



Examiner Endorsements: June 7, 2016, Presidential Primary Election

The June 7 elections are just weeks away. While crucial issues are on this ballot, many of the primary races are mere warm-ups for the November general election, when five city supervisor seats will be in play that could remake San Francisco's political landscape, as well as a slew of state and national races, including, of course, the presidency.

Players are already jockeying for position with an eye on November, as our endorsements below make clear. None of this works well without an engaged citizenry. We hope this guide contributes to that end. Here is where we stand for the June 7 election:

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Proposition A: Public Health and Safety Bond

San Francisco health, fire and homeless facilities would receive vital seismic upgrades and renovations from this \$350 million bond. Taking care of the facilities and systems that ensure our health and safety is an investment we can't afford to overlook.

The bond would provide \$222 million toward seismic upgrades to the Department of Public Health's campus around the soon-to-open new San Francisco General Hospital, including urgent care and psychiatric emergency services. Another \$30 million would help renovate the South East Health Center, and \$20 million to other health clinics, including Chinatown Health Center, Castro Mission Health and Maxine Hall.

Another \$20 million would go toward homeless shelters for seismic and design improvements. The Fire Department would receive \$54 million of the bond money, with \$14 million for continued work to upgrade the 42 neighborhood fire stations.

The remaining \$44 million would construct a new, centrally located ambulance deployment facility to improve response times to medical emergencies. Assistant Deputy Chief Ken Lombardi said the new facility could decrease response-time significantly, allowing for ambulance refueling and restocking in 15 minutes rather than the current 45 minutes.

Proposition A, which requires two-thirds approval to pass, would not raise property taxes since it is timed to replace retired debt. The measure has the support of the entire Board of Supervisors and Mayor Ed Lee.

Endorsement: Yes on A

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Proposition B: Park, Recreation and Open Space Fund, Charter Amendment

Parks are one of our few democratizing safe-zones in this quickly changing city. They are open to all and provide much needed open spaces for recreation and rest in a San Francisco that has grown more restless in recent years. The question Proposition B poses is: How should we care for these public amenities?

The Recreation and Park Department has an operational budget of \$160 million — \$64 million of which comes from the general fund this fiscal year, a number that fluctuates based on the needs of the department and other departments — as well as the money available to The City as a whole. The percentage of The City's general fund designated for Rec and Park has fallen from 2.1 percent to 1.2 percent in the last 15 years.

Proponents say as The City has grown over the past 15 years, the funds to take care of city parks have lagged behind and maintenance is rarely performed unless the conditions are dire.

The measure on the June 7 ballot asks voters whether city parks should have steady funding for the next three decades, beginning with annual \$3 million increases from the general fund for the first decade.

Unless San Francisco experiences a budget deficit of \$200 million or greater, Proposition B would set aside \$64 million for Rec and Park next year to grow by \$3 million annually until the 2026-27 fiscal year.

Prop. B would also extend by 15 years the Park, Recreation and Open Space Fund, one of the three sources of funding for the park system that comes from property taxes and was created by voters in 2000.

A third aspect of the measure requires Rec and Park to correct disparities at parks in low-income and disadvantaged neighborhoods, if any exist.

Many opponents have rightly noted that earmarking city funds for specific causes is bad fiscal policy, and would contradict a 2012 ordinance passed by voters that prohibits setting aside future money for particular departments. But since Prop. B is a charter amendment, it's not bound by the 2012 law. Still, their criticism stands and should be a reminder that we should think twice about such decisions. In this case, making sure our parks are clean and safe is a smart investment, a vote to preserve the quality of life for The City as a whole.

Endorsement: Yes on B

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Proposition C: Affordable Housing Requirements, Charter Amendment

Proposition C would return power from voters to the Board of Supervisors to change the number of affordable homes — known as inclusionary housing — mandated in residential projects of certain sizes.

While San Francisco has built 4,300 below-market-rate homes in the past decade, it has also lost 3,200 of such homes in the same period. Meanwhile, the median monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment has surpassed \$3,500. We need to do more, faster. This measure will be an needed engine for that goal.

