



## Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa

### **Candidate Survey on Poverty Issues: City of Richmond, City Council**

The Ensuring Opportunity Campaign is a collaborative, cross-sector effort to end poverty in Contra Costa County by addressing structural causes at the policy level. As part of our campaign we distributed a survey to candidates on their approach to policy strategies that help residents who are struggling to get ahead. Below are their responses. Please note that as a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, we cannot support or oppose any candidate for public office. These survey answers are meant to serve as a resource for voters.

**Below is a list of strategies that support low-income working families. How important do you believe each of these strategies is to supporting low-income working families in your community? (Not at all important, Moderately important, or Extremely important)**

	<b>Nathaniel Bates</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Courtland Boozé</b>	<b>Ben Choi</b>	<b>Jael Myrick</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Vinay Pimplé</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Jim Rogers</b>	<b>Uche Justin Uwahemu</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Melvin Willis Jr.</b>	<b>Cesar Zepeda</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>
Increase local minimum wage to ensure workers earn a living wage.		Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Extremely Important	
Strengthen and increase access to safety net services, such as CalFresh (food stamps), SSDI (disability benefits), health care coverage, EITC (tax credit for low-income workers), and CalWORKs (welfare to work).		Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Extremely Important	
Promote and expand child care tax credits, renter's credits, and other tax credits that directly impact low-wage workers.		Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Extremely Important	
Ensure worker protections and community benefits, such as project-specific community benefit agreements (to ensure living wage, local hiring, etc.)		Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Extremely Important	
Other (please specify) or comments:						I wrote Richmond's First Source law requiring preference for our local workers in construction projects.			

**Below are five commonly recognized policy strategies to end hunger. How important do you believe each of these is to ending hunger in your community?**  
*(Not at all important, Moderately important, or Extremely important)*

	<b>Nathaniel Bates</b>	<b>Courtland Boozé</b>	<b>Ben Choi</b>	<b>Jael Myrick</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Vinay Pimplé</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Jim Rogers</b>	<b>Uche Justin Uwahemu</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Melvin Willis Jr.</b>	<b>Cesar Zepeda</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>
Strengthen the capacity of emergency food assistance networks, such as local food banks	Moderately Important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Moderately Important	
Streamline and improve participation in the nutrition assistance program CalFresh	Moderately Important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Moderately Important	
Improve the quality and accessibility of child nutrition programs, including school breakfast and lunch, summer meals, and the supplemental nutrition assistance program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Moderately Important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Extremely Important	
Dismantle “food deserts” (areas in which it is difficult to buy affordable or good-quality fresh food) by developing accessible and affordable avenues through which people can purchase nutritious foods	Moderately Important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Moderately Important	
Address the underlying socio-economic factors that give rise to poverty and hunger	Moderately Important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Extremely Important	
Other (please specify) or comments:						Education is obviously a huge factor i the cycle of unemployment, crime, drug/alcohol addiction, etc. I led the Save Our Schools fight that kept Kennedy Grant, and Olinda from closing.			

**Below is a list of strategies to address housing insecurity. How important do you believe each of these strategies is to meeting the housing needs of your community?** *(Not at all important, Moderately important, or Extremely important)*

	<b>Nathaniel Bates</b>	<b>Courtland Boozé</b>	<b>Ben Choi</b>	<b>Jael Myrick</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Vinay Pimplé</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Jim Rogers</b>	<b>Uche Justin Uwahemu</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>	<b>Melvin Willis Jr.</b>	<b>Cesar Zepeda</b> <i>(Did not respond)</i>
Promote efforts to dedicate land permanently to affordable housing (low- and moderate-income)	Moderately Important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Extremely Important	
Create a permanent funding source to support the development of affordable housing	Moderately Important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Extremely Important	
Support Community Land Trusts	Moderately Important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Extremely Important	
Support the Housing First approach, which prioritizes providing housing to homeless residents as quickly as possible and then addressing additional support-service needs	Not at all important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Moderately Important	
Support policy prohibiting discrimination against Section 8 voucher holders	Not at all important	Extremely Important	Extremely Important			Extremely Important		Moderately Important	
Other (please specify) or comments:						I have a long record as a Richmond Councilmember of supporting affordable housing projects, even when there is some pushback from disgruntled neighbors.			

