

National Union of Healthcare Workers Questionnaire for 2018 California State Constitutional Offices

To help NUHW assess your candidacy for state office, we ask you to complete this questionnaire.

BACKGROUND

Name: Ricardo Lara Candidate for: CA Insurance Commissioner
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1. Please list any elected or appointed public offices you previously have held.

California State Senator and State Assemblymember. I am also currently on the California Air Resources Board. Additionally, prior to my legislative service, I was proud to be appointed and to serve on the Los Angeles County Consumer Protection Commission, and Los Angeles City Planning Commission.

2. Please list any key volunteer organizational leadership roles you have played.

My commitment to my community is also reflected in my ongoing volunteer work with local, statewide and international service organizations, including the Downey Kiwanis Club, Kiwanis International; the Bellflower Noon Lions Club; Optimist International; and the Rotary Club in the city of South Gate. Today, I also serve on the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Project Board, where I continue to protect and expand the quality and affordability of healthcare services for working families and the Board of Equality California (EQCA). I have also served on a number of boards and foundations, including Parents for a Quality Education Board (PIQE) and Bicycle Casino Community Foundation.

3. Briefly describe your educational background and prior work experience.

I have dedicated my entire life to public service. From serving as Associated Student Inc. (ASI) Vice President while studying at San Diego State University, to working with the late Assembly Member Marco Antonio Firebaugh on the landmark AB540 legislation that opened the doors for

undocumented students to pursue a higher education, my dedication to serving the most vulnerable in the state has not wavered. I later worked as a legislative staffer for years, including working for State Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez and for now State Senate President pro Tem Kevin de León, before being elected to the Assembly in 2010.

My colleagues in the legislature quickly recognized my leadership abilities. In my first term, I was elected chair of the influential California Legislative Latino Caucus and currently serve as Vice Chair of the California Legislative Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Caucus. While serving in the Assembly, as Chair of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, I focused on strong ethical oversight over public funds and programs to ensure the effective and efficient management of taxpayer monies.

Upon my election to the Senate in 2012, I made history by becoming the first openly gay person of color elected to the California State Senate. I am also an active member of the California LGBT Caucus and a board member of the Equality California Institute. Currently, I serve as Chairman of the Appropriations Committee of the California State Senate, considered to be perhaps the most influential committee in the California State Senate.

In my capacity as State Senator for the 33rd Senate District I am also proud to have championed legislation and budget priorities which have increased access to healthcare for all the children in our state regardless of immigration status; improved air quality and environmental justice for the most impacted communities, protected the free schools clause in our state's Constitution to ensure low income children have a free and quality education; expanded higher education access opportunities by making college more affordable and inclusive; protected pregnant and nursing mothers in the workplace; worked to integrate immigrants into our community and our state; and fought at every level to support and protect consumers.

Dubbed by the Los Angeles Times as the "Point man in the push for immigrant rights," in 2016, I engineered the successful statewide campaign to allow for multi-lingual education in California's schools. I was also one of the key leaders behind a landmark effort to grant driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants in California. This legislation is more important than ever, now that Donald Trump has instructed border patrol agents that they may deport undocumented immigrants for the "crime" of driving without a license.

4. Are you currently a union member? To which if any unions have you belonged? If you have been a union member, were you an officer, steward, bargaining committee member or activist?

While I have not been a union member, I have dedicated my career in public office to being a fighter for the voiceless, for the disenfranchised and for social and economic justice. Whether it's been fighting for protections for workers, collective bargaining, organizing efforts, standing in solidarity with workers in picket lines, writing letters on behalf of labor unions, pushing for and backing a statewide \$15 minimum wage, single-payer healthcare, safeguards for pensions and retirement benefits and more, I'm proud to say I've been a fierce ally of working families.

5. What significant endorsements have you received from organizations and individuals?

Elected & Community Leaders

- United States Senator Kamala Harris
- State Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León
- State Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
- California Board of Equalization Chair Fiona Ma
- State Assembly Speaker Emeritus and State Senator Toni Atkins
- State Assembly Speaker Emeritus and State Senator Robert Hertzberg
- State Assembly Speaker Emeritus Fabian Nunez
- State Senator Dr. Ed Hernandez
- State Senator Holly Mitchell
- State Senator Ben Hueso
- State Senator Tony Mendoza
- State Senator Scott Wiener
- State Senator Steven Bradford
- State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson
- State Senator Nancy Skinner
- State Senator Ben Allen
- State Senator Mark Leno (Ret.)
- State Assembly Member Jimmy Gomez
- State Assembly Member Miguel Santiago
- State Assembly Member Blanca Rubio
- State Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez-Fletcher
- State Assembly Member Todd Gloria
- State Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia
- State Assembly Member Jacqui Irwin
- State Assembly Member Evan Low
- State Assembly Member Tony Thurmond
- State Assembly Member Kevin McCarty
- State Assembly Member Reggie Jones-Sawyer
- State Assembly Member Susan Bonilla (Ret.)
- Sacramento Mayor and former State Senate President pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg

- Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia
- California Democratic Party First Vice Chair Alex Rooker
- California Young Democrats' President Eddie Kirby
- San Diego Democratic Party Chair (Ret.) and current Democratic National Committee Member, Jesse Durfee

Organizations Representing Working People

- State Council of Building and Construction Trades Council of California
- UNITE HERE, AFL-CIO
- California Nurses Association/National Nurses United
- California State Council of Laborers
- California Conference of Machinists
- California State Council of Pipe Trades
- United Steelworkers Legislative Education Committee for Los Angeles and Orange Counties
- International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) District Council 36
- United Industrial Workers of the Seafarers International Union, SIUNA, AFL-CIO
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 11
- Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1277
- American Federation of Musicians Local 47

Organizations

- California Latino Legislative Caucus
- Equality California (EQCA)
- HONOR PAC

6. How much money have you raised to date? How much do you aim to raise?

I am continuing to vigorously collect funds, and my report will soon be available.

7. Have you conducted a poll? If yes, please provide relevant information from the findings.

Not yet.

8. Beyond our public endorsement, what specific support are you seeking from NUHW?

In addition to your public endorsement, I would appreciate a maxed out contribution to my committee. I'd also like to have your members' help in getting the word out about our campaign,

by broadcasting our message on social media, talking with their friends and family members, and being an integral member of our voter contact operation as we get closer to the election.

OVERVIEW

1. Why are you a candidate for this office and why are you seeking NUHW's endorsement?

I'm running because our nation is in full-blown crisis mode right now. We have a man in the White House with no popular mandate, who is methodically working to strip Americans of their healthcare, their economic security and their civil liberties.

I'm running to be California's next State Insurance Commissioner because I believe at my core that now more than ever California needs a strong defender, and a counterpuncher, who will stand up to fight our bullying President, Donald Trump, and his increasingly reckless federal government on issues from healthcare access to economic security and more. If millions of Californians begin losing their health insurance or have their families torn apart because of actions taken by Donald Trump, I will be there to fight him tooth and nail at every pass.

As California's Insurance Commissioner, I'll work tirelessly to represent the people of California, not the corporations, the billionaire class, the pharmaceutical or the insurance companies. My allegiance will always be first and foremost to the consumers, the patients, our working families, and our most vulnerable communities in our Golden State. Californians ought to set a precedent by not only leading the resistance against President Trump and his insidious, poisonous agenda, but also moving forward to further embrace the inclusiveness, diversity and innovation that makes our state great. The Golden State needs to move forward, and I'll work toward a single-payer insurance program that will guarantee medical access to all, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

As a State Senator, I have already been a leader on numerous issues that the office of the Insurance Commissioner interacts with. I recently spearheaded the groundbreaking law that provided health care for 170,000 immigrant children, and played a strong, dynamic role in shaping, implementing and expanding Covered California. I also recently co-introduced Californians for a Healthy California Act (SB 562), which would create a single-payer healthcare system for the state.

I'm seeking NUHW's endorsement because it would solidify my status as a statewide leader on access to quality, affordable healthcare. I believe that I am the best candidate for NUHW because throughout my career in public service, I have stood up for working families and the need to ensure that universal healthcare is a reality in California. From my first election in 2010 to now, I have won every election with NUHW. During my time in the legislature, I have worked with NUHW on a wide range of issues and I understand the invaluable role that healthcare workers play in our healthcare system.

This includes authoring SB 1094 in 2014, which helped maintain community access to crucial hospital-based services. Additionally, for the last three years, I've been working with NUHW to get fair wages for UC workers through SB 376, 958, and now SB 574.

2. Briefly describe what will be your top legislative priorities and issue areas of focus if elected.

Throughout my career, I've always stood up for working families and against injustice, even when doing so was difficult or unpopular. Grounded in my East Los Angeles upbringing and raised by a factory worker and a seamstress, I have built a record on bringing people together around tough challenges and delivering results that improve people's lives. I'll continue this work as California's Insurance Commissioner.

