

Santa Monica Democratic Club 2022 School Board Candidate Questionnaire

General Information

Candidate Name: Miles Warner

Email Address: vote4MilesWarner@gmail.com

Phone Number: please email to schedule a phone call – I am very happy to speak with anyone

Candidate's Current Occupation: Father and Business owner

Candidate's Employer: Self-employed

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate):

What qualifications do you bring to this office?

I am a father of a kindergartener and a third grader, the oldest of which has special needs. Both of my children attend Roosevelt Elementary, where I was elected to the School Site Council. I am also a Santa Monica native, who attended JAMS and SAMOHI, so I am deeply invested in our community and in our schools. I grew up with a single mother with low income and further I am a product of our special education departments, and my son is now too. So, I am deeply committed to supporting kids who need extra help to succeed. My wife has a PhD in Occupational Science, so over the years I have been surrounded by experts in the fields of developmental support such that I believe very strongly in early intervention.

Additionally, I have a background in the arts, as well as in finance, with specific experience in real estate finance and management. Since one of the biggest failings of our board over the past ten years has been successful allocation and management of both new and existing buildings, I believe my business background will be particularly helpful in holding our management accountable and using our bond funds wisely.

I also bring a lot of compassion and intellectual curiosity. I am certain there will be issues where I am the most knowledgeable person in the conversation, but I am also certain there will be many where I am not. And in both cases I listen, ask questions and try make the best decision based on all of the factors, with an eye for what's best for our kids. It is a skill that has served me well and I believe it will serve our kids and the board extremely well.

Why are you running?

I am running for my kids, and for every kid in Santa Monica and Malibu. I am running so that they have clean safe places to learn. I am running so that our bond money is allocated and spent wisely and to the best use of our needs and future needs and I am running because I see a disturbing downward spiral in our schools. I personally owe so much to SMMUSD for my own education and for the many people who showed up for me as a kid who needed a lot of extra help to make it. Being on the site council has shown me the many management problems and unforced errors that the current board has made. Our teachers are amazing and our kids are amazing ... it's the management that is letting us down, and it is the board who is allowing that to happen.

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MILES WARNER FOR SMMUSD SCHOOL BOARD

I am called to action—to ensure that my children have the excellent education I had and that they deserve and to ensure that all kids in our district leave Santa Monica and Malibu having had every opportunity to shine and all the support they need to do so.

[What are the top issues of your campaign? How do you plan to address those issues once elected?](#)

I will work from day one to locate and allocate funds for more teachers. The achievement gap has been used by the current board for many years as an excuse for their projects and yet we have seen very little movement on that crucial issue. The number one proven solution to Class/Race/Gender achievement gap concerns, is more teachers and small class sizes. I will find the money and we will hire more qualified teachers. This may necessitate housing vouchers and other means to help lure teachers into our high cost of living cities, but the flip side is that we have property tax money, and I am certain we can find ways to ensure that we hire more and better teachers.

I will hold management accountable for the safety issues and violations that have occurred. I will press facilities management to ensure all of our schools are properly maintained (that means no mold, no PCB and no rats/fleas/mice (which currently exists)). I will demand more articulated construction and repair budgets, so that when they are audited, there is clear paper trail for the spent funds. And I will make it absolutely clear that we are not a Real Estate development company, that we are in the sole practice of educating children!

I will include all parents in every appropriate element of the board's processes. The communication during COVID and the Muir debacle has been awful, with mixed and unclear messages coming from school and district staff. These are areas of safety and must be treated as such. Parents must be included and properly informed—and they have not!

I will ensure that special education is properly funded so that our kids with more needs are scaffolded, to grow and succeed. I propose that kids who are unhoused, have high emotional, financial or learning needs are given advocates who stick with them until they graduate in order to make sure they have what they need to succeed. This is something I would have benefited from and something I think every kid who needs help deserves.

The final issue I will tackle is the socio-emotional toll that a year and a half of online school has caused. I have seen very little effort to engage our kids at any level about this. Our kids need help and they need a plan to heal after a very traumatic few years, for many of which are foundational years in their social and emotional growth.

[Please list all of your individual and/or organizational endorsements.](#)

I am endorsed by:

Oscar De La Torre – SM City council

Phil Brock – SM City Council

Craig Foster – SMMUSD school board member

There are many more coming, but these are as of now where I am. I am a first-time candidate, running against a long-enshrined incumbency. I am outgunned, but I am running for our kids.

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How long have you lived in Santa Monica? Where else have you lived, and why did you live there?

I was born in Santa Monica and lived here until I was 18 when I went off to Santa Cruz for college. I have since lived almost my entire life in Santa Monica with a brief stint in NYC, and then Washington DC when my wife was a fellow at the National Cancer Institute. We lived in Malibu for six-months while we looked for a house to buy, where my child attended Webster for a school year. I do not see myself ever leaving again 😊

Will you pledge to serve on City Council for your entire four year term?

