



East Bay Young Democrats

Platform Document

Foundational Principles

Health care

Immigration

Housing

Transportation

Environment

Criminal Justice

Strengthening Democracy

Homelessness

Budgeting and Sources of Revenue

Labor

Education

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Foundational Principles

As young Californians, we see the mounting problems our country faces – reckless financial markets, increasing stratification and inequalities, rising costs of education and living, infringements of basic human rights – and demand action. We believe in an America that defends shared human dignity.

We are united in the principle of equity, that to the extent one of us is impoverished or suffering, all of us are. Equity calls us to address our mutual futures in our policies. With the current rise in racism, anti-semitism, heterosexism, and transphobia, it is crucial that young people organize to push our government to reflect our values of inclusion, racial justice, gender justice, and justice for all people, especially those who are members of marginalized communities.

As Democrats, we strive to guarantee the principles of dignity, safety and inclusion through a fair, open, and free electoral process that safeguards all citizens' right to vote.

We seek a system that optimally gears us towards a thriving democracy and sustainable use of resources. Our basic principles and issue positions are well addressed in a quote by former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan: "What we want is very simple: we want an America as good as its promise."

Health Care

The East Bay Young Democrats have grown up in a society where the lack of guaranteed health care is a source of major stress and suffering. Health care is a basic human right that must be guaranteed to all, as fundamental as public safety or education, and just as much a concern for all of us to address by working together. As such, we support moving towards universal health coverage, including for all United States residents.

All patients deserve sufficient access to affordable providers regardless of geographic location, including primary care, mental health care, substance use treatment, chronic care, hospital, and emergency services, without undue wait or travel time, as well as affordable

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medications. Cost of care should also be made significantly more transparent. It is vital that our health care compassionately care for those most systematically disadvantaged, including people of color, women, LGBTQQIA+, people with disabilities, and people with behavioral health conditions.

In order to assure that *coverage* results in genuine access to affordable and effective service, we support the following specific initiatives to increase the number of qualified providers and rein in high medical costs.

We hold that social taboos and fear campaigns are not valid criteria for public health decisions, and support policies founded in reliable evidence of harm reduction, including comprehensive sex education, condom distribution, safe injection sites, sobering centers, and mandatory vaccinations for children in schools.

Currently, women's access to reproductive health, especially abortions, is under attack. We support the right for all people to access the care that they need, and it is the responsibility of the state of California to provide those services in light of added restrictions in states throughout the country.

Mental health care is often deprioritized in our country. We believe that all health care should cover mental health services. In addition, currently when people experience acute mental health crises, the primary solution is to call 9-1-1. Cities in the East Bay and throughout the country should offer 9-1-1 alternatives staffed by individuals with expertise in supporting those experiencing mental health crises.

Immigration

The East Bay Young Democrats affirm that immigrants are essential and valuable members of the fabric of California and America more broadly. Many of our members are foreign-born or have at least one immigrant parent. As such, we understand first-hand the enormous contribution of our immigrant community members. Immigrants are our families, our friends, and neighbors.

Immigration is fundamental to the United States and strengthens American society in myriad

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ways. Immigrants in generations past have suffered from stigmatization, discrimination, and fear, but we celebrate the substantial ways in which many Americans have seen past this xenophobia and welcomed the stranger, until today we could not imagine ourselves without them.

We look forward to the day comprehensive immigration reform can be passed at the federal level, setting up a fair process for immigrants and their families to obtain citizenship over time. This process should also make reasoned, transparent, and nondiscriminatory choices about the admission of new immigrants over time.

We stand for a humane immigration enforcement system that keeps to a minimum the extreme measure of deportation, which breaks up families and undermines community trust in law enforcement. Deportation must be reserved for rare cases such as convicted violent felons, and those facing deportation must have assured access to legal counsel as criminal defendants do. Those of all immigration statuses should be safe in their communities and have access to basic services and supports. Existing immigration law enforcement agencies have proven to be entirely unprofessional, politicized, and complicit in overt massive human rights violations; ICE and the Border Patrol must be abolished and a new agency be built with completely new staff, dedicated to following laws and treaties, appropriately lower-sized and trained to perform civil duties without physical duress except dealing with those known to be violent.