Currently, projects with at least 10 homes are required to offer 12 percent of those homes at below market-rate. Developers may also pay a fee or build 20 percent of the homes as affordable off-site.

The passage of Prop. C would enable trailing legislation, introduced by supervisors Jane Kim and Aaron Peskin, to require projects with at least 25 homes to include 25 percent of those units as below market-rate, including 15 percent for low-income residents and 10 percent for middle-income residents.

That middle-income bracket would apply to those who work as nurses or teachers, offering that group of a residents a dedicated source of housing in San Francisco for the first time. The City

sorely needs to find creative ways to keep these workers living here. This is a good step in that direction.

The legislation also requires the City Controller to issue by July 31 a feasibility study of affordable housing requirements, as well as follow-up studies, which could impact when and if the board adjusts the 25 percent inclusionary housing rate.

Some have opposed the measure on the grounds that it would kill development in The City, that giving so much of new buildings over to lower-income residents would leave no incentive to build. We are confident that developers will find ways to continue to profit by building in San Francisco under Prop. C. Voters are justified demanding a more inclusive and broader residential market.

The Housing Action Coalition, which supports increased affordable housing, has taken a neutral position on the measure, claiming the mandate to make a quarter of new homes below market-rate was not a result of any study that called for such a rate, and the percentage needed may be different.

We understand the objection, and even Kim and Peskin have acknowledged the percentage may need to be tweaked, but the fact remains that The City is in desperate need of housing for low- and moderate-income families, and this measure helps move us in the right direction. The current level of 12 percent for larger developments is woefully inadequate.

Endorsement: Yes on C

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Proposition D: Office of Citizen Complaints Investigations, Initiative Ordinance

It is alarming that not all police shooting incidents in The City are by law already investigated by San Francisco's police watchdog agency, the Office of Citizen Complaints. Proposition D, if passed, will fix that.

Prop. D would require that all officer-involved shootings, in which someone is injured or killed, are investigated by the OCC and requires that the Police Department cooperate with that investigation. The District Attorney's Office, which decides whether criminal charges should be filed against the police officers involved, would also investigate, as would the Police Department conduct its own administrative investigation.

Supervisor Malia Cohen, who authored the measure, says Prop. D is needed to increase transparency in order to rebuild public trust. We agree this would be a positive step in this direction, especially in light of recent incidents that have undercut public trust in local law enforcement, particularly in minority communities, including a series of controversial killings by officers and racist text scandals within the department.

While a small percentage of the 31 police shootings in San Francisco over the past five years have been investigated by the OCC, under current local laws the agency only investigates such incidents

if a citizen complaint has been filed. No officers have been charged with crimes in any of those incidents.

While requiring the OCC to investigate these incidents by no means would be the sole solution required to address this vexing issue within a troubled department, it is a positive step and should be supported. The cost it would take to increase the workload and staffing of the OCC is a worthwhile investment to start rebuilding independent oversight and public trust in the SFPD.

Endorsement: Yes on D

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Prop. E: Paid Sick Leave, Initiative Ordinance

Proposition E brings San Francisco's paid sick leave law in line with the state's. Although The City's law was passed a decade ago, the 2-year-old state law expands some of the provisions.

Endorsement: Yes on E

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San Francisco Democratic County Central Committee

Five dozen candidates running for a seat on the San Francisco Democratic County Central Committee is a daunting array of names for voters, and endorsers, to consider. This body, though perhaps unknown to many, is very influential in determining the outcome of future elections in this city, where nearly all elected officials are Democrats.

Not only does the DCCC control influential party endorsements and cash for elections, many local elected officials are also committee members, meaning they can use their DCCC campaign finances, which are unlimited, to push their recognition when campaigning for office — a huge advantage over non-DCCC competitors. With the balance of power on the Board of Supervisors up for grabs this November, the stakes are high for the June vote for DCCC.

The 60 candidates, 10 of which are incumbents, are running for the 24 open seats. To help clarify the dizzying field of candidates, two major slates have emerged: the Progress Slate, comprised of 23 more moderate candidates; and the Reform Slate, a collection of 22 more progressive-leaning candidates, according to the local political nomenclature.

