

STATE ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE RESPONSES

PAUL AKINJO - STATE ASSEMBLY - DISTRICT 12
NO RESPONSE

HEATH FLORA - STATE ASSEMBLY - DISTRICT 12
NO RESPONSE

JOEL CAMPOS - STATE ASSEMBLY - DISTRICT 21
NO RESPONSE

ADAM C. GRAY – 21ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

1) WHAT ARE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS TO RUN?

I was born and raised in Merced, CA. I was elected to the State Assembly representing the 21st Assembly District in 2012. Prior to my election, I worked for the State Legislature as a staff member for many years. Having worked for the legislature, I brought with me a unique perspective of both the legislative process and the challenges that our region has faced trying to fight for resources on the state level. I have fought to successfully secure funding to extend ACE Rail through Modesto, funding to address homelessness in Modesto, funding for expansion of the VOLT program, and most recently, funding for a branch campus medical school here in the San Joaquin Valley.

2) IN YOUR OWN WORKS, DESCRIBE THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE ASSEMBLY MEMBER.

I am a strong advocate for the residents of the 21st Assembly District up in Sacramento. I look at each piece of legislation before me and drill down on how the bill impacts our community. I do everything I can to fight for a better future for our area. I have stood up for our community and against my own party to fight against the State's attempt to divert hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water from our region through the Bay-Delta Plan. I have a strong record of working with community partners like the Modesto Chamber to make sure we are heard up in Sacramento. Together we organized over 1,000 people show up on the steps of the State Capitol to fight for water.

3) IF ELECTED, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR HIGHEST PRIORITY?

My highest priorities have been protecting our water and increasing access to healthcare. We are still fighting against the water grab and I am hopeful for successful voluntary agreements. On health access, I have passed legislation that increased the hours of our local community clinics, secured additional funding for residency positions to train new doctors, and this year, secured \$15 million per year in ongoing funding to support a branch campus medical school that will be a collaboration between UC Merced and UCSF Fresno.

4) IF THE ORGANIZATION FOR WHICH YOU SEEK OFFICE OPERATING WITH A BALANCED BUDGET? WHAT ARE YOU PLANS TO MAKE THE ORGANIZATION MORE SUSTAINABLE?

As a state, we started this year with a projected surplus and a healthy rainy day fund. The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously reversed the financial course of our state. It is going to take some time for us to get back to where we were. Individuals and businesses across the state are struggling. We need to support a robust economic recovery but state and federal government need to do a better job of ensuring that recovery resources are distributed fairly across our state. As our economy recovers, I will again be an advocate for healthy rainy day funds and a balanced budget. We would have been in an even worse position if we had not made that a priority prior to the pandemic.

5) DESCRIBE WAYS IN WHICH YOU AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL WOULD ENCOURAGE A COLLABORATIVE AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER UNITS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

I have strong relationship our local government partners on all levels. I regularly hear from our members of the Modesto City Council, the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, local government staff, as well as our law enforcement partners. I have always encouraged our local government leaders to contact me directly and reach out to my staff. They always help inform my decisions before I vote on legislation that impacts our region.

6) WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS TO MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE TRANSPARENT AND RESPONSIVE (OR EFFECTIVE)?

Transparency is important perhaps now more than ever. I believe that we are seeing a breakdown in trust between the public and government representatives at all levels due to extreme partisanship and infighting. I represent my constituents, not a political party platform. I think my voting record reflects that. I also meet with groups on all issues, whether we see eye to eye or not. It is important for me and other government representatives to hear from constituents directly and for constituents to hear from their representatives. Sound bite politics do not benefit anyone.

7) HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE IMPACT TO BUSINESS WHEN MAKING VOTING DECISIONS?

I evaluate the impacts to business whenever I make a vote. Whether we are talking about new environmental regulations that impact our local agricultural producers or changes to employer obligations, I study those impacts closely. Often, the impacts of regulations on business will be felt very differently in downtown San Francisco than they are in downtown Modesto, which is why I have always been a big proponent of allowing for regional variations rather than making blanket reforms. I value when I hear from our local businesses when I'm considering legislation.

8) MODESTO NEEDS JOBS. AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL, HOW WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE TO CREATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVING THE AVAILABILITY OF LOCAL JOBS?

