

**Berkeley Tenants Union & Berkeley Citizen Action 2014 Candidate
QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is the first step in seeking an endorsement from BTU and BCA. Thank you for answering all questions and returning this questionnaire to Kimberly, almanzacamille@yahoo.com no later than **Friday, September 12 at 6 PM.**

Candidate Name: Elizabeth Echols

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State Assembly

1) Do you support the Berkeley Rent Stabilization and Eviction for Good Cause Ordinance?

Everyone deserves a safe and reliable place to live and I support the Berkeley Rent Stabilization and Eviction for Good Cause Ordinance. The ordinance provides tenants increased protection against evictions, maintains affordable housing, and preserves community diversity. Tenants must be protected from unwarranted evictions.

2) Would you vote to reform Costa-Hawkins? Would you vote to reform the Ellis Act?

Abuses of the Ellis Act have left renters unprotected. I would support legislation like SB1439 that Senator Mark Leno introduced last year. SB 1439 would require a San Francisco landlord to own a building for at least five years before they could evict tenants using the Ellis Act. This provision would help prevent abuses of the Ellis Act such as landlords purchasing affordable property, evicting the tenants using the Ellis Act, and then flipping the rental for profit.

When Costa-Hawkins was implemented in 1999, rents increased over 40%. I would support reforms to Costa-Hawkins such as the legislation that Senator Mark Leno proposed to overturn the Palmer decision so that local governments can enforce inclusionary housing for low-income families.

3) How will you work to make housing more affordable in the Bay Area?

In order to increase the supply of affordable housing, I would support establishing a statewide housing trust fund to have a permanent revenue for the production and preservation of affordable housing. There are currently funds along these lines in 34 states. More than \$750 million is spent for affordable housing through these trust funds every year and this amount is increasing. For each dollar committed to a housing development by a housing trust fund, an average of up to \$10 is accessed in other resources, both public and private.

4) How will you work to make higher education more affordable for students?

We need to reinvest in our state's community colleges and universities. I believe strongly that we must prioritize making our state's higher education more accessible and affordable. We must reduce college fees and provide much needed revenues to our higher education system, as well as provide stable affordable housing for our students. Stable affordable housing is particularly important when higher education is so expensive.

5) What will you do to improve the match between identified community needs and the community benefits offered by hospitals and banks?

I believe that we must protect working families by maintaining affordable rents and strong protections for renters. This must be taken into consideration when any community benefits agreements are being developed.

I support AB 503 which would increase the community benefit requirement of non-profit hospitals. Although it did not get out of appropriations this year, as your representative, I would support the bill next session. I also support incentives that encourage banks work to obtain community reinvestment act credits.

6) Are public transit, bicycling, and pedestrian infrastructure and operations adequate to support the Berkeley's existing and projected housing stock? If yes, why? If not, what would you change?

Public transportation gets cars off the road and helps provide basic transportation access to people without cars. The state can provide resources to invest in improved public transit through the State Transit Assistance Fund. The state budget allocates cap and trade money to this fund. I would work to get this funding into the district.

We also should encourage the development of housing to be built around mass transit, so more residents have convenient access to transit. More funds need to be allocated to increase the number of local bike lanes as well as to AC Transit so that they can restore services. I support Measure BB and I am working to get it passed this November.

7) Berkeley has a very large homeless population. The City provides around \$2.9 million/year to non-profit organizations that provide services to the homeless, but the problem is clearly getting worse. What would you do to improve the situation?

In Sacramento, I will fight for restoration of the social services program needed for our homeless population. Many factors can lead to homelessness. For some of our homeless population, social services such as access to mental health services and substance abuse treatment centers are key to putting them on the path to stable housing. Many of these services were eliminated during the recession.

The state also is involved in programs like Everyone Home. The state provides funding to the project and they in turn work with local governments to provide permanent housing and wrap around services such as public health, mental health and education to our communities homeless population. This provides a multi-agency regional approach to solving homelessness. Currently Berkeley spends more per capita on homelessness than any city in California. With a regional approach to solving homelessness we are better able to leverage state funds and work to solve a situation that goes beyond city borders as many in the homeless population move from one area to another. I would advocate for more programs like Everyone Home.

In addition, the state can facilitate affordable housing for local governments. The cap and trade funding formula that allows for sustainable communities housing development is helpful. One area in which we've made recent progress is housing for veterans. I applaud the passage of Proposition 41, which will prevent homelessness and ensure in a fiscally responsible way that veterans have homes.

