

Santa Monica Democratic Club

2024 Rent Control Board Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in the Santa Monica Democratic Club endorsement. Candidates seeking the endorsement of our Club must complete and return the following questionnaire. Only registered Democrats are eligible for our consideration. Submitting this questionnaire constitutes acknowledgment that its contents are now part of the public record and may be reproduced and distributed by the Santa Monica Democratic Club.

Please send the completed questionnaire to smdemocrats@gmail.com by 11:59pm on May 18, 2024. Interview appointment times with our Executive Committee will be scheduled on a first come first served basis for the weekend of May 25/26 as the questionnaires are returned.

None of these questions shall be construed as litmus tests. There are no questions that must be answered a certain way to be considered for our endorsement.

General Information

Candidate Name: **Kay Ambriz**

Email Address: **Kay@electkay.com**

Candidate's Current Occupation: **Campaign Consultant**

Candidate's Employer: **Ellis Raskin for Santa Monica City Council**

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate): **N/A**

1. What qualifications do you bring to this office?

Immediately after high school, I found the Housing Rights Center where I worked as an intern taking calls regarding housing discrimination issues. During college, I took an internship at the Coalition for Economic Survival with our good friend Larry Gross, where I learned about the dangers of lead based paint in older buildings amongst other issues. After graduating from Occidental College, I attended Hastings Law School where I continued my interest in housing rights issues. I interned at the Eviction Defense Collaborative in San Francisco where I assisted in many unlawful detainer cases. In 2015, I found my home in Santa Monica and became a Social Services Commissioner in 2019 until the commission was merged. I have also been active with SMRR as a member of the SMRR Steering Committee and as a hotliner where I assist callers with their problems and direct them to appropriate resources.

2. Why are you running?

Rent control is crucial to protecting Santa Monica's renters and safeguarding our city's most vulnerable residents. It is a mission-based law that helps preserve economic diversity in our community. Without rent control, I would have been priced-out of Santa Monica years ago – I know many other city residents share this experience.

It is only because of renter protection programs that I have been able to stand where I am today. Growing up, I experienced homelessness due to a drug addicted and abusive father. My mother worked through the system and was fortunate to receive Section 8 housing when I was in high school. I was very aware and appreciative of our housing

circumstances. Now I would like to use my lived experience and education to help others by serving on the Rent Control Board.

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

My top issue is renter education. As I have seen firsthand as a SMRR hotliner, many residents are ill-informed about their rights. I plan to address this issue by 1) being as knowledgeable about the law myself and 2) educating the public wherever possible via in person workshops, zoom meetings, neighborhood association meetings, various club meetings etc.

4. Please list all of your individual and/or organizational endorsements.
- **Caroline Torosis, Santa Monica City Council Member, former Rent Control Board Commissioner**
 - **Jesse Zwick, Santa Monica City Council Member**
 - **Denny Zane, Former Santa Monica City Mayor**
 - **Sue Himmelrich, Former Santa Monica City Mayor**
 - **Ericka Lesley, Santa Monica Rent Control Board Chair**
 - **Kurt Gonska, Santa Monica Rent Control Board Vice Chair**
 - **Anastasia Foster, Santa Monica Rent Control Board Commissioner, former chair**
 - **Daniel Ivanov, Santa Monica Rent Control Board Commissioner**
 - **Alicia Mignano, Santa Monica School Board Member**
 - **Jennifer Kennedy, Former Rent Control Board Commissioner**
 - **Patricia Hoffman, Santa Monica Democratic Club Executive Member, former SMDC President, Former SMMUSD Board Chair**
 - **Leslie Lambert, Santa Monica Planning Commissioner, Former Rent Control Board Commissioner**
 - **Dan Hall, Former Santa Monica Democratic Club Vice Chair**
 - **Ellis Raskin, Santa Monica Planning Commission Chair**
 - **Michael Tarbet, Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights Steering Committee Member**

*** Titles are for identification purposes only ***

5. How long have you lived in Santa Monica? Where else have you lived?

I have lived in Santa Monica as a renter in the Pico Neighborhood since 2015. I grew up in the Inland Empire (San Bernardino County) for my formative years. I lived in Los Angeles as a teen and graduated from a LAUSD high school (John Marshall High School). I also attended college in East Los Angeles at Occidental College where I lived until 2012. From 2012-2015 I lived in San Francisco in the Tenderloin neighborhood while I attended UC Hastings College of the Law. Santa Monica is now my permanent home and I have no intentions of ever living in a different city.

6. Will you pledge to serve on the Rent Control Board for your entire four year term?

Yes.

Campaign Finance

1. How much money have you raised for your campaign to date?

\$0 to date because I have not yet launched my website nor begun asking for donations to my campaign. However, that is forthcoming very soon.

2. How much do you intend to raise by Election Day 2024?

I would prefer not to speculate at this early time. But, I will say that I have a lot of support and plan to ask those who support me to make a donation.

3. Candidates for local office often choose not to take campaign contributions from particular types of organizations or industries. Are there any such sources from which you would decline donations? If so, which?

Yes, I will not take contributions from oil, gas, coal industry executives, police or law enforcement unions, or development firms, lobbyists, or PACs. I will not take donations from any individuals who do not share my values.

Party / Activism

1. 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 registered as a Democrat since I began voting in my first election at 18 years old. I have never been registered for another political party.

2. 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?

My first time becoming politically involved began during my first year at Occidental College. Barack Obama was campaigning for the presidency in November so it was a very exciting time. As then future President Obama had once attended my Alma Mater Occidental College, almost every student on campus became involved in some way. I chose to phone-bank.

In the summer of 2008, I interned with the Coalition for Economic Survival where I phoned-banked for the No on Proposition 98 and Yes on Proposition 99 campaign. Our campaign was successful.