As Insurance Commissioner, I will:

- *Work to improve and expand upon the enhanced coverage provided by Covered California, the state's implementation of the Affordable Care Act, by enacting a single-payer healthcare system that covers everyone in the state, as outlined in my legislation, Californians for a Healthy California Act (SB 562).*
- *Serve as a watchdog, working to shield, protect and advocate on behalf of California's consumers, working families, and small businesses to ensure equality, a level playing field, and that all parties play by the rules when it comes to insurance markets.*
- *Fight against corporations who prey on and take advantage of California's consumers, especially the state's most vulnerable communities.*
- *Crack down on those who break the law by committing fraud or scams against businesses.*
- *Regulate insurance markets to prevent egregious premium increases that hurt middle class families in health, home, car and property insurance.*

3. What do you believe distinguishes you, over your opponents, as the best candidate for this office?

I am the currently the only announced candidate for California Insurance Commissioner and the clear frontrunner. Despite only announcing a few months ago, I have amassed a series of impressive endorsements, including from United States Senator Kamala Harris, State Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León, State Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon, and the California Nurses Association. Significantly, if elected, I would also be the first openly gay statewide elected official in California.

WORKERS' FREEDOM TO CHOOSE A UNION

Workers are regularly denied the freedom to choose a union due to intimidation, harassment, and other forms of coercion by their employers, and sometimes even by labor organizations. Legal remedies for such violations of workers' rights are far too little, far too late, with the result that these violations are legal and workers' organizing efforts are squashed more often than not.

4. Would you urge employers to respect workers' freedom to choose a union by:

a) Remaining neutral on the question of unionization and recognizing a union as their employees' collective bargaining representative when presented with a petition demonstrating its support from a majority of the employees (frequently referred to as "card check neutrality"); or

b) Agreeing to a code of conduct for a fast and fair union election that prohibits both the employer and the union from disparaging each other's motives; requires them both to make only factually accurate statements when seeking workers' support; provides them both equal physical access and equal time to discuss workers' choice of a union with them; bans inherently coercive kinds of communications, like "captive audience" meetings and one-on-one discussions with supervisors; and establishes a short election period prior to a final and binding secret ballot vote?

Absolutely. I am always willing to support workers in their pursuit of a labor union and collective bargaining.

Have you ever interceded with employers to urge their adoption of one of these methods for workers to choose a union? If so, describe your experience and what you learned from it.

I have stood side by side with workers throughout my career by standing in picket lines, petitioning for workers rights, and standing with laborers when they try to form a union.

INDUSTRY STANDARD WAGES, BENEFITS, AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Over the first years of this century, organized hospital workers throughout California established a set of industry standard wages, benefits, and working conditions that brought these caregivers, who are predominantly women, people of color, and recent immigrants, solidly into the middle class, while also creating a stable and experienced workforce in adequate numbers to protect the well-being of acutely ill patients and improve the quality of care they receive.

5. In the imminently upcoming round of collective bargaining, will you publicly support NUHW members in their efforts to restore the industry standard wages, benefits, and working conditions that made California's hospital workers among the very best compensated of any in the nation?

Specifically, will you join workers in calling upon employers to restore:

- fully employer paid family health benefits
- defined benefit pensions
- a real voice in staffing levels with the right to arbitrate any disputes
- employment and income security for displaced workers
- a ban on subcontracting;
- scheduling policies that allow workers to live stable lives and maximize full time jobs?

Yes, I definitely support all of the above.

SUPPORTING COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGNS

In order to secure the best results for workers, patients, and communities from recalcitrant employers, NUHW members often must wage comprehensive campaigns that build power in multiple venues through multiple means. Such campaigns are undertaken both to help unorganized workers assert their right to choose a union and to compel employers' agreement to industry standards. Elected officials are frequently called upon to play important roles in these efforts.

6. To support comprehensive campaigns aimed at recalcitrant employers, would you be willing to:

- meet with union organizing committee and bargaining committee members;
- sign public letters of support for the union's organizing rights or bargaining proposals;
- place phone calls to and meet with employer representatives on the union's behalf;
- attend negotiations with employers to support and help present the union's position;
- conduct facility walk-throughs to engage both workers and employers on disputed issues;
- participate in town hall meetings to highlight the union's organizing and bargaining campaigns and build support for union proposals in the press and with the public;
- participate in picket lines, marches, rallies, and vigils;
- assist in outreach to community-based organizations and faith based groups

Yes, I certainly support all of the above.

Single Payer Healthcare Reform and Public Financing for Healthcare Services

Obamacare represented a critical step forward in the long struggle to win affordable, quality healthcare for all, but much work remains to be done. Even with the expansion of Medi-Cal to cover the near poor and the availability of significant subsidies to help low and middle income families purchase coverage through the state exchange, millions of working Californians will remain uninsured as the price of coverage remains too dear, especially for those living in high cost areas. Now the Washington Administration is threatening these gains and millions are likely to lose their health insurance.

