

Santa Monica Democratic Club
2026 School 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 June 8, 2026. Interview appointment times with our Executive Committee will be scheduled on a first come first served basis for the weekend of June 20/21 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: Stacy Rouse

Email Address: stacyrouse525@gmail.com/vote4stacyrouse@gmail.com

Candidate's Current Occupation: Assistant Ombuds

Candidate's Employer: University of Southern California

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

1. What qualifications do you bring to this office?

I am a deeply rooted member of the Malibu community. I have many years working with the district from the Malibu community before running for school board in 2022. I bring knowledge and care of education, with specific work experience in early education and higher education. I have expertise and passion for good communication that is informed and reinforced by healthy conflict and socio-emotional techniques.

Excerpted from my 2022 application for endorsement: I have a strong commitment to public education. I grew up attending public schools and my two children were part of the Malibu Pathway in SMMUSD from Kindergarten to graduation. My kids are successful young adults. I believe access to a high-quality and free education is the key for people to grow in opportunity and, ultimately, success for their families. I am committed to the power and potential of public education.

I am demonstrably committed to this district. From 2012 to 2022 I engaged in various ways including participating at the local level in my children's schools, working closely with the larger district as a whole, paraschool organizations like the Malibu Boys and Girls Club, Webster's PTA President in 2012, part of the Superintendent's Advisory Council (SAG) and many Board of Education meetings making public comments to request that the district and the board take a different approach to the implementation of the needed changes.

I have leadership, service, and education experience in SMMUSD in the following ways:

- SMMUSD Malibu Pathway Parent, 2004-2021 (children attended Webster Elementary, Malibu Middle School, and Malibu High School)
- Parent Classroom Volunteer, Webster School 2004-2010
- Webster PTA Board, VP of Administration 2010-2012
- Webster PTA Board, President 2012-2013
- Webster School Site Council, member 2011-2012
- Superintendent's Advisory Council, member 2012-2015
- Malibu FDAC, member 2016-2022, applied and approved by the SMMUSD Board of Education
- Malibu Schools Leadership Council, president 2016-2022
- Level One Restorative Justice Training, participant February 2018
- Superintendent's Feasibility Committee, member March-July 2018
- Measure M Co-Chair July-November 2018
- Malibu Middle and High Steering Committee, member August 2018-present,
- Malibu Middle and High Planning Committee, member August 2018-present
- Level Two Restorative Justice Training, participant February 2019
- Superintendent's Budget Advisory Committee, member January 2020-2021
- SM-MUSD School Board, member, 2022-present
 - Liaison, Malibu Facilities District Advisory Committee, 2022-present
 - Liaison, Early Childhood Education District Advisory Committee, 2022-present
 - Liaison, Special Education District Advisory Committee, 2022-2024

I am trained in public service and view this position as a public servant who serves the entire community, not just those in my neighborhood or town or demographics. I also have training and experience and the ability to create trust-building, empathy building, and a new set of conflict engagement skills to the forefront of how the board operates. I bring collaborative processes to change how decisions are made and bring experience with the facilitation of stakeholder groups that will increase positive and meaningful interfaces with constituents (children, families/caregivers, employees, staff, administration, and contract and MOU holders, etc.), and the public (residents and businesses within SMMUSD who are not part of SMMUSD, city governments, etc.).

My educational experiences demonstrate a life-long interest in and commitment to communication, education, and the power of collective/collaborative efforts in communities. My Bachelor's degree in Broadcast Journalism honed my communication skills including listening, making meaning from hearing different perspectives, verbal and writing skills. Additionally, with a minor in Public Service, I was exposed to how political systems are built, maintained, sustained, and changed.

My pursuit and completion of my Master's degree in Dispute Resolution was wholly informed by my work in the school system. While my interests and skills led me to love the idea of this line of study, I was reluctant to pursue a degree solely out of a desire to learn. Through working with the people and systems of SMMUSD, over and over again I observed a system of silos that operate independently. I also found a sincere desire on everyone's part to be heard and their

perspective and their work to be better be integrated as part of the whole. I took on graduate school with a full-time job after 20 years of being out of formal education. I did so because I saw the practical applications this type of work could provide me in the various roles I play throughout my other work as well as those I hold in SMMUSD. Dispute Resolution skills can be used anywhere, but I see their particular strength in working within a school district.

2. Why are you running? To continue to be a connection between Malibu and Santa Monica. We all believe in representative government and an entire community should be represented directly by someone in the community as well as those who have pledged responsibility and care for that community but do not live there.

