

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Candidate Name: **Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein, Ph.D.**

Email address: richardamir@me.com

Phone Number: 928-600-0403

Candidate's Current Occupation: College Professor

Candidate's Employer: Santa Monica College

Campaign Contact Person: Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein, Ph.D.

Campaign website: www.rtjforschoolboard2022.com

What qualifications do you bring to this office?

I have served on the SMMUSD BOE since 2014. I have been an effective voice for closing the achievement/opportunity gap, protecting the health and safety of our students, and modernizing our classrooms while keeping our District in the black. As a parent whose two children recently graduated from SMMUSD I know our public schools well. I bring a deep commitment to public education and 30 years of experience as an educator. I also bring skills that allow for meaningful collaboration amongst all stakeholders in our education community.

Why are you running?

I am running to further support the implementation of the District's Social Justice Learning Standards, grow our Project Based Learning curriculum/program, maintain good financial stewardship, enhance and expand our attention to student well-being, continue to address learning loss resulting from the global pandemic, and support teachers and parents as our community continues to work at closing the achievement/opportunity gap.

What are the top issues of your campaign? How do you plan to address those issues once elected?

For me, a top priority is to see the establishment of a Well-Being Task Force for our students as we exit the global pandemic. We need to engage families and our larger community as we work to restore normalcy to the school day in the wake of a terrible disruption to our lives. In addition, I will continue to champion Social Justice Learning Standards, American Cultures and Ethnic Studies curriculum, and the joy of learning through Project Based and Interested Based learning. I would also like to see Malibu Unification achieved while protecting students in both communities.

Please list all of your individual and/or organizational endorsements.

As of August 23, 2022:

Ted Lieu, U.S. House of Representatives, Congressperson 33rd District

Julia Brownley, U.S. House of Representatives, Congressperson 26th District

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Richard Bloom, California State Assemblyman, District 50

Ben Allen, California State Senator, District 26

Sheila Kuehl, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, District 3

Maria Leon Vazquez, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District BOE

Jen Smith, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District BOE

Jon Kean, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District BOE

Laurie Lieberman, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District BOE

Keith Coleman, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District BOE

Dr. Louise Jaffe, Santa Monica College Board of Trustees

Barry Snell, Santa Monica College Board of Trustees

Dr. Nancy Greenstein, Santa Monica College Board of Trustees

Dr. Margaret Quinones-Perez, Santa Monica College Board of Trustees

Rob Rader, Santa Monica College Board of Trustees

Dr. Susan Aminoff, Santa Monica College Board of Trustees

Dr. Sion Roy, Santa Monica College Board of Trustees

Sue Himmelrich, Mayor, City of Santa Monica

Gleam Davis, Santa Monica City Council Member

Kristin McCowan, Santa Monica City Council Member

Lana Negrete, Santa Monica City Council Member

Christine Parra, Santa Monica City Council Member

Anastasia Foster, Santa Monica Rent Control Board Member

Erica Lesley, Santa Monica Rent Control Board Member

Caroline Torosis, Santa Monica Rent Control Board Member

CEPS — Community for Excellent Public Schools

Santa Monica Forward

Los Angeles and Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council

Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 11

Judy Abdo, Former Santa Monica Mayor

Abby Arnold

Merle Arnold, Retired SMC Professor

Rob Bailis, Executive and Artistic Director of the Broad Stage

Carolyn Baugh

Dr. Mitch Becker

Dr. Dianne Berman, SMC Professor

Marwa Bernstein

Trish Blessing, Vice President, Westside Ballet of Santa Monica Board of Directors

Tom Bolle

Kelly Boston Olvera

Justin Braun, Educator

Patti Braun, Past President, SMMPTA Council

Reiner Braun

Dr. Alan Buckley, SMC Professor

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Natalie Burton, Former Principal, Roosevelt Elementary School

Damian Carville, Parent, Roosevelt Elementary

Allegra Clegg, Film Executive, Paramount Pictures

Rev. James Conn

Dennis Crane

Lauri Crane

Jose Cue, SMC Professor

Shari Davis, Former Chair of CEPS, Community for Excellent Public Schools

Guido Davis Del Piccolo, SMC Professor

Dr. August De Oliveira

Judith Douglas, Retired SMC Professor

Brian Driscoll, SMC Professor

Michael Dubin

Mehrdad (Mike) Eghbali

Kiersten Elliott

David Fairbank

Dr. Mary Jo Frazier

Dr. Christina Gabler, SMC Professor

Elizabeth Gelfand Stearns, Filmmaker

Dr. Bill Gelfeld

Donald Girard

Anne Goldstein

Jack Goldstein, Attorney

Terry Green, Retired SMC Professor

Dr. Marcy Hardart

Nadine Harrison

Patricia Hoffman, Former SMMUSD Board President and Former Chair of the Santa Monica Democratic Club