We observe employers and other powerful interests taking advantage of the current broken immigration system to exploit workers foreign and domestic. Abuses run the gamut from illegally low pay or unsafe labor practices, to outright imprisonment and slave labor. Employees must be free to report labor violations and other crimes without risk of legal action against them, the victims. Abuses also exist in the world of legal immigration, such as through a H1B visa process that allows employers to bring in workers at significantly lower than domestic prevailing wages, who know getting on the wrong side of their boss means leaving - effectively a form of indentured servitude. Comprehensive reform must protect worker rights and bargaining power and make visa status attached to the person, not the employer.

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Housing

We believe that affordable and fair housing is essential to the continued vibrancy of the East Bay. We see increasing rent as a barrier to economic and civic engagement that must be torn down. Increased production of subsidized and unsubsidized housing are necessary to meet the needs of residents at all income levels.

At the local level, more housing must be built, especially near transit. We want all neighborhoods to be open for increased housing development, especially neighborhoods with a history of exclusionary zoning and redlining. For this reason, we support policy tools to reduce land speculation, such as tax on vacant land and housing. However, new development cannot be limited to luxury units, therefore we support policies that encourage diversity in the types of units that are built.

Cities should streamline their permit process to avoid regulatory uncertainty and reform their regulations to be more supportive of innovations like modular homes, tiny houses, 3D printing, and homes built out of unconventional materials.

Low-income renters should be supported through a mix of publicly subsidized housing and access to alternative forms of home ownership. We support increasing public housing, housing cooperatives, community land trusts, permanent supportive housing, and other forms of social housing. Additionally, public financing for low-income residential development should be formula-driven to robustly keep pace with market pressure over time.

The history of de-facto segregation must be addressed by allowing multi-family housing in exclusive neighborhoods. We especially believe in increasing the supply of townhomes, accessory dwelling units, and other “missing middle” housing options in these neighborhoods. Similarly, we support an anti-displacement approach to urban renewal, and believe displaced residents should be eligible for subsidized housing in their old neighborhood, regardless of where they were forced to move.

We oppose urban sprawl, especially when it encroaches into fire prone areas, and believe cities should facilitate denser development. However, a high quality of life requires access to greenspaces, so public greenspaces should be developed and adequately maintained as

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density increases.

Due to the asymmetric power landlords can wield against tenants, California should pass strong tenant protections, like a ban on no cause evictions. We want to repeal Proposition 13 to give localities the revenue they need to provide high-quality infrastructure and and repeal Costa-Hawkins to give them the flexibility to design rent control laws that meet their needs. The mortgage interest deduction should be redirected to housing credits for all, or affordable housing construction, to serve everyone in need of housing rather than just a wealthy few in expensive homes.

We support a statewide rental registry that lists what rental properties are available, how much the rent is on those properties, what units are currently available, and is capable of facilitating the creation of an adequately maintained directory of affordable units.

The increase in housing should be matched by improved transportation options, with an emphasis on public transit. Neighborhoods should be designed to encourage walking, biking, and other forms of transit that reduce reliance on ownership of automobiles.

Transportation

High-quality affordable transportation options are a crucial component of vibrant cities. We want cities with zero traffic deaths, shorter commute times, and aggressively reduced reductions in emissions from travel.

To achieve these goals, we believe transportation funding should prioritize complete streets: streets that enable a wide-array of mobility options through bus lanes, bike/scooter lanes and congestion pricing. We should expand high-quality public transit options such as Bus Rapid Transit, and High Speed Rail. We see a role for new technologies such as scooters and TNCs, but these services must abide by existing worker's rights and worker's dignity and deliver their services in an equitable manner.

While we should invest more funds in maintaining our existing road network, we should end most funding for highway expansions, knowing their direct linkage to promoting sprawl, and impose tighter controls on costly budget overruns on transportation infrastructure projects. Congestion pricing and demand-based parking pricing can help

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limit traffic and generate new sources of revenue to subsidize public transit. In the long run, we should build sufficient transit and other infrastructure and supports that will make cars largely obsolete.