Unemployment rates in our region regularly exceed state averages. We also have high numbers of workers commuting for hours to the bay area, which significantly impacts their quality of life. I am proud to have secured the funding that will extend ACE rail to Modesto, along with my former colleague Anthony Cannella. It will create new opportunities for businesses to locate in Modesto and improve lives for those already commuting. I am also a strong supporter of the trades and vocational education. The VOLT program is a great example of local groups collaborating to fill a workforce need. I secured \$2 million of state funding to support the VOLT program to train workers. During my time in office, I will continue to look for opportunities to improve the economic development opportunities for the 21st Assembly District.

9) Due to changes to the laws over the last several years, our City/County now faces prisoners released early, non-enforcement of most non-violent offenses, and rampant homelessness. What are some solutions you propose to these problems?

As a state, we have continued to put burdens on our local government and law enforcement without the funding to support them. I have opposed those efforts, but frequently find myself in a minority amongst my legislative colleagues. Prisoner releases in the absence of the resources necessary to ensure that the individuals released have somewhere to be housed and are not reoffending impact the quality of life in our communities. It puts a burden on our businesses and our local law enforcement. We need to address it at a state level and give local communities more tools to address the impacts. Homelessness is a moral issue that impacts the health, safety, and quality of life in our community. That is why I secured \$2.5 million in additional state funding for Stanislaus County to fund the Modesto Outdoor Emergency Shelter. We have to invest in solutions to get people off the street and into housing, while enforcing the law to improve quality of life for all residents of Modesto.

STATE SENATOR CANDIDATE RESPONSES

SUSAN EGGMAN – STATE SENATOR - DISTRICT 5
NO RESPONSE

JIM RIDENOUR – STATE SENATOR - DISTRICT 5

1) WHAT ARE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS TO RUN?

I was born and raised here in the Central Valley. I started my career as an EMT when I was still in my teens and eventually became the Vice President of American Medical Response, and then the President of the CA Ambulance Association. I was then elected to serve the City of Modesto as their Mayor from 2003-2012. During this time I had to lead our community through one of the worst economic recessions in history. I am proud to say that not only were we one of the only cities in the area to not declare bankruptcy, but our community became stronger and worked together to find solutions for the city. Also during this time, I was trusted to serve as the President for the League of California Cities. In this position I worked with mayors from all over the state to find cohesive solutions for the people of California. Up until coronavirus began, I was serving as a part-time Stanislaus Deputy Sheriff. My years serving the public and working with both sides of the aisle will equip me to be a very effective State Senator for District 5.

2) IN YOUR OWN WORDS, DESCRIBE THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE POSITION YOU SEEK.

Too often our state legislature is caught up in partisan politics, which hurts the people of California. If I became State Senator, my responsibility would be to represent the Central Valley--not special interests. My role in the State Senate would be to bring balance, pragmatism, and common sense solutions to the legislature that will help everyone in the Central Valley.

3) IF ELECTED OR REELECTED, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR HIGHEST PRIORITY? DESCRIBE THE MEASURES YOU WILL TAKE TO ADDRESS THIS PRIORITY.

I believe that everyone's highest priority right now is to figure out how to come back stronger and safer than ever due to the coronavirus. While I understand the need to reopen the economy, we must do it safely. When elected, I will propose legislation that supports our small businesses which have suffered due to the shutdown. The state legislature needs to commit to supporting our businesses, especially during this time. California's economy is at stake, and if we do not do everything we can to help our businesses, they may shut down for good. Once we can safely reopen the economy I can focus on other issues like Homelessness, public safety, and providing water for our farmers.

4) IS THE ORGANIZATION FOR WHICH YOU SEEK OFFICE OPERATING WITH A BALANCED BUDGET? IF NOT, WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS TO MAKE THE ORGANIZATION MORE SUSTAINABLE?

With COVID-19, the budget has been radically different from what we find normally acceptable. As we get our state moving again, we must provide our business and schools financial support to ensure that they can open safely and effectively. The truth of the matter is that we will have to make very tough decisions in order to balance our budget. I would start by ditching the High Speed Rail and by advocating an audit into Caltrans so that we can make sure that our tax dollars are being spent effectively.