Gary Huff, SMC Professor

Phildon Huffaker, SMC Professor

Erin Inatsugu

Ana L. Jara, Former Santa Monica City Council Member

Danica Jamieson

Robbie Jones

Dr. Amber Katherine

Dr. Lesley Kawaguchi, Retired SMC Professor

Benjamin Kay, Teacher

Harry Keily, Former President, Santa Monica-Malibu Certificated Teachers Association

Joan Krenik

Paulina Ladreyt

Leslie Lambert

Andy Larkin

Kylie Larkin

Paula Larmore

Wendy Lazarus

Cheryl Lee

Jae Lee

Sandra Lee

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Ericka Lesley, Chair of the Santa Monica Black Agenda

Susan Lord

Payal Maniar

Ilaan Mazzini, Arts Educator

Judith Meister, Retired Beach Manager, City of Santa Monica

Walter Meyer, Former Chair of the Santa Monica Arts Commission

Diane Miller, City of Santa Monica Commissioner

Jaleh Mirhashemi

Dr. Ali Mohsen

Jonathan Mooney

Rebecca Mooney

Greg Morena, Former Santa Monica City Councilman

Neil Morley

Debbie Mulvaney

Dr. Nancy Nieman

Dr. Eric Oifer, SMC College Professor

Jonas Oppenheim, Parent

Adrienne O’Riain, SAMOHI Parent

Tom Peters, Candidate for Santa Monica College Board of Trustees

Raquel Ramirez, SMC Professor

Stephanie Ramos

Ellis Raskin

Daniel Rooke

Paul Rosenstein, Former Mayor, City of Santa Monica

Dr. Christine Schultz

Angela D. Scott, Parent and Education Advocate

Rebecca Sprigg

Linda Sullivan

Sri Susilowati, SMC College Professor

Ashley Tahvildaran

Bobby Tahvildaran

Ezzat Tahvildaran

Gina Tahvildaran

Manoochehr Tahvildaran

Sohrab Tahvildaran

Mina Tahvildaran-Sefati

Michael Tarbet

Janice Thelkeld, Teacher

Dr. James Thing

Christine Thornton

Mark Tomasic, SMC College Professor

Nathaniel Trives, Former Santa Monica Mayor

Vanessa VanWormer, SMC Professor

Sal Veas, SMC Professor

Caprice Walker, Associate Artistic Director, Westside Ballet

Holly Watson

Winifred Wechsler

Lori Whitesell

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Dr. Susan Winfield

Ted Winterer, Former Santa Monica Mayor

Roberta Wolin-Tupas, Retired SMC Professor

Denny Zane, Former Santa Monica Mayor; Current Co-Chair SMRR

Marcia Zimmer

Kathy Zurich-Lunsford

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

I have lived in Santa Monica since June 4, 1999 (23 years). Before living in Santa Monica, I lived in Flagstaff, Arizona where I earned a Ph.D. at Northern Arizona University.

Will you pledge to serve on the SMMUSD BOE for your entire four-year term?

Yes.

2. 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?

I have been a registered Democrat for over 25 years. Before that I was a registered Green. I was a Green in Arizona because the Arizona Democrat Party was too conservative for me.

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 politically active my whole adult life. I have volunteered for countless campaigns. As the former Co-Chair of Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights I worked on all campaigns dating back to 2000. A sampling of the campaigns I've worked on include: Julia Brownley (CA State Legislature), Sheila Kuehl (LA Board of Supervisors), and as a volunteer for Pete Buttigieg and Hillary Clinton for President. I have also worked on many rent control measures and bond measures in support of public education.

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

This is a sampling:

Sue Himmelrich
Kristin McGowan
Gleam Davis
Kevin McKeown
Terry O'Day
Ana Jara
Pam O'Connor
Richard Bloom
Ben Allen
Shy Roy
Lindsey Horovath
Torie Osborn
Sheila Kuehl
Julia Brownley
Tony Vazquez
Frank Gruber
Shari Davis
Caroline Torosis
Anastasia Foster
Ericka Lesley
Craig Foster
Laurie Lieberman
Jennifer Smith
Ralph Mechur
Jon Kean
Nancy Greenstein
Margaret Quinones Perez
Rob Rader
Louise Jaffe
Andrew Walzer
Susan Aminoff
Jose Escarce

Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office?

NO!

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

1. SMMUSD BOE (Past President and current Vice President)
2. Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights (Past Co-Chair and Steering Committee)

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3. Santa Monica Democrat Club
4. UFCW Local 270 (Shop Steward)
5. Santa Monica College Faculty Senate (Past President)
6. Westside Ballet of Santa Monica (Guild President)
7. Community for Excellent Public Schools (CEPS Steering Committee)

Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform.

Yes, I have.

List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree.

I fully support the party platform.

3. 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.

Yes

2. I pledge not to take contributions from police or law enforcement unions, lobbyists, and PACs.

Our local law enforcement does not endorse or support school board candidates, so this is moot.

3. I pledge not to take contributions from development firms, lobbyists, and PACs.

Yes

4. SMMUSD

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

I support the District adhering to the Los Angeles County Department of Health guidelines and protocols. This is our current policy in the District.

