

Our Revolution Maryland 2022 Congressional Candidate Questionnaire

Responses to Questions will be made Public

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ECOLOGICAL/CLIMATE CRISIS

We face multiple existential threats: a climate crisis with the unprecedented levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, an environmental pollution crisis caused by our extraction and consumption practices, and the limits to growth on a finite planet. There are so many crises in the world, but the threats to the environment and our climate are the most grave. So we begin here.

Our Revolution has endorsed the framework of the Green New Deal, with the twin goals of a transformation to renewable energy and promoting environmental justice and economic equity. Will you support the Green New Deal and any implementing legislation in the upcoming Congress? Describe your vision for moving to renewable energy and transitioning away from fossil fuels. What commitments can you make now to voters, to demand action in Congress where we have seen none for decades? *

Yes, in Congress, I'm working with Safe Climate Caucus colleagues to break the stranglehold of the carbon barons over our energy and environmental policies and to engage in sweeping positive climate action. I was one of the first Members to cosponsor Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal resolution when she first got to congress and introduced it, and I am also a proud cosponsor of many other bills to stop subsidizing the carbon industry, place a moratorium on new fossil fuel projects and move our country towards 100 percent renewable energy by 2035. You can find more on my environmental work in Congress on my official House website here: <https://raskin.house.gov/environment-energy-agriculture>.

In the face of a lack of Congressional action, and the Supreme Court now revisiting EPA authority, will you join Our Revolution in calling on President Biden to declare a climate emergency to take actions at the executive level? *

Yes. I am a member of the CPC executive board, which has just released a slate of priorities for executive action from the Biden administration and declaring a 'National Climate Emergency' is top among them. This will allow the Executive Branch to fully utilize its emergency powers and mobilize multiple federal resources to meet the sweeping urgency of the climate crisis.

Are there policies you would favor to move to more sustainable levels of consumption and less environmentally devastating practices and products? *

I favor many such policies and will continue to explore them all.

Besides anthropogenic global warming, what other environmental crises are we facing and how do you propose addressing them? *

In Congress, I'm working to protect Maryland's coastline from offshore drilling and actively pushing for Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts; working to build a nationwide green infrastructure initiative and to take immediate action to promote renewable energy and combat climate change. As an active member of the Congressional Safe Climate Caucus, I'm committed to pushing for greater environmental stewardship as we work to eliminate the influence of giant corporate polluters over federal policy. We must work to counter soil depletion, lead in drinking water all over the country, the horrific toxic effects of factory farming, the rapid loss of biodiversity and the shocking rise and acceleration in the extinction of other animal species.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Will you commit to voting for passage of an increase in the federal minimum wage to at least \$15/hour now (indexed to inflation)? *

YES

What is your plan for addressing the homelessness crisis? What are your ideas for addressing the crisis in the cost of housing which has many Americans paying more than half their income for housing? *

I've supported a variety of legislative efforts to address income inequality, increase worker pay, and expand affordable housing for every American.

Do you agree that wealth and income inequality are among the most significant problems we face? If so, why do you believe this is happening, and what specific steps would you take to redress this? Would you support changes in tax laws or rate changes? What other policy changes would you advocate for? Please be specific as possible here. *

Yes, I agree. Economic inequality in the U.S. is at an all-time high, and the dividing lines of class and race continue to converge in many parts of the country to lock many people out of structures of opportunity. It is hard to sustain the political culture of a democracy with such sharp and appalling wealth inequality. We need to end the steep wealth gap in America by increasing wages and the minimum wage, ending corporate tax cuts and tax breaks for the wealthiest 1%, restoring progressivity to the tax system, investing federal funds in programs that support and empower marginalized communities, passing sweeping campaign finance reform and voting rights legislation, and ending discriminatory practices that criminalize and punish people just for living and working in poverty.

What new or repealed laws or regulations would you impose or reinstate on the investment and commercial banking sectors? *

We need to revive the Glass-Steagall act.

What steps would you take to protect workers who are trying to organize a union? Do you support the Pro Act? Does it go far enough in your view? If not, what else must we do? *

One of my top priorities in Congress has been fighting to protect the rights to organize and bargain collectively. I am an active member of the Congressional Labor Caucus and have cosponsored legislation to protect and expand workers' rights, including the PRO Act, which strengthens and protects the rights to organize and collectively bargain for better pay and safer working conditions.