3. What are the top issues of your campaign, and how do they differ from other candidates in this race? How do you plan to address those issues once elected? See below

4. Please list all endorsements received to date (individual and organizational). None at this time. I will seek endorsements through the process, especially once it's officially open to file. I will apply for endorsements that have deadlines prior to that date, but for fairness of all who choose to run, my personal preference would be that all endorsements happen after filing dates. In 2022 I didn't begin my campaign until right around the filing date and I was afforded the opportunity to apply and participate in all endorsements. I would like any potential candidate to be afforded the same.

5. How long have you lived in Santa Monica or Malibu? 25 years Where else have you lived? Agoura Hills, 3 years; Waco, TX 1 year; Minneapolis, MN 4 years; Abilene, TX 5 years (incl 4 years college); Evergreen, CO 15 years (including 4 years college)

6. Will you pledge to serve on the School Board for your entire four year term? Yes. Recent personal events in my life have caused me to reflect on the near and further-out future including should I run again and will I be able to commit to serving well. I am not only committed but looking forward to serving Malibu and Santa Monica communities for the entirety of my term. The only scenarios that might change that would be a circumstance beyond my control (such as illness) or the fruition of years long and now completely joint effort to establish SMUSD and MUSD in which case I would seek to continue my term by filing to be on the ballot as an MUSD School Board Trustee candidate.

7. What is your history of watching, attending, or speaking at SMMUSD School Board meetings? (If incumbent, prior to your own service.) Quite a bit as needed from 2010-2018

Campaign Finance

1. How much money have you raised for your campaign to date? \$0. I will begin raising in the next six weeks.

2. How much do you intend to raise by Election Day 2026? I hope to keep as minimal as possible as money is best spent directly on the causes people care about rather than directly to a political campaign. I would like to cap at \$20,000-25,000 and creatively run my campaign through coffees, door knocking, and social media updates. In 2022 I was able to run for under \$20,000. This may not be possible, but that is a personal goal that I have.

3. Candidates for local office often choose not to take campaign contributions from particular types of organizations or industries who are out of step with their own values. Are there any such sources from which you would decline donations? If so, which? The types of organizations that I have seen in play for school board races and have found access to tend to be well-established local organizations in Malibu and Santa Monica or nearby or are education-related. That said, I would not accept endorsement or funding from organizations that deny people basic rights based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, or immigration status. For our local purposes, since the school district does a lot of business with many big companies, I would not accept funding or endorsement from those organizations solely to keep things away from the appearance of impropriety.

Party / Activism

1. How long have you been a registered Democrat? Since 1992 Have you ever been registered as a member of another political party, or as Decline To State? Perhaps in 1988. If so, which party and why? I am unsure, but in 1988 I may possibly have registered as an Independent which was in-line with my parents' party preference at that time.

2. What is your experience with political activism? I have a history of local involvement. In Minneapolis I joined our Neighborhood Action group. I engage in clicktivism although the last four years I have had less time than before. I also give small amounts of money to different people and organizations. **Have you ever volunteered or worked for a political campaign other than your own, and if so, in what capacity were you involved?** Yes, I was co-chair of Measure M for SMMUSD's Malibu FSID in 2018; phone banking for Measure MM for SMMUSD Malibu FSID in 2022; I have volunteered as a phone caller and canvasser for Craig Foster for School Board; Carl Randall for Malibu City Council; and Karen Farrer for Malibu City Council.

3. Which political candidates and/or ballot measures have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible, especially where you endorsed during a contested primary. Craig Foster, Karen Farrer, Jen Smith, Carl Randall, Richard Tahvildarin-Jesswein, Keith Coleman, Hillary Clinton, Dave Jones (CA Insurance Commissioner), Henry Stern, Barack Obama, Deborah Klein-Lopez, Sion Roy. Upon becoming a candidate in 2022 and then as an elected official, I adopted a personal policy that I do not endorse for local races including Malibu City Council, Santa Monica City Council, Santa Monica-Malibu School Board, and Santa Monica Community College. In one capacity or another, each of these offices work together once we are elected and we have a duty to serve the community and work together for our purposes. I will work with whoever is elected,

regardless of how closely we align and do not want to put additional roadblocks to our work. If there were egregious issues with a candidate I would speak my mind.

4. Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office? No, recall should be reserved for inappropriate conduct not disagreement or dissatisfaction. Those issues are resolved during re-election. **If so, please list the name(s) of the officials and why you felt they should be recalled.** N/A

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

International Ombuds Association 2020-present; University Church of Christ 1998-present (member of Pastoral Care and Oversight Council 2021-2025); Stonewall Democrats 2022-present, Malibu Democratic Club 2022-present.

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/2026/02/CDP-Platform-2026-FINAL-Platform-Adopted-2>

22.26.pdf

Yes

District Governance & Finance

1. What are your top priorities for SMMUSD over the next four years?

I want to serve on the school board for four primary reasons. First, I want to continue to contribute to the vision-making and the decision-making for our district. Second, I would like to be a more direct part of decisions including the current move to change educational practices, budgetary practices, and focus and to bring improved methods of local representation, not just for Malibu, but across the district and on pressing matters including our English language learners, special education, and technology. I continue to be committed to represent unheard or misheard voices within our district. I have seen some shifts in these areas in the last four years. At the same time, we are always adapting and learning to what our students need most so the work continues. Third, I want to continue to be a representative specifically for Malibu schools and Malibu community as we forge ahead with a joint plan for Unification to create SMUSD and MUSD - both communities agree this is best for all students in both cities and are committed to finding a way forward. While I am not serving on the SM-MUSD subcommittee for unification, I strive to be a presence for both the district and city of Malibu subcommittee members and help provide feedback and perspective. Fourth, I bring with me practices of healthy conflict engagement, strong collaboration skills, warmth and empathy, and good communication skills; these have been valuable in the work our Board carries out and I want to continue them.

2. How do you assess SMMUSD's current approach to public engagement and

transparency? We are continuing to grow in this area. The new models through LCFF and ELAC engagement is an example of this. While they are mandated by the state, we are beginning to model this in other areas. Our DAC model also provides this kind of access to discussions, especially for members, but as brown act committees, anyone can come observe, listen, and make public comment. **What specific steps would you take to strengthen public trust, ensure meaningful community input, and maintain accountability in Board decision-making?** While the district has many mechanisms for this type of engagement, one area I have wanted to improve is my communication and planned accessibility as a board member to the public. I have always been open to people reaching out and have tried to be responsive and accessible. However, I would like to develop a more sustained and regular manner to communicate and be present to the community. Whether that is some type of periodic written update on social media or public coffees, or a combination. With a full-time job and a recent difficult personal transition, I will need structure and planning to implement but that is a goal for development and implementation if I am re-elected. This would be individual, not as a group, due to brown act considerations.

3. How would you approach working with the Superintendent and district staff to effectively implement Board policies? I try to work through a model of respect, curiosity, and openness. I ask direct questions, I share the viewpoint of myself and community members and gain their viewpoint. I try to remain mindful and aware of the boundaries that safeguard our work - the superintendent and district staff roles are in the operations of the district and they implement policy and budgetary decisions made by the board. My role as a board member is policy development and maintaining and revising policies, and vision setting, budgetary decisions, supervision and evaluation of the superintendent, community engagement as I am their representative between the district and the community. The structure of any school district, including SM-MUSD is very bureaucratic in nature and is nuanced. Navigating it is tricky and looks different if you are staff who is immersed in it daily or if you are a student, parent, or community member who is trying to find information or solve a problem or find answers. It's not easy for each to understand what the other means at times because they are coming from such different user experiences even though we all care about kids and education. One of my goals is to help "insiders" and "outsiders" understand each other and find ways to better communicate and connect.

4. How do you assess the district's current financial position, and what steps would you take to ensure long-term fiscal stability?

We are maintaining, but how to maintain our excellence and breadth while staying fiscally sound is always a concern. It continues to be and is important to be looking ahead to not fall into a space where layoffs will occur such as Manhattan Beach and LAUSD. These things aren't happening because of mismanagement, but because schools remain underfunded both Federal and State levels. We have massive local support, individual parent funding, and the benefit of being basic aid, but costs are rising faster than income. This will take creativity and discipline and advocacy. While we are not starting from zero, we do need to stay diligent here.

5. Given the district's Basic Aid status, how should funding priorities be set during periods of economic uncertainty? We do need a strong reserve policy so it is good that one was able to be set this year. We also need to prioritize spending and know what we might need to release, even though everything is important.

6. Do you support the currently proposed parcel tax measure for SMMUSD? Why or why not? In your answer, please address how you evaluate the measure's structure, its relationship to the joint use agreement, and how the District should ensure accountability for the use of these funds. N/A - as a Malibu resident I can't vote on this measure. I understand the reason for the ask and it isn't frivolous from my perspective, but this is a matter for SM voters to speak to.

