

SUZANNE JONES
Candidate Questionnaire
LEAGUE OF CA CITIES

INTRODUCTION: Candidates for the state legislature in 2016 are respectfully requested to answer these questions relevant to the respective and often complementary roles of the state and city governments in California. While the League does not itself endorse candidates, the responses to this questionnaire will be shared with elected city officials in each legislative district for consideration in their own endorsement decisions as well as posted on the League website. Thank you for your participation. Please email your response to Bismarck@cacities.org or by fax to 916- 658-8240 by no later than March 31. If you have any questions, please contact: League Public Affairs Director Bismarck Obando at Bismarck@cacities.org or 916-658-8273.

LOCAL CONTROL: The relationship between the state and cities functions best as a partnership where major policy issues are approached by the state with careful consideration of the varied conditions among the state’s 482 cities and an appreciation of the importance of retaining local flexibility to tailor policies to reflect local needs and circumstances. Still, at times, cities have to respond to state legislation they believe undermines the principle of “local control” over important issues such as land use, housing, finance, infrastructure, elections, labor relations and other issues directly affecting cities. What is your perspective on local control and state preemption of local control? (Please explain).

I am an advocate for local control. I don’t believe in Big Government control with respect to issues that are specific to cities and local areas. Local leadership is responsible for their citizens and should retain the flexibility they need to take care of and serve their population. Local leaders know the issues, the problems the people, their resources, they have their own local revenues, and they are in control of their own budgets.

There is also a place for state and federal government where interstate commerce is concerned and some public policy, public safety and infrastructure issues require. However, I will not support intervention by the state legislature when it undermines or takes away local control of issues that are clearly local issues and should be managed at the local level.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING. Cities and counties are struggling with a \$78 billion, 10-year maintenance funding deficit for the local streets and roads system. This amount is needed simply to maintain existing infrastructure; delaying these repairs by just 10 years would increase the deficit to \$99 billion. Meanwhile, millions of cars, trucks, busses and other vehicles have been added in California, utilizing our already over-burdened transportation network. At the same time, gas tax revenues (that benefit both the state and local system) have not been raised since 1994; they have been eroded by inflation, expanded use of electric and more efficient vehicles, and more recently declined 26% since Fiscal Year 2013-14. How would you support addressing this infrastructure funding deficit?

Additional state gas or other vehicle taxes: No

Additional state user fees (similar to the vehicle registration fee): No

Expanded local authority to raise taxes and fees locally: Yes

Return transportation funding from General Fund (\$1 billion/yr) and reform CalTRANS: Yes
Combination of approaches: Yes Other approaches? (Please explain)

Roads, highways and infrastructure are the responsibility of the state and federal government. However, I do support local control allowing local cities and counties to ask their voters/taxpayers if they would support raising revenues for the repair and maintenance of their local roads.

The state needs to pass legislation that prohibits the government from “dipping into” highway gas taxes funds for anything other than roads, highways, bridges and infrastructure. If the government had not raided the highway tax fund 40 years ago, we might not be in such a mess today.

If the state fails to maintain the local roads and highways, then city and local government should have the flexibility to raise revenue and invest in their local infrastructure.

For interstate highways, the federal government should be returning some of our tax dollars to support repair and maintenance of these arteries.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING. With the loss of \$1 billion in redevelopment funding that previously went to affordable housing and the exhaustion of past state affordable housing bond funds, California has virtually no resources to construct affordable housing. Affordable units often require additional public subsidy so that rents and/or purchase prices can be made affordable to low and moderate income households. What is your solution to the affordable housing crisis?

Allocate a portion of state general fund dollars for affordable housing: Unsure

Establish a new permanent source of affordable housing funding from a new revenue source such as a recently contemplated \$75 state tax or fee on various real estate instruments: No

Establish a local-state matching program, where local funding commitments to affordable housing are matched dollar-for-dollar with a state contribution: No

Reduce the regulatory burden on housing production imposed by CEQA and other regulations: Yes

Combination of these approaches: Yes

Other approaches? (Please explain)

I would have to see the plan for allocation of a portion of state general fund dollars before I could support it. I'm not sure this could be done equitably across the state since some areas could require greater investments than other areas and be supported by taxpayers from elsewhere.

I feel the city and local governments should partner with the state legislature in an attempt to find equitable programs that work best.

I do not support funding affordable housing by increasing already cumbersome, burdensome, and already overtaxed real estate transactions.

I will support reducing regulatory burdens imposed by CEQA and other regulatory agencies that drive the cost of “affordable” housing until it is no longer affordable for local governments to build or support.

I am willing to listen to ideas regarding how to provide affordable housing and research the possibilities of using a combination of approaches.

WATER CONSERVATION AND STORMWATER. Faced with the ongoing drought and increasing federal and state clean water regulations, local governments have struggled to enforce water conservation requirements and remove contaminants from stormwater and urban water runoff without reducing funding for public safety and other general fund commitments. How should the state assist cities with this challenge?

Providing increased grants through state bonds financed from the state General Fund: No

Providing cities and other water agencies with increased flexibility to implement water conservation rate pricing and raise funds locally: Yes

Combination of these approaches: Possibly

Some other approaches? (Please explain)

We have several options to address water conservation.

The state is responsible for man created droughts and therefore should be responsible for preventing future man created droughts. This should be done in several ways:

The state needs to build more water storage, either above or below ground. With more water storage we can save additional water during the rainy years, so that we can survive the dryer years; similarly to the way the state should be saving money in revenue rich years so that we have needed money during the revenue poor years.

The state need to get the federal government’s hands out of the state’s business of water management. The state needs to do a better job of managing our water. For example, when we are releasing huge amounts of water from Folsom dam because of the rapid rainfall or snow melt conditions , we should take advantage of pumping that water to the aqueduct and send it to southern CA instead of just letting that water run straight to the ocean.

The state should be funding heightened requirements for mandates on local governments to remove contaminants from storm water and urban water runoff. Local cities and governments should not have to suffer the loss of public safety or other necessary public services because the state imposes onerous mandates upon them such as this.