In 2022 I was involved in the Ellis Raskin for Santa Monica City Council campaign. This involved but was not limited to phone-banking and door knocking. In addition to this campaign, I also volunteered to phone-bank for other SMRR endorsed candidates. Additionally, I supported and campaigned for Measures GS, RC and EM.

3. Which political candidates have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible, *especially where you endorsed during a contested primary.*

See above answer regarding political activism. Up to date, I have only publicly “endorsed” SMRR candidates. The only exception is that up to this date, I have publicly endorsed Ellis Raskin and Dan Hall for Santa Monica City Hall in this year’s City Council election. I have never endorsed during a contested primary.

4. 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.

No.

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

Santa Monica Democratic Club, Santa Monicans for Renters’ Rights (Steering Committee Member and hotliner), League of Women Voters, Angeles Chapter of Sierra Club (former Political Committee member).

6. Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform, as found below. List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree.
<https://cadem.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/FinalPlatform2024.pdf>

I do not have any substantive disagreements with the platform of the California Democratic Party.

Social Justice

1. Which group or groups of Santa Monicans currently face significant challenges in terms of housing discrimination?

Those who are currently unhoused face housing discrimination because landlords do not want to rent to individuals without a previous long term rent history. During my work at the Housing Rights Center I regularly documented instances of housing discrimination. HRC would employ “testers” who would apply for a rental unit in an attempt to demonstrate a landlord’s pattern of not renting to persons in a particular class such as people of color, families with children, individuals appearing to be a part of the LGBTQ community etc. It is still the case today that people who belong to marginalized groups face discrimination in every area of life; housing is not an exception.

2. How would you use your position on the Rent Control Board to assist systematically disadvantaged groups of residents of Santa Monica?

My main concern as a prospective Rent Control Board Commissioner is public education of renters’ rights. As previously stated, I would use my position to be a source of knowledge and advocate for residents to have easily accessible access to information. Part of this includes making sure that our city’s information is published in as many different languages as possible. Access to renters’ rights information in one’s native

language is a very important cause that will assist many of our important, diverse communities.

Rent Control

1. What do you see as the mission or purpose of the Rent Control Charter, both at its founding and in its present form?

Since its adoption in 1979, Santa Monica's Rent Control Charter protects renters from uncontrolled rent increases, evictions without just cause, and provides remedies for situations where excess rent is charged or maintenance is neglected. The purpose of our city's Rent Control Law is to ensure economic diversity so that our city is not only accessible to a wealthy few.

2. What are the biggest challenges to keeping tenants in their homes in Santa Monica?

Speculative real estate, new owners coming into the market, existing owners not keeping up with maintenance, the Ellis Act evictions, ever increasing unaffordability due to Costa-Hawkins, and predatory transactions. These threats would be addressed by strengthening rent control law, having a renter friendly city council, and more education to tenants about their rights.

3. Do you feel that Costa-Hawkins and/or the Ellis Act need reforms, and if so, what are some examples of those reforms?

Costa Hawkins should be repealed or reformed so that units in Santa Monica that received a certificate of occupancy more recently than 1979 can be rent controlled. The Justice For Renters Act is one example of good legislation that has emerged recently to address this issue. Loopholes must be tightened in the Ellis Act so that less properties are able to be taken off the market and less tenants are displaced. For example, the current litigation regarding Barrington Plaza demonstrates that landlords can cite the Ellis Act in bad faith in order to remove tenants from their building.

4. Are there any current trends in real estate speculation patterns that you see as an issue for the spirit of the Charter?

As properties continue to be redeveloped, we need to ensure that the Rent Control Law is clearly enforced. One trend I have seen is mom-and-pop landlords being bought out by corporations. This is a concerning issue.

Ballot Measures

Do you support the Justice For Renters Act?

Wholeheartedly yes! I am also a text-banker for the campaign.

Do you support the repeal of Article 34?

Yes. California is currently the only state to have a requirement that government-funded low income housing must first pass a local election. Such a requirement is only a barrier to building more affordable housing especially during our housing crisis.

Do you support the initiative to require new local taxes to pass by a two-thirds vote?

No. This initiative would undermine the democratic process and would make it much more difficult to raise critically-needed revenue for affordable housing, services for individuals experiencing homelessness, and other important programs.

Do you support the potential measure to amend Prop 47?

No. Proposition 47 is good law. It helps make sure that our already overcrowded jails and prisons are devoting their resources to violent and serious crimes, not to low level offenders. Additionally, the savings generated by Prop 47 are important and can be re-invested in areas such as our public schools, victim services, as well as mental health and drug treatment.

Do you support the proposed amendments to Measure GS to exempt multifamily housing?

No.

Additional Questions

1. Should the Rent Control Board be allowed to add ballot measures directly to the ballot without City Council's approval?

Yes. The Recent Control Board is elected to be the knowledgeable body regarding renter issues. As such, they should be given the authority to effectuate change.

2. Should the Rent Control Board's term limits be extended to three terms instead of two?

Yes. The term limits of the Rent Control Board should match those of the City Council.

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

The Santa Monica Democratic Club should be leaders in informing the public of what issues are important. Many people do not take the time to research propositions, amendments, or political candidates and therefore look to trusted organizations to make the right recommendations. SMDC should also be a place of community, where people can gather and feel good about participating in civic discussions.

4. 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?

If elected, I would not only attend SMDC meetings, but be available to make reports or presentations about current issues regarding Santa Monica Rent Control.

5. What is the most important topic that was left off of this questionnaire?

I will bring a much-needed, diverse perspective to the Rent Control Board through my lived experiences and as one of the few Latina and Native American members of an

elected body in Santa Monica. I believe that representation is critical in a democracy so long as candidates are vetted and qualified.