Passing the PRO Act is necessary but insufficient. We need stronger enforcement of existing union rights and federal labor laws, We need to modernize and enforce Davis Bacon regulations to ensure fair pay on federal projects And we need to transform federal labor law to make unfair labor practices civilly actionable as a tort and/or as a civil rights violation. We also need to reform bankruptcy laws to prevent their abuse by unscrupulous employers to nullify obligations to workers in terms of compensation, retirement and health benefits and other hard-won concessions.

Would you support or oppose the Congressional Progressive Caucus' plan to create fairer trade deals? (Read more here: https://progressives.house.gov/_cache/files/d/0/d06e29b1-a19e-48e5-8eba-7ca61b0bba94/D363B2756F3792BAEEC7A33B795604EA.cpc-fair-trade-agenda.pdf) *

Support.

HEALTHCARE/RETIREMENT

What steps do you support to strengthen Social Security and Medicare? *

I support protecting and expanding Social Security and Medicare. I am a proud cosponsor of H.R. 5723, the Social Security 2100 Act, H.R. 1976, Medicare for All.

Will you join in support of Rep. Jayapal's petition effort to end the Trump/Biden program allowing Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to move Medicare enrollees to for-profit Direct Contracting Entities? *

Yes, I was an early supporter of this effort. See <https://jayapal.house.gov/2022/01/05/protect-medicare/>.

Do you support single-payer healthcare - Medicare For All? Please explain your answer. *

Yes, I have been a cosponsor of Medicare for All since my first year in Congress, and was a lead exponent and defender of the legislation in its first hearing in the House Rules Committee in 2019.

LEGAL REFORM

Do you support legalizing marijuana? Why or why not? *

Yes. I helped lead the effort to pass a medical marijuana program and then to decriminalize marijuana in Maryland and have continued to promote liberalization and legalization in the U.S. Congress. I am a proud cosponsor of the MORE Act (H.R. 3617) and other legislation to address our country's failed War on Drugs.

The United States has 5% of the world's population, but 25% of those incarcerated worldwide. Roughly 90% of those in prison have taken plea deals, and even those who get new evidence later are unable to get hearings or convictions overturned. Private prisons further incentivize arrests and incarceration. What steps do you support to reform our Criminal Justice system - police, prosecutors, courts, jails and prisons *

In my career in Annapolis, I led the fight to abolish the death penalty, end mandatory minimum sentences in drug cases, and decriminalize marijuana possession, so I was proud in Congress to support the First Step Act, which was enacted into law. Much more has to be done now to confront and transform the prison-industrial complex. We need to end for-profit prisons, terminate the authoritarianism of the War on Drugs, restore voting rights for all former prisoners, decriminalize and destigmatize addiction in order to address it effectively as a public health crisis, and abolish the death penalty nationally.

Our Revolution Maryland has advocated for justice for the human rights attorney Steven Donziger, who is being persecuted by oil and gas 'Goliath' Chevron through the federal court system. See this link for a discussion of the timeline of events in his case: <https://www.freedonziger.org/timeline-of-the-case>. What steps will you take to rebalance the scales of justice so that 'Davids' like Steven Donziger can bring suit against mega-corporations to seek redress for victims of corporate misconduct, without risking their own freedom? With respect to Donziger, in particular, do you support Congressional hearings and/or Justice Department investigation into possible corruption of process in the Southern District of New York? *

Yes, I led the effort calling for a DOJ review into this case: <https://raskin.house.gov/2021/4/house-members-call-for-doj-to-review-case-of-environmental-justice-advocate-steven-donziger>. I have known Steven Donziger a long time and he has been the victim of an old-fashioned railroad.

The federal judiciary is largely composed of pro-corporate/anti-consumer and labor judges appointed by Presidents from both parties. We see this in recent bankruptcy decisions allowing profitable corporations to claw back pension funds from employees and retirees. There are also high-profile abuses of bankruptcy protections, such as the 'Texas Two-Step' to shield assets of billionaire owners and Fortune 500 companies from deserving plaintiffs and claimants. What reforms and court oversight would you support to prevent predatory corporations from abusing judicial process to evade responsibility for egregious conduct injuring thousands and even millions of Americans? *

In my role on the Judiciary Committee we are closely examining the bankruptcy system and conducting ongoing oversight of the the federal court system, whose operations have been distorted and deformed by right-wing manipulation and corporate power.