I %100 pledge to serve on the school board for your entire four year term! I also will pledge to step down after two terms, when my children will have graduated and my direct interest will have subsided. I am committed to doing what's right for all of the kids in Santa Monica and Malibu.

Party / Activism

How long have you been a registered Democrat? Have you ever been registered as a member of another political party, or as Decline To State? If so, which party and why?

What is your experience with political activism? Have you ever volunteered or worked for a political campaign other than your own, and if so, in what capacity were you involved?

I have been a democrat for my entire life. I spent my childhood going to abortion rallies and nuclear testing protests with my mother. She was a member of the Church in Ocean Park, so I was surrounded by people who believed in positive community change. In college I interned for the Energy and Commerce Committee Press office on Capital Hill. The quarter I spent in DC imprinted a lot of my understanding of politics and justice and I have never seen things the same since. I am pro-labor, pro-choice, pro-LGBTQ, and pro-action on climate. I believe in equality of opportunity and justice and I would step down before compromising those beliefs.

Which political candidates have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible.

I gave money to Obama, to Amy McGrath, to planned parenthood and the ACLU. Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office? If so, please list the name(s) of the officials and why you felt they should be recalled. I have never endorsed anyone as I am a first time candidate.

Please list any organizations with which you are a member, including any leadership position you have held in each organization.

I am a member of the Roosevelt School Site Council and of the Santa Monica Dem Club 😊 As a burn survivor, I have worked with the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation and served on their communications board over the years.

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Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform, as found here: <https://cadem.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CDP-Platform-2022-FINAL-1-1.pdf>

I have

List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree. (This is in no way a litmus test for our endorsement; however, because the party delegates have worked so hard on every

I am on the same page as far as I can tell on all of your issues.

word of this platform document, we believe it will be a helpful guide to comprehend the policy differences between each candidate.)

Campaign Finance

Please indicate Yes or No to the following statements:

1. I pledge not to take contributions from oil, gas, and coal industry executives, lobbyists, and PACs. I pledge.
2. I pledge not to take contributions from police or law enforcement unions, lobbyists, and PACs. I pledge
3. I pledge not to take contributions from development firms, lobbyists, and PACs. I pledge

*Note I'm assuming you mean PACs related to the prior groups, not all PACs, as we democrats also have PACs etc...

If you answered No to any of the above contribution questions, please explain here:

SMMUSD

What kind of approach should SMMUSD be taking in regard to COVID safety at this point in the pandemic?

SMMUSD should be taking a science-based approach. My wife has a MPH, as well a PhD in Occupational Science. She is a fellow of the National Cancer Institute, which is a part of the NIH... She has experience with epidemiology, and yet she would tell you she is not an expert. My point is that we should be listening to the people who understand COVID and making our policy based on their recommendations, not our hunches. That being said, SMMUSD must follow state protocols anyway, so our position as a school board must be first and foremost to support kids, teachers and parents through clear communication and following the guidelines to the letter to ensure we are doing everything we can to balance safety and successful educational outcomes.

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Additionally, as I already mentioned, we must provide more socio-emotional support for our kids and teachers at all age and grade levels. The past few years were traumatic and we have a responsibility to do everything possible to ensure our kids succeed.

What are your top priorities for SMMUSD which you plan to address in this four year term? Given the district's Basic Aid status, what are the biggest impacts to the district as a result? How does this affect your funding priorities?

I addressed this in the earlier question re my priorities. However, I will add here that basic aid gives us an opportunity to spend more money per pupil than ever before and that will be my plan. We do not need 1.5 administrators for everyone 1 teacher. That is absurd and I will be turning that ratio around.

Do you support the petition to transition the SMMUSD Board into districted elections, or do you believe the Board should continue in its current form of seven at-large seats?

I do support districted elections. It is more democratic and ensures that every area will be represented. As it is now the vast majority of our board members live in NoMA, and that isn't fair. I assert that Malibu might be sticking around if we'd had districted elections ten years ago.

What can SMMUSD do to further reduce the achievement gap?

As I said—more qualified teachers and more support for higher needs kids and schools that are open and clean and safe.

What can SMMUSD do to better implement social justice instruction and otherwise address equity issues?

This is a tricky question. I think we can encourage a strong understanding of our countries bloody history, so that every kid knows where we've come from and how hard their forebearers had to work to achieve what we have now, and how each and every one of us owes it to future generations to continue that fight, until we can honestly look around and say that everyone has a fair shot at their best life.

I also think critical thinking helps every student to learn and dissect the facts from the propaganda. Social justice will not function if we can't break down information and make accurate take aways.

What do you believe is the role of the District in providing high quality early childhood education and how will you fund expansion and quality improvement while maintaining accessibility and affordability?

I am a product of LMS' adjacent pre-school. My daughter attended TK. I believe investing in pre-school for every child in our district is the best return on investment we could think of. As I mentioned my wife is an Occupational Therapist, and I have learned over and over again how important early intervention is and how important those first magical years are. We as a district

could do so much for our future generations and I will %100 work to find money, whether from the cities for from grants to pay for this.