What are your top priorities for SMMUSD which you plan to address in this four year term?

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1. Student emotional well-being and attention to closing the achievement gap
2. Student Equity and Inclusion - Social Justice Learning Standards and curriculum
3. Project Based Learning expansion
4. Good fiscal stewardship and the recruitment and retention of diverse teachers and staff

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?

As SMMUSD gets "deeper" into Basic Aid status we will find ourselves in a much improved financial position. However, until then the transition from State Aid to Basic Aid will require close attention and experienced leadership. I will bring that experience and leadership.

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 not support the SB442 petition before LACOE and I voted to take legal measures to stop its implementation.

What can SMMUSD do to further reduce the achievement gap?

We are making real progress in closing the achievement/opportunity gap. Our collective work at ensuring equity and inclusion through the implementation of our ACES (American Cultures and Ethnic Studies) graduation requirement, the implementation across all grade levels of our Social Justice Learning Standards, and our focus on meeting students where they are through the joy of learning and the expansion of Project Based Learning demonstrates real progress. We must continue this work. Also note worthy is our recent reclassification successes with English language learners in our District.

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

This is happening with the full roll out and implementation of the Social Justice Learning Standards. The current school board is directly responsible for this success.

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?

Our District leads here. The current school board expanded access to quality early childhood education and we made some of the most impressive expansions in the Southern California region.

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?

The school board is an elected body charged with representing the community. As we are a diverse community with varied interests, it is a board member's responsibility to be attentive and collaborative. I am a proven collaborative leader who respectfully engages with community stakeholders, parents and teachers.

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

I support, as do all my current colleagues on the BOE, the unification effort. However, the split of the District must be fair and equitable and there can be no harm to any child whether they live in Santa Monica or in Malibu. We are currently making progress in mediation with the City of Malibu.

5. STUDENT CONCERNS

What is your idea of the perfect learning environment?

One where students feel safe, respected, and able to explore their interests.

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

I am recommending that the District establish a Well Being Task Force to address the incredible need in our community – a need that we know exists throughout the country. We need to engage all stakeholders in discussing and developing processes and responses to what is a national crisis – one that has been exacerbated by the global pandemic.

How do you feel about campus surveillance?

We need to strike a balance between protecting students' privacy while at the same time maintaining a safe learning environment. I do not support surveillance/cameras inside of the campus. However, I do support surveillance of the school parameters.

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

All persons working at our schools and attending our schools need to practice active shooter drills. Our campus security and teachers and staff need to have the best

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professional development to be ready in the case of an active shooter. Additionally, we must maintain good communications and partnerships with local law enforcement.

Do you support SMPD officers in the schools?

I do not support armed officers on campus. However, I do support patrols of our school parameters.

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

I support efforts to reimagine the ways in which we do policing in our community.

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?

I believe that teaching students to be critical thinkers is essential. Also, I believe we must have a strong focus on civics and democracy. I do support student activism and have often joined students in their organized marches and walkouts.

6. SOCIAL JUSTICE

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

We can ensure this by making sure that our curriculum is diverse and that the narratives of Black Americans amongst other historically marginalized communities are part of the curriculum. I believe deeply in the Politics of Recognition.

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

First, we can make sure to protect the privacy of all students and their families by prohibiting the release of any information (within the law) to outside agencies. We must engage in professional development for our teachers, staff, and administrators so that equity and inclusion are championed in our District.

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

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I will continue to make sure their voices are heard and that our curriculum reflects the narratives of diverse people. Key to this is our full build out of Social Justice Learning outcomes and implementation of Board Policies where equity and inclusion are recognized as the bedrock of our District's work.

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

First, we must recognize and name these micro-aggressions. Then we must learn how to deconstruct systems that have allowed them to flourish. I have been a teacher for 30 years and have been committed to this social justice work my entire adult/professional life.

7. BALLOT MEASURES

Do you support California Proposition 1?

Yes, I believe in a Woman's right to choose and for reproductive freedom for all. This must be enshrined in the California Constitution.

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?

Yes, as a long-time committed advocate who deeply believes in affordable housing, rent control, and strong public education as a tool to eradicate systemic inequities in our society, I see important benefits for our community in this measure.

Do you support the competing council-approved ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue into the general fund?

This measure along with measure GS would provide important benefits to our community like: Funding for afterschool programs, libraries, and safety measures important to the school community that I represent.

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

Yes

Do you support the SMC Bond measure?

Yes

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

Yes

Do you support the cannabis business tax ballot measure?

Yes

8. ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

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

The SMDC is an important stakeholder in our community/City. I believe it should be consulted and engaged in public education here in our community.

SMDC plays an integral role in connecting residents with their locally elected representatives and ensuring that strong, fair, progressive values are known and implemented in community governance.

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 am committed to serving as a good liaison with SMDC and SMRR. I regularly attend meetings of both organizations as my political sensibilities are deeply aligned with the platforms of both groups.