IMMIGRATION

If you support a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in our country today, please set forth your vision briefly. What other reforms to our immigration system would you advocate going forward? *

Maryland is the Free State, welcoming, inclusive and just, and I'm proud to represent the wonderfully diverse 8th District, which is home to many vibrant immigrant communities. I value the history, culture, and achievements of successive waves of immigrants who have immeasurably enriched America. In the House, I am pushing for comprehensive immigration reform, restoring protections for refugees and asylum seekers that have been cancelled by the Trump administration, and humane, effective and pragmatic policies at the border. Since entering Congress, I have worked to advance the Dream and Promise Act, which would provide a pathway to citizenship for DREAMers – immigrants brought to the United States as children – and to families who have lived here for years due to natural disasters or conflicts in their native countries. I opposed the previous administration's baseless and misguided attacks on immigrants and refugees. I believe people across the nation must recall our founding and deep character as a nation of immigrants (which describes everyone who came voluntarily to the country but not, of course, people brought here as slaves and indentured servants). As Thomas Paine wrote in Common Sense, America was conceived as a haven of refuge for people fleeing from religious and political repression and violence all over the world. I support legislation to preserve America's proud history as a legal haven for refugees and asylum seekers and to continue a robust and transparent legal immigration program.

FOREIGN POLICY

The United States spends more on its military than the next 10 countries combined. That enormous expenditure incentivizes conflict over diplomacy and lobbying by our military-industrial complex to maintain the status quo. In Congress, would you work to reduce our annual military spending? *

Yes. I reject militarism as the basis of a democratic foreign policy and am convinced that the great breakthroughs of the last half-century have been the product not of the military-industrial complex but of nonviolent movements, like the Civil Rights Movement, the movement to end apartheid in South Africa, the movement to end bureaucratic state socialism in the USSR and liberate Eastern Europe and the social change movements that have strengthened democracy around the world.

ELECTION & PARTY REFORM

Do you support public financing for every election? Why or why not? *

Yes, consistent with Buckley v. Valeo, I support providing public financing as an option in federal and state legislative and executive races. I long ago co-authored a book with John Bonifaz called The Wealth Primary: the Constitution and Campaign Fundraising, which made the argument for public-financed elections as both a superior policy option and a constitutional imperative.

Do you support or oppose ending the revolving door for elected officials and staffers becoming lobbyists? What will you do about the influence of fossil fuel executives and other industry front-groups on policy-making and elections? *

For too long, special interests have convinced our government to put the interests of the carbon barons and the fossil fuel industry above the public good of our economy and the vast majority of by Americans. With global temperatures shattering all records, I am championing policies to rapidly transition us to a green economy that invests in alternative clean energy technologies and provides fossil fuel industry workers an opportunity to retrain and find jobs in a new clean energy sector. I support ending federal subsidies to the fossil fuel industry and have worked to hold the industry accountable for its climate change denialism in my role as the Chair of the Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Subcommittee. Meantime, I favor putting teeth into our revolving-door laws and forbidding any lobbying work for substantial periods of time after a person leaves federal office.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Two decades into the 21st Century, intolerance and discrimination are still plaguing us, and now, incredibly to many of us, activists on the right are trying to purge our schools of any books or curriculum which would involve an honest accounting of our troubled history of social, racial and ethnic strife, prejudice and even exploitation and genocide. Can we address disparate treatment and intolerance without openly confronting our troubled history and persistent injustices? Looking at the 2021 election in Virginia, it seems that GOP's main electoral talking point this year will continue to be a refusal to even discuss racial inequities, as well as creating new forms of oppression of women and LGBTQ people. As a society and as progressives, how should we formulate a response to these political talking points, and going forward to ensure we can equip each generation to discuss difference and discrimination? *

As the Representative of a District that is home to a diverse and robust LGBTQ+ community, I am a proud cosponsor and vocal supporter of H.R. 5, which will guarantee that LGBTQ+ Americans cannot be discriminated against because of who they are or whom they love. As a member of the Congressional Equality Caucus, I'm also working to ensure that transgender Americans can live free of violence, fear, or prejudice. I opposed the Trump Administration's appalling and irrational ban on transgender servicemembers, which would have rolled back decades of civil and equal rights progress. There is no room for discrimination against patriots who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect America. I'll keep fighting to make sure that transgender Americans receive the equal protection of the laws.

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