



Endorsement Recommendations November 3 Election

The Yolo Democratic Party conducted interviews of candidates running for local offices. We attempted to reach all candidates who are members of the Democratic party. Some candidates did not respond to our requests for interviews, and there were a few candidates for whom we were unable to find viable contact information. Interviews took place over Zoom during the week of August 10 - 15. A number of Central Committee members participated, and their names are noted accordingly. We want to sincerely thank them for their hard work and commitment of their time.

Although I participated in all of the interviews, I did not vote on the recommendations.

Submitted by,

Don Stauffer
Candidate Endorsement and Recruitment Committee

City of Davis - City Council District 2

Candidates interviewed: Dillan Horton, Will Arnold, and Colin Walsh
Interviewers: Giles Giovinazzi, Bill Julian, Aaron Latta, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Dillan Horton** be endorsed.*

Rationale: Dillan has been an energetic and effective activist within and for the Democratic party and the YCDCC. He has earned our endorsement many times over through his many contributions to the life of the YCDCC. Dillan will be an important addition to the Davis City Council, as a renter, and as a social justice activist. We believe that he is more than capable of addressing the most difficult issues relating to the city's workforce – especially public safety (police and fire) – and the fiscal accommodations and programmatic restructurings that may be required in the near term, especially through the collective bargaining process.

Colin Walsh, although he had a detailed knowledge of the workings of the Davis City government, he did not make it clear how his values align with those of the Democratic Party.

Will Arnold has been an indispensable ally to the Yolo Democratic party, and is a strong labor union supporter and member. His institutional knowledge of the Davis bureaucracy is a key asset. Our decision to endorse Dillan Horton is based on the new perspectives he would bring to the Davis City Council and should not be taken as a testament to Will Arnold's qualities. If Will were to be re-elected, we believe that he would continue to be a strong representative for the people of Davis.

City of Davis - City Council District 3

Candidate interviewed: Lucas Frerichs

Interviewers: Giles Giovinazzi, Bill Julian, Aaron Latta, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Lucas Frerichs** be endorsed.*

Rationale: Lucas has been an active participant in the YCDCC for many years, as both an officer and a member. He earned our endorsement in 2016 and has been a steady source of support, advice, and counsel as an incumbent city council member. He deserves continued support.

Lucas has been an active participant in the city's energy supply and infrastructure activities: he serves as chair of SACOG, is an outspoken opponent of the Brightnight fiasco, and continually advocates for transparent decision-making. He is the most engaged of any city council candidate on the sustainability and de-carbonization issues that animate Davis's environmental constituencies.

The other candidate in the race, Larry Guenther, did not respond to our offer of an endorsement interview.

City of Davis - City Council District 5

Candidates interviewed: Josh Chapman, Kelsey Fortune

Interviewers: Giles Giovinazzi, Aaron Latta, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Josh Chapman** be endorsed.*

Rationale: Josh is an engaged citizen of Davis who is relatively new to the political scene and the inside baseball that sometimes overwhelms and dominates city decision-making. As a downtown Davis small business owner, he brings fresh insights and relationships that will make important contributions to the city's efforts to address the fiscal and community service challenges we face. He has a background in education policy, which can offer a valuable perspective. His values and priorities line up with Dillan's and Lucas's. His candid, open, and approachable style fits well with the district approach to council representation.

We very much appreciated Kelsey Fortune's energy and enthusiasm towards making the City of Davis a better place. As a recent PhD graduate, she is committed to environmental sustainability issues, and would bring a valuable perspective to Davis City Council. However, Kelsey was not able to clearly articulate how her values align with those of the Democratic Party.

The other candidates in the race, Connor Gorman and Rochelle Swanson, are not registered Democrats.

Davis Unified School District - Trustee Area 3

Candidate interviewed: Cecilia Escamilla-Greenwald

Interviewers: Carlos Alcalá, Perrin Swanlund, Jake Whitaker, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Cecilia Escamilla-Greenwald** be endorsed.*

Cecilia has very strong progressive values that align with the Democratic Party. She has a long history of embodying these values. She is passionate about education, and strives to be an advocate for the needs of English Language learners, foster youth, and others who are often marginalized. She has a depth of understanding about the importance of public education and collective bargaining.

The other candidate in the race, Betsy Hyder, is a Republican.

Davis Unified School District - At Large

Candidate interviewed: Vigdis Asmundson

Interviewers: Carlos Alcalá, Perrin Swanlund, Jake Whitaker, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends **no** endorsement in this race.*

Vigdis has a strong background as an educator, with 19 years experience as a classroom teacher. Many of her answers lacked the detail and depth we expected from someone who is currently serving on a school board. Her positions on many issues seemed obscure, and she was not able to provide a detailed rationale for her positions.

We were unable to contact Andrew Cullen, the other candidate in the race.

Los Rios Community College Trustee Area 4

Katie Villegas & Kelly Wilkerson were interviewed.