The Progress Slate has been ascendant in recent years on the DCCC, mirroring the political climate in City Hall. The question is, has it led reliably or has it caved to the interests, namely that of Realtors, that have hurt the values for which San Francisco stands?

The Reform Slate argues the DCCC is beholden to the special interests of real estate and values that are contrary to San Francisco values, especially with Mary Jung, director of government and

community relations with the SF Board of Realtors, as chair. They rightly ask, in an era when affordable housing is the number one issue in The City, should real estate's top lobbyist be the leader of the local democratic party? The Reform Slate seeks an agenda empowered by progressive politics reminiscent of the 2000s.

It's time for a fresh look at the DCCC, even with some old faces, to disrupt the influence of special interests that have been entangled in City Hall in recent years. The Reform Slate is our pick to deliver more independence and better deals for the people of San Francisco.

Although we have chosen to endorse slates rather than individual candidates in this race, we want to acknowledge a few candidates who deserve an independent look by voters. These include incumbents Alix Rosenthal and Rebecca Prozan, part of the Progress Slate, who have compellingly exhibited independence on the committee and a dedication to uphold the values of the party. Also newcomers Gary McCoy and Keith Baraka could have bright futures in local politics and deserve consideration.

Endorsement: Reform Slate

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Proposition AA

Opponents have tried to frame this as a inequitable regressive tax to protect wealthy businesses (read: tech) near the Bay Area waterfront. We don't buy that argument. This regional measure asks voters in the nine local counties to approve a \$12 parcel tax to raise \$25 million for 20 years to restore and protect the Bay shoreline.

The money would reduce trash, toxins and pollution in the Bay, improve water quality and habitats for fish, birds and wildlife, restore marshland and increase public access to the shoreline.

It's a small price for such a vital and collective good. The measure must pass by two-thirds collectively among the nine counties.

Endorsement: Yes on AA

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State Senate, District 11

This is a tough call and a fascinating choice. Jane Kim and Scott Wiener have been stellar advocates for their neighborhoods and for The City as a whole as members of the Board of Supervisors, and both would do well bringing their passion to addressing issues on the state level. While we admire both for their ambition to grapple with some of the most significant issues facing

The City, we support Kim as the most effective leader for San Francisco in the state Senate at this crucial time.

Wiener is a hard worker who has tackled weighty issues like development transit fees for residential building, solar mandate for new construction and paid family leave. His effectiveness and pragmatism as a supervisor, especially in the areas of public transportation and environmental policy, have translated into many significant victories. But he has also been a polarizing figure who has earned the ire of his more progressive colleagues.

Kim has emerged in recent years as a leader on the Board of Supervisors on core progressive issues with her push for increased affordable housing and eviction protections and efforts to reform the criminal justice system such as by opposing building a new jail.

She is a proven effective negotiator, having reached landmark agreements to significantly boost affordable housing beyond requirements in development deals with the Giants for Mission Rock and for Forest City's 5M project in the South of Market. She has played a lead role in placing Proposition C on the June ballot, which would boost affordable housing in new development citywide.

Kim has also called for free tuition at City College, advocated for a statewide declaration of emergency to aid homeless residents, and last week became the first high-ranking elected official to urge the removal of Police Chief Greg Suhr to more effectively reform a Police Department rocked by racist text messages and fatal shootings.

She has the support of progressives and tenant groups and has sided against some of the more anti-homeless measures like tent sweeps and backs the right to rest law, for which Wiener sharply rebuked her. She has sided with the progressive majority on issues like restricting commuter shuttles, tougher restrictions for Airbnb and the housing pause in the Mission, all of which Wiener opposed.

This primary election won't decide the race between the two supervisors. Voters will send the top two candidates to the general election in November to determine who will go to Sacramento as the new state Senator for District 11, replacing termed-out Sen. Mark Leno. Kim and Wiener are certain to finish ahead of Republican challenger Kenneth Loo in the June election. It should be a close race with substantive debates between the two qualified candidates. We give the edge to Kim, whose vision for continuing her fight to promote equitable housing and education for the working families of California is a thrilling prospect.