Environment

The East Bay Young Democrats see it as simple fact that human animals, non-human animals, flora, fauna, land, air and water are all interdependent entities in a highly interconnected ecosystem. Our East Bay cities should ensure that the Climate Action Plan (CAP) acknowledges globally interconnected systems. We support adopting a consumption based greenhouse gas inventory that calculates emissions from all products and food that we consume.

We must urgently work to stop climate change from progressing further than it already has, including putting firm and growing prices on carbon. We strongly support direct interventions toward the rapid replacement of fossil fuels with renewable energy and animal products like meat and dairy with plant-based options. Additionally, we must aggressively invest in new green technologies that can create social and environmental equity. We oppose further investment in fossil fuel infrastructure or extraction as counterproductive and unsafe. California is uniquely positioned to lead the way in these activities.

Our economic ecosystem must be brought to sustainability with comprehensive green standards for construction, vehicles, food, waste disposal, etc. The current food system heavily promotes directing significant agriculture resources including crops, water and land towards raising livestock. It leads to global food inequality, deforestation, soil erosion and excessive use of scarce freshwater resources.

Environmental degradation and climate change impact different segments of society unequally, and thereby become matters of social justice. We demand lead and other persistent contaminants be removed from drinking water, buildings, soil, etc.; the guarantee of safe drinking water and ambient air to all; comprehensive assistance to disaster victims and climate change refugees domestically and internationally; and climate change resiliency planning to preemptively protect likely future victims. Environmental racism is the product of human generated policies. Therefore, we support elevating the voices of communities that

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have historically not been included in the conversation.

We must preserve our forest, water, air, topsoil, and wildlife with safety and sustainability regulations; we oppose efforts to erode existing federal and state protections such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the California Environmental Quality Act, and seek to close loopholes and further strengthen these protections.

We believe all of these weighty tasks can be accomplished while boosting employment and the economy, by centering it on green infrastructure, research, production, and recycling.

Criminal Justice

We oppose ineffective and discriminatory criminal justice policies. We stand in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives, Latinx, and Muslim communities, communities that bear the brunt of our racist history of criminal justice in our country and endorse the Vision for Black Lives Policy platform.

We want more effective and accountable policing in our communities. This means recruiting and training public officials, not limited to police, who can work effectively in cross-cultural situations and mental health crises, ensuring independent investigators in cases of police use of deadly force, providing funding for labs to complete all rape kits in a timely fashion, and collecting data to ensure all communities are treated equitably.

The court system must be strengthened by balancing funding for public defender and district attorney agencies. DNA testing should be used when appropriate to protect the wrongfully accused and set free the wrongfully convicted. We must decrease penalties and decriminalize drug and other non-violent offenses across the board. The money bail system should be eliminated, and court fines, fees, and surcharges, should be reduced and/or tied to income.

We stand for a fundamental transformation of the prison system that would eliminate prison as we know it. This would enable a reallocation of funds from policing and incarceration to long-term safety strategies such as education, local restorative justice services, and employment programs. We should end capital punishment and inhumane incarceration

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practices as well as the the militarization and privatization of the criminal justice system. California should cease using out-of-state jails and prisons and the use of exploitative prison labor

Because the criminal justice system has already inflicted tremendous harm, we support efforts to undo that harm. There should be retroactive decriminalization, release, expungement, and reparations for the devastating impact of the “war on drugs” and decriminalization of sex work. Communities most negatively impacted by the “War on Drugs” should be able to benefit from increasing legalization efforts of drugs such as marijuana. We should restore full citizenship rights to individuals with a criminal record and ban the use of past criminal history to determine eligibility for housing and housing subsidies, education, licenses, loans, employment, etc.

Strengthening Democracy

We seek to end the pernicious and outsized influence that the wealthy few play in our elections. The disastrous Supreme Court decisions of *Buckley v. Valeo* and *Citizens United* have unleashed a torrent of money into the American electoral system, and they must be revised or overturned. In the meanwhile, we must institute alternative finance systems that comply with the current legal order, such as Public Financing and Democracy Dollar programs, to ensure that supporter-rich but cash-poor candidates can fairly compete in our elections.