7. What is your assessment of Malibu unification, and what remains to ensure financial and educational equity for both Santa Monica and Malibu students? As stated above, both communities agree this is best for all students in both cities and are committed to finding a way forward. A unanimous vote from both SM-MUSD and City of Malibu in December was monumental. There is more along the way, but to have gotten this far shows the viability and seriousness of this issue. We need to continue to share the new state of being in this process together across two communities, not against each other, and re-educate people about where we're at. We need to solidify protections for teachers and staff. I could talk geekily in depth about this for long periods of time so please ask if you have questions.

8. Based on results from the first few years of implementation, do you believe that 2022's Measure GS should be amended? If so, how and why?

N/A - as a Malibu resident I can't vote on this measure. I am grateful for how it has funded our schools and don't want to lose it, but this is a matter for SM voters to speak to.

Students & Learning Climate

1. What specific steps would you take to improve student outcomes across the district?

To go along with our project based learning model, I would love to see us grow in competency based assessment style.

How should success be measured? This involves a portfolio and interview style assessment that happen often as conversations or written between students and teachers, and iterative goals throughout learning rather than solely test based.

2. How should SMMUSD support student mental health and well-being, and what role should schools play in this area? We are tending to this as a priority, and much of our one time covid funds went to supplement these areas. Malibu Boys and Girls Club serves our students and families with these resources, and in Santa Monica there is a patchwork of services.

3. In light of increasing political pressure on public education nationwide, how should SMMUSD approach decisions around curriculum, instruction, and inclusive learning environments?

We need to continue to put our kids first, stay to data, and acknowledge people are different and give room to have input and to opt in and out of programming.

4. How should the District address persistent disparities in educational outcomes among different student groups?

Models of inclusion and individualized learning like dual language programs, collaborative classrooms, project based learning, independent study, and Olympic, and OCLC bring improvement. Modeling these principals in all our learning will likely show more improvements.

5. What is your approach to school safety, including the role (if any) of law enforcement on campus?

For Malibu, presence is needed for natural emergencies. For law enforcement on campus, we need to have clear guidelines for why they are there and what they do and don't do. Relationships and accountable are paramount. They should not be in charge of discipline, that is solely a school issue. There is much more to say here.

6. How should SMMUSD balance the use of screens and digital learning tools with concerns about student attention, social development, mental health, and academic outcomes? What role should technology play in the classroom, and where, if anywhere, should limits be placed? This is a developing issue. It should be limited and be for specific use at specific times. This is also personalized learning, as some kids need digital tools for accommodations. Balance about what is needed when is key. This will involve engagement across the district, and that's being started.

7. What is your position on the use of artificial intelligence tools in classroom instruction at SMMUSD? What specific guidelines or limitations, if any, should the District adopt to govern their use? For certain use in middle school and high school with teacher input it is appropriate. We need AI literacy to be able to use tools properly and to discern and master its use as a tool.

8. Do you support a “bell-to-bell” ban on student cell phone use, similar to the policy recently adopted by LAUSD? Why or why not, and what considerations should guide how such a policy is implemented at SMMUSD?

It depends on the age. I appreciate the process and policy set this year for ES, MS, and the forthcoming HS policy. I'm also glad this will be iterative so we can find what will work best.

9. What is your assessment of how the District handled recent changes to the music education program, and what principles should guide decisions involving arts education, program restructuring, and community engagement moving forward? There was the change to the program and the adjustment to staffing - two separate issues. The program changes seem to be a conversation people are open to having but needed more time so it is

continuing to be discussed but not implemented for 2026-27. The staffing change aligns us with the number of kids and helps us stay within our budgeting parameters.

Community

1. What role should the District play in providing early childhood education, and how should expansion be funded while maintaining accessibility and quality?

From September 2017-May 2022 I served as a program manager for a service organization that provides a pre-literacy and socio-emotional curriculum for preschoolers in underfunded classrooms. I developed relationships with 12 preschool classrooms and their site directors each year across the LA area including SMMUSD, LAUSD, and privately-funded preschools in Mar Vista and in Malibu. I worked directly for racial and educational justice through early childhood education to narrow the vocabulary gap between children who have access to well-funded schools and children who do not have access.