Endorsement for State Senate, District 11: Jane Kim

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Superior Court Judge, Office 7

San Francisco Superior Court Judge Ernest H. Goldsmith's retirement opened the door to three local lawyers contending for the post. Victor Hwang is a sitting police commissioner; Paul Henderson works for Mayor Ed Lee on public safety issues; and Sigrid Irias is in private law.

The two top vote-getters in the June primary election will compete in November. If any single candidate takes 50 percent plus one vote, there will be no November election.

Hwang, who serves as deputy Director for the Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach, has the strong experience as a civil rights attorney and public defender that will serve him well for the position. He was deputy district attorney in San Francisco from 2007 to 2014, when he prosecuted hate crimes and human trafficking, among other cases. Hwang was appointed to the Police Commission in April 2014. The San Francisco Bar Association ranked Hwang as more qualified than his opponents. We agree with that assessment.

Endorsement: Victor Hwang for Superior Court Judge

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State Assembly, 17 and 19

There are only two candidates in each race, including incumbent Democrats David Chiu (District 17) and Phil Ting (District 19), so all will continue to compete in the November election.

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U.S. Congress, District 12

Nancy Pelosi, minority leader of the House of Representatives, has three challengers in this race, the top two of whom will go on to the general election. We look forward to Pelosi continuing her record of strong and effective leadership in Washington, D.C., and hope that, come the new year, she returns to her role as speaker of the house.

Endorsement: Nancy Pelosi

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U.S. Congress, District 14

Rep. Jackie Speier is running uncontested for reelection.

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U.S. Senate

In a crowded field of 35 registered candidates, this is pretty much a two-person race between state Attorney General Kamala Harris and Southern California's U.S. Rep. Loretta Sanchez. The two Democrats are likely to be the top vote getters in June and vie for retiring Sen. Barbara Boxer's seat in November.

Despite being a former San Francisco District Attorney, Harris is more than just a hometown favorite in this race. Her record of promoting social justice issues along with criminal justice has been a hallmark of her career locally and statewide and it embodies the values we must push for on the national level. She has worked to curb international criminal gangs, gun smuggling and human trafficking. She has worked to keep children in school, promoted marriage equality, improved online privacy and safety, and has fought for homeowners victimized the housing crisis. As impressive as her record has been, we are hoping for even more in her future.

Endorsement: Kamala Harris for U.S. Senate

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U.S. President

With the Republican primary already decided, the Democratic race is the only game left in town.

This is the first California presidential primary that has mattered in nearly a half century. This is truly a momentous election for the voters. California might be Sen. Bernie Sanders' last stand, but the fact he has made it this far against the Democratic machine that seemed intent to discount his candidacy from the outset speaks to the force of discontent in this country and the feeling, on the Democratic side, that Hillary Clinton is a flawed standard bearer for the party.

The disagreement between Democrats in this race bears some semblance to the troubles on the Republican side, where the rise of Donald Trump as the presumptive nominee is evidence of how broken the GOP has become. But there are very different tensions, too, leading to Sanders' surprising and encouraging successes thus far.

Sanders' vision for the future of America is optimistic, egalitarian and just. The revolution he speaks of, however distant or far-fetched, is about restoring hope to so many who have assumed the terrors and injustices of modern life were insurmountable. That vision, that government can better people's lives and root out entrenched corruption and cowardice, deserves our heartfelt support and full-throated endorsement.

Despite Sanders' unexpected strength in state contests, the party superdelegate lead that Clinton enjoys means his chances to capture the nomination are slim. If she prevails, Clinton — more moderate and hawkish than Sanders, less convincingly passionate about the plight of those who live in poverty and those who struggle against systemic oppression — will have to try to unite the party against Trump in November. Sanders has created a meaningful moment in American politics that speaks well for the future of the Democratic party. It is up to us to carry it forward.

Endorsement: Bernie Sanders for Democratic nominee for U.S. President

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