We should also further expand the franchise to other people affected by but currently lacking a say in our governance, including 16 and 17 year olds and non-citizen residents. Felon and prisoner disenfranchisement is a vestige of another era and must be abolished. We must ensure that people have access to the ballot in practice, as well as on paper, with vote-elicitation policies such as automatic voter registration, election consolidation, and enabling more voting by mail, so that working Americans can exercise their democratic rights with zero inconvenience.

We should continue to explore alternative voting systems to produce more equitable and representative results, including ranked choice voting, multimember districts, and proportional

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representation, alone or in combination. The Electoral College and the Senate are unjust institutions that artificially enhance the voices of white, rural voters at the expense of urban voters and voters of color. Both should be abolished or sharply overhauled to ensure the principle of equal counting of every vote.

We increasingly face challenges on a regional scale, especially here in the Bay Area. Many of these challenges are made unnecessarily difficult to address by our complex structure of overlapping local authorities, such as cities, counties, and the multitude of special districts. These structures also inequitably break apart tax bases across the metropolitan economy. We must strive to reach across local entity borders and enable partnerships or completely new governance structures to take on the most challenging obstacles at the regional level, especially housing, transportation, and homelessness.

Homelessness

Nothing serves as a better mirror for the character of a society than how it treats its most vulnerable residents. While for far too long our society has tolerated the neglect of our neighbors' housing needs, the impacts of homelessness have recently become so pronounced that the issue can no longer be ignored by society at large. This crisis has its roots in several evils: institutional racism, the pursuit of private profit at the expense of the public welfare, the abandonment of government responsibility to guarantee adequate healthcare, and the exploitation of myths about the homeless community for political gain. No discussion of the homeless crisis would be complete without recognizing that while the homeless crisis is a challenge that touches the entire community, its impacts are disproportionately felt by people of color and by members of the LGBTQ community.

It is the position of the East Bay Young Democrats that all members of our community should have an absolute right to shelter, and that to this end a humane, compassionate, and comprehensive response to the homelessness crisis is required. Homelessness for the purposes of public policy should be defined as all those who live on the street, in cars or RVs, in shelters, in motels or hotels, hospitals, jails, couch-surf, or otherwise do not have a stable source of permanent housing. The response to homelessness must consider and adjust to the unique needs of all these homeless populations. This response must embrace both short-term actions to address the immediate needs of the homeless population and a

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longer-term solution to permanently eliminate the need for any person to be homeless.

In the short term, the reaction to homelessness must focus on the provision of programs and services for health, safety, and dignity rather than the failed strategy of criminalizing unhoused persons' existence. While solutions will vary from community to community, we support the pursuit of alternative housing options like tiny homes, the use of sanctioned encampments to stabilize unhoused communities, the provision of safe parking areas for car campers and RVs, the provision of sanitation and storage facilities to sanctioned encampments, and the robust provision of mental health services.

In the intermediate to long term, we support the expansion of navigation centers and transitional housing to provide pathways to permanent housing solutions, as well as the expansion of rental housing vouchers and the provision of emergency rental assistance to help those at imminent risk of eviction. We are strong supporters of a Housing First approach to homelessness that moves people into housing with supportive services readily available to all those who need it. We support increased funding from Alameda and Contra Costa County towards homelessness programs, as part of a broader increase in resources for housing solutions. We also support tailored solutions for the unique challenges faced by transgender youth who may be poorly served by traditional shelter and rehousing services.

Budgeting and Sources of Revenue

We believe taxes and budgets should be designed with the goals of reducing inequality, improving economic stability, and robustly providing vital public services.

Taxes

We support progressive tax policy focusing on a sharply greater share from the wealthy, by various means including wealth taxes, higher estate taxes, and repealing Proposition 13. We reject the concept that progressive taxation disincentivizes work or business creation. We oppose requiring supermajorities to pass any taxes at state/local levels.

However, to provide stable revenue that is not tied to the boom and bust of the economic cycle, not all regular sources of revenue can come from the top 1% or 10%. Regular ongoing

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tax sources need to fall on all people of even moderate means.

