can make a six-figure-plus salary as a software engineer, doctor, or lawyer. (In contrast to the Mayor, I would not have run on the anti-development platform that she ran on in 2016.)

I offer a technology perspective and am philosophically distinct in terms of process/procedure. As Mayor, I would actively take steps to make government more accessible and increase opportunities for civic engagement. (In contrast to the Mayor, there is a widely held perception amongst the people that Fremont has become less accessible and less accountable in the past 4 years.) I would work to change that perception and back it up with substantive policies, including leveraging my technology background as VP of a global IT company to create an accessible data-information pipeline and better infrastructure in general to benefit all Fremont residents through the use of IoT.

I represent a new generation of leadership, and I am grateful to many of the community members in the APA Caucus for advocating to give the next generation opportunities to lead. I believe in diversity, representation, and inclusion, and if elected, I would work to make sure our government is more representative of the people. (In contrast to the Mayor, I would not solicit commission applications from the same pool of people. This is something that could be attested by other APA leaders in Fremont, including former Board members of the APA Caucus.)

I am the only candidate in this race whose staunch advocacy for human rights and social justice has never been questioned, and I would actively advocate for issues that speak to basic human rights and societal equity. (For instance, if I were on Fremont School Board, I would have voted for Harvey Milk Day in 2010 and voted to include books like *Angels in America* in our school curricula in 2012; in contrast to my opponent, I would not have voted to ban it.) This year, I also organized an antiblackness demonstration for the South Asian and East Asian communities. We kneeled for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the same amount of time that Officer Chauvin held his knee on the neck of George Floyd that ultimately resulted in his death. Officer Chauvin has been charged with second-degree murder.

In this race, I am the only millennial, the only openly LGBT candidate, and the only candidate with a high tech and legal background, and that affords me a different perspective than the incumbent and the other candidates.

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

I have spoken up for our Asian American community, even when it was not the “popular” thing in Democratic Party circles to do so. I strongly believe in the Housing Navigation Center, but I was disappointed by the leadership shown by the Mayor. As someone who holds a law degree and teaches business law to community college students, and as someone who graduated from Dartmouth College with a degree in history, I am deeply familiar with the effects and backlash of Roe v. Wade. To be quite blunt, even if we find ourselves on the right side of history and vote the right way on important issues (as the Mayor did with the HNC), if we go about it in the wrong way, we will see huge community backlash (as we saw in Fremont) and we will not create the long-lasting solutions that we hope to create.

In Fremont, in response to a comment by a concerned resident, the Mayor made a comment that was screenshotted and circulated on WeChat. The closed caption of the Council meeting that was circulated via screenshot showed Mayor Lily Mei telling a resident that it doesn't matter what they say because she has already made up their mind. This is something that you never say to a Fremont resident, who you represent, regardless of the situation.

I am pro-HNC and pro-transparency and pro-accountable government. I got involved in Fremont politics in 2018 because I wanted to make a positive difference in my community and to make sure that Fremont residents not only were actually represented but also felt represented. Since 2018, Fremont has become less accessible, and I have consistently found myself fighting for local residents and parents, whether for Stratford School parents (re: Tri City Rock air pollution), for Irvington HS families who want equitable access to education and AP tests, and so on.

To obtain the lasting solutions that we seek, we need strong leadership and a fresh start.

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

59%

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

Indian, Chinese, Filipino

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

I believe that the most at-risk APA communities are actually subcategories within the broader APA community, with respect to both horizontal and vertical identities.

These include issues related to trans/gender identity and those with mental health issues. In APA immigrant families, this is a very tough issue, and having spoken with members of my community at all age levels, I would like to see greater accessibility and services provided to these communities. Other areas of concern are domestic violence in APA immigrant communities, which are underreported.

For vertical identities, I believe that we need to advocate for disaggregation of API data. I understand that I may be preaching to the choir, but this is very important if we genuinely want to achieve equity. On the Affirmative Action committee, I have brought this up many times. If Prop 16 passes, we need to take the next step, which is to make sure that underrepresented Southeast Asians are not doubly burdened or hurt. (I have spoken to many residents about this issue, including local Vietnamese Buddhist monks.)