7. Do you support the establishment of a single payer healthcare system as prescribed in SB 562 Californians for a Healthy California Act a publicly financed system of healthcare for all with a uniform standard of coverage that reduces costs by eliminating the profiteering, administrative waste, and marketing expenditures that accompany private insurance? Do you support the Sales Tax and revenue measures in the SB 562 financing report? How would you participate in the campaign to enact a single payer solution to our healthcare crisis?

For the majority of my legislative tenure, I have fought for health4all and ensuring that every Californian has access to healthcare. There is no denying that I am a passionate longtime advocate of healthcare for all. Today, I am proud to be the Author of Senate Bill 562, which would create a single payer system in California; thereby granting a right to high quality healthcare to all the people in our state! Regardless of whether or not we get it done this cycle, I am whole-heartedly committed to ensuring that a single payer healthcare program in California is enacted in the next few years, and I'll continue the fight as Insurance Commissioner.

8. As you may know, NUHW members over the past several years successfully prosecuted a complaint against Kaiser Permanente for failing to provide its plan members with timely and appropriate mental health services. In prosecuting the complaint, we learned that the Department of Managed Health Care interprets current law not to require any specific timeliness standard for the scheduling of return appointments, even in mental health services where in many cases the close spacing of return appointments is absolutely necessary for the provision of clinically sound care.

Will you support NUHW members if we seek to close this loophole in the state's timely access law?

Yes absolutely.

Will you support NUHW members in demanding that all members of the public have equal access to quality and affordable mental health care?

Certainly. I fundamentally believe that every Californian should have access to quality and affordable mental health care.

Will you support NUHW members in their contract disputes to improve the quality of care?

Yes, definitely.

9. SANCTUARY CITY AND NUHW

NUHW recently declared itself a ‘sanctuary union’ and a member of the growing network of sanctuary institutions that will do everything within our power to ensure the safety and security of all members of our community regardless of their immigration status.

As a result, NUHW will:

- protect the rights and safety of every member of our union, our community and all patients including undocumented people and their families;
- will not voluntarily cooperate with federal agents to enforce immigration laws;
- pledge to stand up for, support and defend the most vulnerable among us; those deliberately targeted in the lead-up to the election; and those who have become victims of hate in its wake;
- urge its members to help address the social, emotional, medical and mental health needs of our patients and community members and to promote diversity and inclusion;
- declares its support for the following Legislation: SB 54, the California values Act, which would prevent the use of public resources to aid federal immigration agents in deportation actions; SB 6, the Due Process for All Act, which provides legal representation for noncitizens facing deportation; and AB 3, the Stronger Public defenders Act, which would create state-funded centers to train defense attorneys and public defenders on immigration law and the consequences of criminal convictions.
- will request that our nation’s hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare providers declare their support for and protection of undocumented people and their families, affirmatively create a welcoming environment for them, and declare themselves to be “safe zones” so that no member of our community feels threatened when seeking medical care.

Please state whether you agree with NUHW’s sanctuary union action and the ‘Sanctuary State’ movement. In addition, state what you will do to protect our communities from hate and possible federal action.

As the child of undocumented immigrants who came to this country to find a better life, I am wholly committed to exploring all avenues for how the state can help slow this administration’s cruel, immoral, and unjust deportations of undocumented Californians. I absolutely support the three aforementioned bills and as Insurance Commissioner, I’ll ensure that predatory companies don’t exploit already-vulnerable undocumented Californians.

Housing and Homelessness:

Californians are seeing one of the worst housing crises in recent memory. Working people are being priced out of their homes by increased rents and mortgages. Homelessness is increasing due to a lack of affordability and a lack of social services for wrap around care.

What is your definition of affordable housing? How do you propose to increase the affordable housing stock/inclusionary zoning? What do you propose to do to curb evictions? What actions have you taken so far to help fix the current housing and affordability crisis? Do you support the repeal of Costa-Hawkins?

To me, affordable housing is necessary when families pay more than 30% of their income for housing and subsequently may have difficulty affording other necessities and are in need of subsidized housing. Cities throughout California should be enhancing their use of inclusionary zoning to mandate that developers make a percentage of their units below market rate value. Fundamentally, we need to build more affordable housing units to make a dent in this tremendous housing crisis. To fight evictions and keep families in their homes, we do need to repeal Costa-Hawkins so that cities throughout the state have more rent control measures at their disposal.