To minimize impacts on lower income people, we support reducing our reliance on fines as a source of income. Taxes should be collected automatically and with as little expense and inconvenience as possible, such as with return-free tax filing. We also support exploring replacing the sales tax with a value-added tax that would collect more equitably from businesses and upper-income people who purchase more services than goods, with refunds to reduce impact to people of lower incomes.

Finally, we believe that our taxes should be justly implemented in a way that does not discriminate against people based on their identities. As a result, we strongly oppose “pink taxes.” Companies that charge more for women’s equivalent products or services should be penalized.

To ensure stable funding for essential services, the government should attempt countercyclical policy, saving extra funds in years of plenty to maintain services in lean years. This is further supported by decreasing reliance on ballot measures that result in overly restrictive funding mechanisms.

Labor

We need to fight for intersectional interests that support and uplift working class power. We must highlight that the workers are the most pivotal components of any company. Workers deserve a safe work environment and fair working conditions.

In the richest country in the history of the world, it is only ethical that people working 40 hours/week at the state or federal minimum wage should generate enough income for people to live their lives. When it comes to workers, we must raise the floor by increasing the minimum wage, expand middle class job opportunities in all sectors of industry, and knock down barriers for folks who have had traditional obstructions to employment.

To empower the working class, we need to tie the minimum wage to inflation to ensure that we no longer have to relitigate the fight over minimum wage. We advocate for full rights for workers toiling in subcontracted and temporary work, ending the misclassification of employees, and ensuring that companies that subcontract are held to high standards by making those companies jointly liable with subcontracting firms when workers’ rights are

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violated. In order to build equity through employment opportunity, employers must “ban the box” and we fight to ensure that hiring decisions are made on the basis of an individual’s qualifications for a particular job instead of whether they are formerly convicted/incarcerated persons.

We support employee rights to organize and collective bargaining and support enforceable organizing agreements that include employer neutrality, card check recognition, and binding arbitration for first time contract disputes. We oppose “Right to Work” laws which deny workers the chance to have strong unions that give them a voice at work. We support paying prevailing wages to protect the economic base of the communities where government-funded projects are undertaken and where private developments get streamlined government approvals. We promote Project Labor Agreements for private and public sector infrastructure projects that provide for local hire, and that partner with viable state-approved apprenticeship programs.

We also must pass legislation to ensure that people of all genders are paid an equal wage, and guarantee that everyone has sufficient access to paid parental leave, paid sick leave, and paid vacation. In a changing economy, these rights, along with the right to a minimum wage, must extend to people working as part of the gig economy.

Finally, it is vital that we decriminalize sex work and recognize it as work needing labor protections.

Education

Our current education systems do not reflect our stated values as Californians, or even Americans. We underfund all of our schools, especially those attended by low-income students. We do not sufficiently pay our teachers, and our school days do not reflect the current needs of our students and families.

Schools were designed with the assumption that one parent is always home and available to pick up their children and look after them after school. This assumption does not reflect our modern reality, where typically both parents work outside of the home, and many children come from one-parent households. Schools should alter their days to reflect modern

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parenting and workforce needs.

Due to the perpetuation of housing segregation, our schools continue to be segregated. As a means of creating a more equitable world without bias, it is vital that our school districts intentionally integrate our schools.

Pay teachers what they deserve! They have undergraduate and, frequently, graduate degrees, and while our country pays lip service to the idea that we value teachers, we should financially compensate them for the extremely important work that they do. This compensation should include sufficiently funding their classroom needs.

Our school lunches should reflect the needs of our students: recognizing that healthy foods help children learn and focus better, our school lunches should both take dietary needs into account and serve healthy lunches that will allow students to flourish.

We have the research indicating the importance of early childhood education, yet our policies have yet to reflect that understanding. Cities should provide mandatory, universal pre-K to ensure that all of our children start kindergarten on the right foot.

Our workforce has made it crucial for workers to receive higher education (2-year, 4-year and beyond), yet the cost of our colleges and universities has increased exponentially within just one generation. As a result, a generation of college graduates is burdened with student loans, unable to save, purchase a house, or even start a family. The cost of public universities should decrease dramatically, and student loans should be forgiven.

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