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

Crime Reduction/Public Safety. Asian Americans perceive that Fremont has gotten much less safe. This is due to crime that specifically targets Asian American households and businesses. Even among our City Council, one of our Asian American female City Councilmembers saw her small Chinese restaurant business (already struggling with COVID-19) burglarized three times in the past 1-2 months. The feeling that nothing is being done by our City is unacceptable.

Traffic Congestion/Overdevelopment/Smart Development: There has been overdevelopment of market-rate, million dollar condos that has worsened traffic and not allowed people to afford new homes in the area. Meanwhile, young people cannot afford a place of their own and have to deal with super commutes. This is a complicated issue, and it is a high priority one for me to address if elected.

Affordable Housing. We need to build for a sustainable future, and we need more affordable housing in the region. For the past 6 years, the Mayor has advocated for less development and she has even voted against affordable development projects (e.g., Stevenson). While residents are concerned about overdevelopment, I strongly believe that we need to make sure our next generation can live here. Being a leader is about standing strong after thinking about different aspects of a similar issue and also learning from those who you may not necessarily agree with, and that is the kind of leader that I hope to be.

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 a candidate, I have spoken up about anti-Asian violence on social media. One of my friends was even attacked. I also spoke up for our Asian-owned businesses.

If I were Mayor, I would have made a public statement about anti-racism and what it means to be a supportive community member, especially for our underrepresented API residents, many of whom are more vulnerable with less of a voice. I would have hosted public discourse, regardless of any potential backlash from non-Asian community members.

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

The Fremont City Council is composed of 7 members, including the Mayor, with 4 seats currently being occupied by Asian Americans. While proportionally, the APA community is represented, we need leaders that not only reflect the different cultures and ethnicities of the APA community, but also reflect its values. In 2016, our Mayor campaigned to cut rampant development and improve our schools. However, we have seen development continue (as you cannot legally stop development), and our Mayor has refused to support Prop 15 (Schools & Communities First). On top of this, we have seen car burglaries and break-ins increase over the past few years. I want to be a Mayor that not only talks about the issues we see in our community, but also supports and enacts policies that deal with these issues. I support Prop 15. I am not taking any developer or corporate money and vow to implement smart growth policies such as mixed-use and transit-oriented development to provide more affordable units that are close to transit centers, reducing traffic. These are only a couple of ways that I will more adequately represent the APA community as Mayor, compared to the incumbent.

Asian American LGBTQ persons are not adequately represented in local government.

Asian American Millennials are not not adequately represented in local government.

Elected officials can improve participation by not making promises that they can't keep and by being respectful to the community members who they represent and offering everyone the opportunity to access city 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.

I have endorsed many Asian Pacific American candidates. This includes Alex Lee for State Assembly, District 25. I endorsed him early and before other people in politics endorsed him. I believe in representation, and Alex was a young and openly bisexual candidate, who I believed showed great potential and capacity in serving over half of all Fremont residents in the State Assembly. I understand that it is difficult to support someone without feeling like others are also supporting them, but I always support people who I believe in and who I believe would be the best in representing their respective constituencies. I helped Alex Lee during the primaries: I gave him strategic advice, connected him to other local groups, and I also connected him to the larger LGBTQ community, and he will most likely be elected to the State Assembly.

In that race, while I endorsed Alex, I was supportive of Natasha Gupta as well, who received the most votes for State Assembly in Fremont and Newark. I was endorsed by both Alex Lee and Natasha Gupta for my own Fremont Mayoral race.

In this election cycle, I have endorsed Lance Kwan who is running for Ohlone College Trustee, Lucy Shen who is running for Fremont School Board, and Aziz Akbari who is running for reelection to ACWD.

I am also supporting Michael Nguyen for Castro Historical Board in San Francisco and Suraj Viswanathan for Milpitas City Council.

While they have not asked for my endorsement, I am supportive of the other Asian Pacific American candidates running for Fremont City Council during this election cycle.

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 South County Endorsement Meeting is scheduled for Sat., Sept. 20 from 1 to 3 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.

Google Forms