



A California Non-Profit Political Action Committee

PDA-CA

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

for the SAN FRANCISCO

DISTRICT ATTORNEY RACE

DISTRICT

ATTORNEY RACE

NAME OF CANDIDATE **Chesa Boudin**

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Date of the Election: November 5, 2019

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PDA-CA is non-profit political action committee newly formed by grassroots progressives in California. The primary objective of PDA-CA is to identify highly progressive Democratic Candidates within the state for statewide offices including, but not limited to, Governor, for State Assembly and Senate Offices, and for offices at the county and municipal levels. Candidates may be invited to apply for the

Endorsement of PDA-CA. If that occurs, the candidate may enjoy grassroots help from the activists within PDA-CA to include walking precincts, phone banking and other activities, to assist that candidate to win election to the office sought.

We ask that the candidate observe the format of this questionnaire, and have it back to the requestor in PDF by the time designated in the cover letter, in order to be eligible for endorsement.

NOTICE: YOUR RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE PUBLISHED ON THE PDA-CA WEBSITE AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC VIEWING AND USE.

1. Why are you running for District Attorney?

When I was fourteen months old, my parents were incarcerated for driving the getaway car in an armed robbery that tragically took three people's lives. My mother spent twenty-two years in prison. My father may never get out. Growing up, I had to go through metal detectors and steel gates just to give my parents a hug. Visiting prisons and working as a public defender has taught me that our criminal justice system is broken. It is broken for victims who all too often have nothing to show for the billions of dollars we spend on punishment; it is broken for the children, like me, left behind when parents commit crimes; it is broken for communities of color that are overtargeted and overprosecuted; it is broken for communities that are torn apart by mass incarceration in ways that actually increase crime; it is broken for the taxpayers that foot the bill for this failed system with recidivism rates above two thirds.

As public defender, in order to enact systemic change in the fight against money bail, I filed writs and led litigation efforts that resulted in a case currently pending before the California Supreme Court, that has promise to change the way the state determines pretrial incarceration. In order to change the way we treated immigration cases, I helped launch the immigration unit in the public defender's office and worked with the sheriff to stop honoring ICE holds. As I did all these things, I realized that the way to enact real change, to completely reform the system, is to elect a bold and progressive district attorney. I'm running for DA to enact reform, because the justice system should not treat people differently depending on the color of their skin, their job title, or the size of their bank account. I am running for DA because I know how to fix this broken system that has so shaped my life.

2. What makes you the best candidate for this position?

In a race where most of the candidates call themselves progressive and have lots of overlap in specific policy pledges, the key to distinguishing between us is our life experience, career paths, and what we've done to reform the system up to now.

My earliest memories are going through metal detectors and getting searched by guards on prison visits to my parents. I'm the only candidate who has loved ones currently incarcerated. I chose to go to law school and become a public defender in an

era of racist mass incarceration and draconian mandatory minimum sentencing policies. The other candidates are all career prosecutors. My entire life has been shaped by prisons; my entire career has been fighting to reform the criminal justice system before it was the popular thing to do.

Since 2012 when I started at the public defender's office, I've spent far more time in the courtrooms of the Hall of Justice than all of my opponents combined. I've tried more than two dozens cases to jury verdict and handled over 300 felony cases. I watched innocent people plead guilty just because they were too poor to pay money bail. So I led policy, legislation, and litigation efforts to end money bail. One of the cases I initiated is currently pending at the California Supreme Court and promises to dramatically change how courts across the state will be allowed to set bail.

I launched a pre-arraignment representation unit at the public defender's office – the first of its kind in California – which provides services and representation to people in the critical period after they are arrested but before their first court appearance. This work helps save people's children and jobs, helps ensure continuity of medical treatment, and inform whether and what charges the DA should file. I also helped launch the public defender's immigration unit and drafted the Sheriff's initial sanctuary city policy to lift ICE holds, before the Board of Supervisors made non-cooperation with ICE official city policy.

My experiences, both personal and professional, set me apart from every other candidate. I'm not running to become a politician, I'm running to transform a system that has hurt millions of people, to end a system of mass incarceration.

3. What are the most important issues in criminal justice and how do you intend to solve them?

My vision is to make our community safe and fair for everyone, by ending discriminatory practices and reducing recidivism rates. The most important priorities for me are:

- to end the racism that plagues our criminal justice system;
- to give victims a voice in every case;
- to focus resources on serious and violent crimes;
- to end money bail and other wealth-based disparities;
- to close county jail #4 and not build a new jail to replace it;
- to enforce the law equally, including against employers who steal wages, police, landlords, white collar criminals and corporate polluters;
- to focus on the root causes of crime rather than just punishing the symptoms
- to end barriers that prevent people from moving forward with their lives, like unnecessary convictions and fees.

The policy areas that I will focus on the most during my first year in office are the following:

First, we need to break the cycle of recidivism and treat the root causes of crime. Right now, more than 2/3 of people who are arrested and prosecuted come back into the system within a few years. 85 percent of bookings into county jail are a person suffering from serious drug addiction, mental illness or both. If we treat the root cause of crime and prioritize treatment, we can actually prevent crime and make our city safer.

Second, we need to enforce the law equally. We must end the rampant racism that plagues every step of the process today. We cannot have small, privileged groups, whether employers, politicians, police officers, landlords, or corporations be above the law. All of us must follow the law and the consequences for failing to do so should be the same no matter the color of our skin, job title, or size of our wallet.

Third, we need to prioritize victim's rights. That means giving every victim of every crime the right to participate in a restorative justice process as often as possible. It means listening to victims and pursuing the help they need to heal, rather than single-mindedly pursuing a criminal conviction regardless of the wishes of the victim.

4. Please describe your courtroom experience?

After law school I clerked for two federal judges in California where I helped handle numerous trials and appeals. Since 2012 when I started at the public defender's office, I've spent far more time in the courtrooms of the Hall of Justice than all of my opponents combined. I've handled over 300 felony cases and tried more than two dozen cases to jury verdict. I've worked in virtually every courtroom and specialty court (collaborative court) that currently exists in San Francisco criminal courts. As a public defender I watched innocent clients plead guilty just because they were too poor to pay money bail. So I led policy, legislation, and litigation efforts to end money bail. I am admitted to practice law not only in California Courts but also in the Northern District of California federal courts, the Ninth Circuit court of Appeals (federal), and the US Supreme Court.