**Do you support expanding Contra Costa Cares (county funded health coverage) to cover all adult residents who don't have health care because of their immigration status? If so, how will you work to make it happen? If not, what will you do to ensure that all residents have access to high quality and affordable health care?**

**Nathaniel Bates**

*(Did not respond)*

**Courtland Boozé**

I support expanding any/all health coverage(s) to cover ALL adult residents who don't have health care. I would establish partnerships and contacts with local and county health organizations, the Department of Human Services as well as local/state government officials to review ways and means of introducing programs that will benefit the Contra Costa community as well as things that will hurt those uncovered. I will attend meetings, seminars, workshops as well as meet with those residents who programs don't benefit.

**Ben Choi**

Yes, I do. As a council member I would leverage relationships with regional leaders and organizations to push for Contra Costa Cares. Additionally, I would especially focus on mental health and substance abuse coverage and services, as the stresses and challenge inherent in life as an undocumented immigrant are especially taxing on an individual's mental well being. I know this from personal experience. Also, since many of our immigrant residents live along the course of prevailing winds which pass over the refinery, it is especially important that this population receive preventive care early and efficaciously for chronic conditions like asthma, COPD, and heart disease.

**Jael Myrick**

*(Did not respond)*

**Vinay Pimplé**

*(Did not respond)*

**Jim Rogers**

Yes. As County supervisor ,many years ago I was an active advocate for including all people in the County Healthcare system.

**Uche Justin Uwahemu**

*(Did not respond)*

**Melvin Willis Jr.**

I do support it. I have worked with Health4all and through organizing and mobilization secured that 3,000 undocumented Contra Costa County residents were accepted in the CCCo health care plan. I have done this work and will continue to expand coverage. Health care is a human right!

**What do you think are the two most pressing issues for residents in your community who are struggling to make ends meet? And if elected, what will you do to address those issues? Please be specific. (Limit response to 200 words. Only the first 200 words will be published.)**

**Nathaniel Bates**

Nothing

**Courtland Boozé**

Employment and housing. I have in the past as a former City Council Member and Vice Mayor did all I could to ensure that ALL residents live in a decent, safe and sanitary environment. (I sat as the Council Liaison on the Richmond Housing Authority). I would also work to bring businesses into Richmond which would increase employment. I along with a former Council colleague worked on a project that when completed will ensure union jobs for Richmond residents for at least five (5) years of continuous employment. I believe that everyone has the right to work and receive a decent and fair cost of living raise/wage. I will always stay in the struggle to see that employees are treated fairly.

**Ben Choi**

Displacement

**Jael Myrick**

*(Did not respond)*

**Vinay Pimplé**

*(Did not respond)*

**Jim Rogers**

1) Providing jobs for Richmond residents, especially the blue collar jobs that those without a college education can get. I was the first to advocate local hire not just in the temporary construction jobs but in the permanent jobs as well. 2) When I got on the Council, there were 62 homicides per year. I led the fight to pass 2 tax measures, which provided about 12 million per year, and were mainly paid by businesses, rich people and out of town people. (Chevron alone paid about 2/3 of one of the taxes. This money let us start the ONS street outreach program, reopen libraries, hire more and better police to do true community policing, and restart shuttered job training programs. The result? Homicides went down 80% over the years. Officer involved shootings decreased to where they were 2/3 less than nearby comparable cities.

**Uche Justin Uwahemu**

*(Did not respond)*

**Melvin Willis Jr.**

Homes, Health, Jobs and Justice

- Expand home ownership for all residents, and protect renters

In the last decade thousands of Richmond residents lost their homes to foreclosure. A lot of pain and frustration are behind these losses. Savings destroyed, families uprooted, sadness and separation for many adults and children. Many of the foreclosures are the result of predatory lending practices and the greed of banks and lending institutions. This is not the Richmond we want. We want a Richmond where the vast majority of residents are owners of their own home. I think that with the right policies in place (Down Payment Assistance, Mortgage Assistance, Foreclosure Intervention and modification ) and with local, statewide, federal support we can help current tenants acquire the home in which they reside. I think that we need to expand further the local resident participation in the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). We need to give local not-for-profit organizations and community organizations, as well as local tenants and residents, priority for the purchase and redevelopment of foreclosed and abandoned homes and residential properties. Let's keep our good residents in Richmond, let's help our tenants to become homeowners.