How do you see your role on the School Board in relationship to different stakeholders: parents, students, credentialed teachers, classified staff, CTA, LACOE, Sacramento, the City of SM, etc?

My role is to represent first the kids, second the teachers and third the parents. In doing that I believe the rest of the community is enriched.

What is your plan to deal with Malibu's petition to unify (ie, separate from) the school district, and what would an equitable solution look like?

If Malibu wants out, it is nonsense to sue them and try to force them to stay. If one person wants a divorce it would be considered abusive to coerce them into staying against their will. I believe we sit down in good faith and negotiate a separation agreement that makes sense for both parties. That is the only fair thing to do.

Student Concerns

What is your idea of the perfect learning environment?

Small class sizes. Proper HVAC. Access to newest technologies. Personal work space for teachers. AND a clear lack of mold, pests and other harmful chemicals.

What can SMMUSD do to better address student mental health needs?

We can hire more therapists and integrate them better into our kids daily experiences, so that if a child needs someone to talk to there is someone near. If they confide in a teacher, that teacher has a support system to ensure that they can support that child. I have mentioned some other ideas above, regarding hiring guides to track higher needs kids from early on until graduation, to ensure uniformity of attention through the many transisions kids face.

How do you feel about campus surveillance?

I think surveillance should be used only in the most necessary of conditions. We are not running prisons and our kids should not worry that we are.

What is your position on gun safety at school? What steps can the School Board take to prevent violent shootings?

The board could work with SMPD and LA country sheriffs to come up with an in-tandem plan for school safety. God knows why they haven't done this yet. Regardless of one's position on the police and their many abuses, they are trained and must be part of the conversation.

Do you support SMPD officers in the schools?

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NO!

Do you support legislative efforts to limit unnecessary police involvement in schools?

YES!

How will you support our students to be critical thinkers, leaders, and activists, starting in elementary school? Would you support student activism such as the student walkouts in support of gun control, racial justice, climate strike, etc.? How can these ideals be incorporated into the curriculum?

Yes, I support walk outs etc. Kids need to learn that they are important and have a voice. Protest and questioning the status quo is how we as a country continue to evolve. Any kid who wants to take the time to organize a walk-out because they feel there is an injustice, deserves to be taken seriously and given the space to voice their concerns.

And, Yes I support critical thinking more than any other thing our kids will learn. We live in an information age where the world's knowledge is at our finger tips. It is our ability to take that knowledge and synthesize new information that make us capable and productive members of our society.

Social Justice

In what ways can SMMUSD ensure that, in a real, practical sense, Black Lives Matter in our school community?

We can ensure that issues of social justice, such as BLM, are part of our kids lives by educating them, which may mean bringing in BLM leaders, and teaching them about Critical Race theory and the history which necessitates ensuring that every Black person in America's life matters.

In what ways can SMMUSD best protect the undocumented residents of Santa Monica?

We can protect our undocumented residents by engaging them as higher needs students and working to ensure they have what they need to succeed, the same way we would with any other higher need community.

How would you use your position on the School Board to assist BIPOC and other disadvantaged residents of Santa Monica?

How do you plan to (in the moment) counteract any and all observed possible acts of microaggressions towards Women, African Americans, Hispanics, LGBTQ and others of marginalized communities from your fellow Boardmembers or members of the public? What is your experience in dealing with these situations?

I believe we must have ensure that our history is taught, that we have a culture where other-ing people is unacceptable and where conflicts are used as opportunities to engage and learn from each other. Empathy must be earned through engagement. When my son had questions about Racism because of something he had heard in school, I took him to the African American Musiem in DC and had him learn about slavery. We discussed how it would feel if his uncle,

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who is African American, was enslaved. I had him think about the power difference and how it was arbitrary. That to me is how we change the discourse—through engagement and empathy. To have those two things there must be trust and there must be focus on them. Everyone benefits in the end.

Ballot Measures

Do you support California Proposition 1? yes

Do you support the citizens initiative ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue for affordable housing, rent subsidy, and SMMUSD? Why/why not? No. I think it's a short-sighted stop gap that does not solve the problems it aims to solve.

Do you support the competing council-approved ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue into the general fund? Why/why not? No. I think it's a short-sighted stop gap that does not solve the problems it aims to solve.

Do you support the rent control ballot measure which would permanently lower the rent control General Adjustment cap from 6% down to 3%? Yes.

Do you support the SMC bond measure? No.

Do you support the 1% transient occupancy tax ballot measure? Yes.

Do you support the cannabis business tax ballot measure? Yes.

Additional Questions

What role do you believe the Santa Monica Democratic Club should have in our City?

We are by and large a progressive democratic led city. I think the Dem club should ensure that our elections are democratic and that the best candidates have a chance to win. It should stand against cronyism and be a force for social justice.

If elected, how would you attempt to interact with the Santa Monica Democratic Club and other political organizations to ensure community buy-in on new proposals?

I would interact with the Dem Club as I would with any important institution for whom I share many views: Openly, fairly and honestly.

Please feel free to reach out.

Best regards,



Miles Warner