Being part of SMMUSD through this program has been important to reveal the necessity of early childhood education and the impact it has on reducing gaps, such as the one we have in our school system. Changing our system and budget to invest in early childhood education and educators has massive impacts down the line and is better than trying to make amends further down the line. While multiple approaches need to be implemented so all children have support and access regardless of their educational journeys, investing on the front end in our youngest and most vulnerable children is a key component. This is an area where SMMUSD could be leading the state and the nation because of our stated goals of providing “safe, socially responsive, and academically-rigorous learning” that closes our own achievement gap. However, finding funding to expand will take a shift of resources and priority.

2. Do you support the Club’s resolution calling for a citywide ban of artificial turf on locally owned public land?

Yes. The Club is entirely within their purview to make and pass resolutions based on the opinions and research of their constituents. I fully support SMDC’s right and process to do so. These types of resolutions, that may or may not match with the practices, decision, or needs of other entities (including SM-MUSD) serve as a vital point of information and discussion for important real-world situations.

Another part of this is my take on what SM-MUSD should do regarding artificial turf. This is an evolving issue on many fronts - what does each micro-community desire? how much and for what use? what are the developing options for best maintaining grass fields? are the developments in artificial turf addressing the real and proven concerns for heat and microplastics? Since we are in flux, as I have stated, I favor each school area begin by listening to the individual communities - residents, families, and staff - to determine these steps rather than the current district practice of turf being one size fits all.

3. What role should public schools play in preparing students to be engaged, critical

thinkers and participants in civic life?

This is the whole crux of public education. An engaged citizenry is vital to maintaining a healthy democracy. This is core knowledge learning (like math, reading, science, history) alongside civics, and values based education, and socio-emotional skills learning and expectations. Public schools do and should play a vital and upfront role in this. Schools should incorporate art, science, math, writing, speaking, music, dance, and working together, problem-solving, communicating, and working through hard things (be they knowledge-related, behavior-related, or interpersonal-related). There are many examples throughout our schools where our kids have these opportunities and we need to continue to grow and adapt and serve in these ways. Learning such as this teaches skills that serve them throughout their education, into work, and in their personal lives now and in the future.

Ballot Measures

1. Do you support the California Billionaire Tax Act, which would impose a one-time emergency 5% tax on those worth more than \$1B? Why or why not?

Yes. Data shows the percentage of taxes overall paid by citizens in each tax bracket and people in lower income brackets tend to pay a higher percentage than those in the highest/elite brackets due to the types of reductions higher wage earners have access to. Having a modest percentage for highest brackets is not an undue or unpayable burden.

2. Do you support the state ballot measure which would require voters to present government-issued identification when casting ballots? Why or why not?

No. There are already processes and protections in place for accurate and valid votes. Requiring presenting identification is an unnecessary hurdle for citizens to participate in the right and privilege each one is afforded by the US and each state that outweighs the low instances of actual fraud or the fear of fraud.

3. Do you support the proposed state taxpayer initiative which would limit the ability of local governments to raise revenue through certain taxes and fees including real estate transfer taxes? Why or why not?

As currently written, I do not support the proposed initiative. I am not against considering something that keeps all passage rates at two-thirds vote rather than simply majority. Although that is a higher bar and makes passage of vital funds more difficult, it does provide motivation to carefully consider measures and to show what is being asked for and why. Beyond the voter threshold, however, I do not agree with overturning past ballot measures for taxes that have already been voted in across the state. If voters in their communities wish to change current voter-backed taxes, they would need to participate in the process of another initiative to call for a change instead of retroactively ending all that didn't meet requirements.

4. Do you support the proposed ballot measure which would set aside 25% of the airport

land for 3000 units of affordable housing, in addition to the remainder which would become a Great Park? Why or why not?

N/A - as a Malibu resident I can't vote on this measure.

Additional Questions

1. 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/re-elected, I would attempt to work together with Santa Monica Democratic Club and other political organizations by listening, and if appropriate, working together with constituents to problem solve for the interests of those involved and to collaborate together for fitting solutions. Coalitions and community input are vital. I look forward to having an open-door policy with SMDC board members, members, and other organization members and community leaders.

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

:) You were thorough

3. Please describe whether and how you used generative AI tools in preparing your responses. If elected, how would you use these tools in governance, if at all?

I didn't use AI tools for these responses. (I did draw from my 2022 Endorsement questionnaire for consistency!) I haven't used AI tools for my governance role, personally, but I do see application and use for it in terms of helping with certain kinds of data processing and to help form structural frameworks or options. However, AI is a tool, not a replacement, so if/when I use it, is it to be either a starting point or for refining, not to do the work in place of me and without me being in control of and responsible for what is ultimately used or put out into the world.