Interviewers: Carlos Alcalá, Desirée Rojas, Danny Thirakul, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Kelly Wilkerson** be endorsed.*

Kelly Wilkerson demonstrates an excellent understanding of the role of a trustee. Kelly understands the importance of the different stakeholder groups within Los Rios and spoke in detail about how she would change the communication between faculty, students and trustees. She is a member of a union and is a strong supporter of unions. Within her current job as a teacher in Davis, she has engaged in a significant amount of community networking around the need to protect DACA students, and worked with the City of Davis in this effort

through the “Guardians Program.” She expressed concern about the fall in enrollment, and the need to find creative solutions to help students succeed while balancing the college system’s budget.

Katie Villegas has a long connection to the Los Rios College District. She assisted her father when he opened the student health centers, and she attended Los Rios schools after high school. She understands the important role that community colleges play in education and career training. Her experience and support for unions seems limited, and she did not fully understand how the different employee groups work within the district’s organizational structure. Katie says that she fears for the DACA students and is active in her current work with providing legal support and advocacy for them. She was unaware of the labor issues that have led to the Driscoll boycott.

We were unsuccessful in reaching the other candidate in the race, David Sandino.

Washington Unified School District Trustee Area 2

Candidates interviewed: Jameson Parker, Danny Thirakul, and Alvaro Venegas
Interviewers: Carlos Alcalá, Kristal Edward-Jones, Maria Grijalva, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Danny Thirakul** be endorsed.*

Danny Thirakul is an educational advocate. He is currently the president of the Student Senate for all the California Community Colleges, and has served in a number of leadership roles within Los Rios. He is an alumnus of Washington Unified School District schools. Danny has previously been a member of the YCDCC, was a past president of the River City Democratic Club, and first ran for school board as a 19-year old. He is a first generation refugee, and his father worked at minimum wage jobs for most of Danny’s childhood. Danny is a strong union supporter, and related the changes in his family’s fortunes that occurred when his father became a member of a union. He was able to use his sister’s experiences as a mother in the district to explain the shortcomings of the existing Washington Unified technology policy and implementation.

Jameson Parker has only lived in West Sacramento for three years, and has a background in housing and transportation policy, as well as public administration. He serves on the city’s Transportation Commission, and participates in numerous other civic organizations. He showed concern and understanding for parents who are essential workers in the time of COVID-19. Jameson’s understanding of the role of unions seems limited, but he did express support for the needs of teachers. He has a good grasp on the inadequacy of current district technology to meet the needs of the homeless and low income students.

Al Venegas is active in the after school programs offered by Washington Unified. He has worked as a coach, and offers wellness training. His background and understanding of educational policy and the nuts and bolts of running a school district seem limited. He has a magnetic personality, a wonderful presence, and clearly has the ability to make people smile. In our opinion, he is not ready to serve as a trustee at this time, but could become a wonderful trustee in the future.

Washington Unified School District Trustee Area 3

Candidate interviewed: Tiffany McFadden and Coby Pizzotti

Interviewers: Carlos Alcala, Kristal Edward-Jones, Maria Grijalva, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Tiffany McFadden** be endorsed.*

Tiffany McFadden is an empathetic parent who is actively engaged in Washington Unified and the local community. She is a foster parent. Tiffany has worked as a volunteer and as a classified employee on all but two campuses in the district. She has a solid family focus and equity perspective. She showed strong concern for students, and specifically mentioned her support for BLM, mental health, foster youth, & LBGTQ+, and advocates for these communities. Tiffany believes that charter schools are a disservice to the West Sacramento community. She expressed strong Democratic values, and spoke of her own positive experiences as a union member. She has a good understanding of the problems of technology in schools, and the unequal distribution of resources.

Coby Pizzotti, as a current member of the Board, has made the commitment to make every decision through the lens of equity. He wants to continue the good work that the district has been doing, and is promoting a future school bond to address the needs of the schools and students in the less affluent part of West Sacramento. He has a good grasp on the needs of the District, especially technological. Coby does not like charter schools, believing that charter schools balance their books on the backs of their employees. He is a lobbyist, negotiator, and hearing representative for the California Psychiatric Technicians.

West Sacramento City Council

Candidate interviewed: Norma Alcala, Dawnté Early, and Duane Wilson

Interviewers:, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Norma Alcala** be endorsed.*

Duane Wilson is a well known community activist in West Sacramento. He has a good perspective on the currently-stalled streetcar project. Duane appeared supportive of local unions and public employee groups, but would not agree to use union print shops for his campaign literature. He seems critical of the policies of Mayor Cabaldon, but it was not totally clear what are Duane's visions for the city. He does not want West Sacramento into another Elk Grove.

This is Dawnté Early-West's first run for public office. She is a powerful equity and racial justice advocate, and is an expert in public and mental health issues. Dawnté has been a participant in My Brother's Keeper. She does not have a good understanding of West Sacramento politics. She did not appear to have a detailed understanding of how public labor unions work, and was not familiar with the Riverfront Street Car Project.

Norma Alcala is well-known to the Yolo Central Committee. She currently serves as a trustee on the Washington Unified School District. She supports single member districts, has strong

budget experience. Norma was previously a labor representative for SEIU. She has not been a supporter or ally of Mayor Cabaldon. She has a strong equity focus and advocates for the homeless and the less affluent parts of West Sacramento. Norma is a powerful advocate for those who are less fortunate. She is well-connected and will do a good job as a City Council member.