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Candidate Name: Tony Thurmond

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State Assembly

1) Do you support the Berkeley Rent Stabilization and Eviction for Good Cause Ordinance?

Yes. The Rent Stabilization Ordinance is an important tool to maintain affordable housing and thereby community diversity in Berkeley.

2) Would you vote to reform Costa-Hawkins? Would you vote to reform the Ellis Act?

Yes. With record demand for housing in the Bay Area, we have seen speculators buying up properties and exploiting Costa-Hawkins and the Ellis Act to evict tenants and flip the property for a quick profit. Many of those displaced by speculative evictions are seniors, disabled people and low-income families with deep roots in Berkeley. To maintain community diversity and to make sure that low income, and working families are able to live in Berkeley, reform of Costa-Hawkins and the Ellis Act need to be on the table.

3) How will you work to make housing more affordable in the Bay Area?

We are in the middle of an affordability crisis. We need a multi-pronged approach to lower housing costs, protect our communities and discourage displacement.

Certainly we need to build more housing. But simply increasing supply will not get us out of this crisis. We need to focus on building affordable, and middle-income housing and protecting the rights of tenants. As a Richmond City Council member I supported inclusionary housing practices and worked with developers to include affordable and below market rate housing units in their developments. I've also been a proponent of workforce housing to make sure that teachers, firefighters, police and other public servants are able to live in the communities they serve. In the City of Richmond, I supported a just-cause eviction ordinance that would protect tenants from arbitrary evictions.

Income inequality is also a large component to housing affordability. This means access to higher education, which I will touch on later, but it also means people need access to jobs that pay a living wage. That's why I've called for an increase to the minimum wage, and why I've championed workforce development programs like Richmond Build.

4) How will you work to make higher education more affordable for students?

Throughout my career, I have fought to make sure that more kids get greater opportunities to succeed – especially through education. I'm so passionate about this issue – because for me, it's personal. Great schools and higher education saved my life. Without a solid education, who knows where I'd be today. If elected, I have a bill ready to be introduced called "Pay it Forward, Pay it Back." With this policy, students could attend college tuition free. After students graduate and gain employment they could begin to pay a percentage of their income to the state to finance the next generation's higher education.

5) What will you do to improve the match between identified community needs and the community benefits offered by hospitals and banks?

I view the role of an Assemblymember to be not just as a legislator, but as a community advocate as well. I will use my position in the State Assembly to convene stakeholders and find ways to meet the needs of the community. But I'm not waiting until I'm elected. Right now in Assembly District 15, Doctors Medical Center is set to close its doors by the end of the year. This is a hospital that serves low income, and predominantly uninsured patients. To me, closure of Doctors Medical Center is inexcusable and unacceptable. That's why I have been lobbying corporations to contribute to their community to keep this essential facility open. I have been successful in getting state help and convening local stakeholders to find a solution. Ultimately, I support a single payer health care system because low-income folks that need hospitals like Doctors Medical Center should not fall victim to what I view as the redlining of our health care system. Further, I am also support any legislative effort that would take away non-profit status of hospitals that pay exorbitant salaries while failing to provide services to the communities who need it.

6) Are public transit, bicycling, and pedestrian infrastructure and operations adequate to support the Berkeley's existing and projected housing stock? If yes, why? If not, what would you change?

Having served on the West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee, I know that our roads and public transportation infrastructure need to be improved and need an infusion of revenue. I support Measure BB, which would generate revenue for public transportation, expand bike and pedestrian paths, BART, and bus operations. As a Richmond City Council Member I voted to support smart growth, including transit-oriented housing development and infill development to counter sprawl. As an Assemblymember, I would continue that advocacy and call for the use of Cap and Trade dollars to expand public transportation and transit-oriented development.

7) Berkeley has a very large homeless population. The City provides around \$2.9 million/year to non-profit organizations that provide services to the homeless, but the problem is clearly getting worse. What would you do to improve the situation?

I believe that the problem of homelessness is a mental health issue as much as it is a housing issue. Increasing mental health services is a priority of my campaign. To address homelessness, we need a regional solution that includes government funded supportive housing – affordable housing with mental health, and substance abuse treatment that treats people with dignity and respect. This will provide housing for those in need, while also addressing the factors that cause homelessness. Supportive housing is a cost effective strategy that will ultimately save money, especially for our public health system, as homeless individuals often rely on emergency rooms for access to health care.