Two candidates were not interviewed: Quirina Orozco, who did not respond to our offer of an endorsement interview, and Jason Schrimsher, who is a registered Republican.

West Sacramento - Mayor

Candidate interviewed: Martha Guerrero

Interviewers: Carlos Alcala, Perrin Swanlund, Jake Whitaker, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Martha Guerrero** be endorsed.*

Martha Guerrero believes it is important that all voices in the community be heard; that there be services and support for vulnerable populations and areas of the city that are not well served. Her answers were very considered and thoughtful. She is articulate and provides good context and depth of understanding on the issues. Accountability and transparency are issues that are very important for her, and she discussed how these would be brought to bear when dealing with the police union, while balancing her strong support for unions. She would bring a needed change and fresh perspective to the people of West Sacramento. Her answers reflect the values of the Democratic Party. She provides a substantive alternative to the current incumbent.

The other candidate in the race, Christopher Cabaldon, did not respond to our offer of an endorsement interview.

City of Woodland City Council - District 2

Candidate interviewed: Karen Rosenkilde-Bayne

Interviewers: Aaron Latta, Sean Raycraft, Desirée Rojas, Lily Starling, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Karen Rosenkilde-Bayne** be endorsed.*

Karen Bayne is currently a trustee for the Woodland Unified School District. She possesses considerable experience and shows a depth of knowledge of Woodland and its needs. She understands what needs to take place to conduct successful outreach to the community. Karen is very capable, shares most of the values of the Democratic Party, but has room for growth in the area of community oversight and police accountability.

The other candidate in the race, Tom Stallard, did not respond to our offer of an endorsement interview.

City of Woodland City Council - District 4

Candidate interviewed: Magda Padilla and Victoria "Vicky" Fernandez

Interviewers:, Aaron Latta, Sean Raycraft, Desirèe Rojas, Lily Starling, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Victoria Fernandez** be endorsed.*

Magda Padilla has an amazing spirit and we believe that she will have a successful political future. She knows and is strongly rooted in her very diverse district. Magda, while supportive of labor, does not appear to be knowledgeable of labor. Additionally, she does not appear to have expertise in the internal policy procedures of the city. At this time, she needs further mentoring and experience.

Vicky Fernandez is a lifelong Woodland resident and has considerable experience as a community leader. She was a teacher for over 25 years and was an active member of the teachers association. Vicky participates with the California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. She was able to relate how racial and other biases adversely affect public safety. She is passionate about the issue of homelessness, and is committed to finding real solutions. Her discussion of public safety included the importance of hiring practices, bringing in the public defender and other legal services. We believe that she could be a key to rebuilding the Democratic Party in Woodland.

City of Woodland City Council - District 5

Candidate interviewed: Mayra Vega and Joe Romero, Jr.

Interviewers:, Aaron Latta, Sean Raycraft, Desirèe Rojas, Lily Starling, Don Stauffer

*The interview team, with one abstention, recommends that **Joe Romero, Jr.** be endorsed.*

Mayra Vega has a lot of potential, but has only been in Woodland for two years. She expressed a concern that the city is not even interested in hearing citizens' voices, and advocates for open communication. However, she was not aware of the important issues concerning IHSS and farm workers. Additionally, her understanding of budgeting was limited.

Joe Romero has been active in Woodland government - serving on commissions and previously running for City Council. He is knowledgeable about the local community and has numerous viable ties within Woodland. Joe recognizes the need for infrastructure improvement, especially into the newer and west parts of Woodland. Joe is strongly supportive of unions. He understands how budgets work, and understands the inner workings of the City of Woodland.

Woodland Unified School District - Trustee Area 3

Candidate interviewed: Bibiana Garcia

Interviewers: Carlos Alcalá, Perrin Swanlund, Jake Whitaker, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Bibiana Garcia** be endorsed.*

Bibiana is sincere, enthusiastic, and has good intentions. She wants to provide a voice for immigrant and ESL families. She has a strong support network among Woodland civic leaders. She leads with empathy, and is able to relate her experience to the needs of others in the school community. The support of the Yolo Democratic party would be important to her campaign in a competitive election.

The other candidate in the race, Trista Kennedy, did not respond to our offer of an endorsement interview.

Woodland Unified School District - Trustee Area 5

Candidate interviewed: Kandice Richardson Fowler

Interviewers: Carlos Alcala, Perrin Swanlund, Jake Whitaker, Don Stauffer

*The interview team unanimously recommends that **Kandice Fowler** be endorsed.*

Kandice is passionate and would be a powerful advocate for equity. We did have some concern about her attitude towards unions - that they can sometimes be a source of obstruction, but still saw the value in collective bargaining. We believe, however, that her heart is in the right place. She aligns with the values of the Democratic Party on the majority of issues, and understands the role of the Democratic Party in local issues. Her answers were detailed, and well thought-out. She is capable of taking on the role and responsibilities of a school board trustee. She showed integrity, with honest answers to difficult questions.

The other candidate in the race, Debbie Decker, did not respond to our offer of an endorsement interview.