5) DESCRIBE WAYS IN WHICH YOU AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL WOULD ENCOURAGE A COLLABORATIVE AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER UNITS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Given my experience as the President of the League of California Cities, I understand the importance of our government working in lockstep with other municipalities and levels of governance. As elected officials, we must first accept that our loyalty should lie with the people we represent, and not our political party. When elected to the State Senate, I have already announced that I will have an "Open Door Policy" which means anyone can come in and have a conversation with me. When I was Mayor of Modesto, sometimes the best ideas came from local leaders and other community members. My priority in the State Senate is to govern everyone in my district, not just those who voted for me. When elected, I will be in constant communication with the local governments to assist them in any way possible.

6) WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS TO MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE TRANSPARENT AND RESPONSIVE (OR EFFECTIVE)?

As I have been campaigning and meeting new members of our community one thing has stood out. Much of the Central Valley's dissatisfaction with Sacramento is the toxic partisan politics which leave us behind. The Central Valley does not share San Francisco's or Los Angeles's far left values, and for this reason we need to have representation which balances the State Senate and seeks pragmatic and reasonable solutions. My plan to make the State Senate more effective is simple. Work across party lines and advocate for legislation that helps the Central Valley, not the coasts.

7) HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE IMPACT TO BUSINESS WHEN MAKING VOTING DECISIONS?

I keep businesses and jobs at the forefront when I support legislation. With California's recent legislation disaster known as Assembly Bill 5, millions of people are unsure whether they will have a job or not. I am disappointed that my opponent voted in favor of this legislation and other anti-business proposals. I will work to ease taxes and regulations on businesses so that we can lower the cost of living and bring more jobs BACK to California.

8) MODESTO NEEDS JOBS. AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL, HOW WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE TO CREATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVING THE AVAILABILITY OF LOCAL JOBS?

When I was Mayor of Modesto, I worked very hard to bring jobs and businesses to our city. This includes revitalizing our downtown area and bringing big employers to our area. I believe that serving in the State Senate and working with local leaders, Modesto can be a place that businesses want to come to. I will be a voice against taxes which break down the small businesses and drive out our larger employers. In order to create a palatable environment for businesses to increase their employment and compete for employees through higher pay and benefits, we should not nickel-and-dime our small businesses anymore.

9) DUE TO CHANGES TO THE LAWS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, OUR CITY/COUNTY NOW FACES PRISONERS RELEASED EARLY, NON-ENFORCEMENT OF MOST NON-VIOLENT OFFENSES, AND RAMPANT HOMELESSNESS. WHAT ARE SOME SOLUTIONS YOU PROPOSE TO THESE PROBLEMS?

We do have a homelessness epidemic on our hands here in California. Nearly half of the country's homeless population live in our state. Unfortunately, this population has been increasing over the past few years despite more public funding to prevent it. We must have a humane approach to this issue because most people experiencing homelessness suffer from mental illness, addiction, or physical disabilities. We should support increasing efforts both at the state and local levels to target resources towards these individuals to get them treatment and transition them into permanent housing. This will be one of my top priorities as your State Senator, and I will be working closely with the cities in our area and other stakeholders in determining the best approaches for this issue.

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE CANDIDATE RESPONSES

JOSH HARDER - UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE - DISTRICT 10

1) WHAT ARE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS TO RUN?

In addition to my experience in business, working to grow small businesses into international job creators – and my time teaching at Modesto Junior College – I have a proven record of results as this district’s representative. Since taking office, I have worked to bring \$14 million to the Central Valley for local water projects – including the first federal funding for a new project in 50 years. I’ve fought to support businesses impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic, and I’ve introduced legislation to improve trades education to guarantee a skilled workforce and attract better-paying jobs to the Central Valley. I was also proud to accept the Abraham Lincoln Leadership for America Award from the United States Chamber of Commerce for “demonstrating the leadership needed to advance policies that support American business.”

2) IN YOUR OWN WORDS, DESCRIBE THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE POSITION YOU SEEK.

Being a representative is actually a simple job – you listen to the needs of the community and then do everything you can to effectuate change in Washington to meet those needs. For decades, our needs have been ignored in Sacramento and Washington – where lawmakers think California is only San Francisco and Los Angeles. In terms of legislating, the job is about bringing federal funding and support to the Valley, updating federal regulations which don’t account for our needs, and finding bipartisan initiatives that can create positive change. In addition, it means supporting local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and local units of government in their applications for federal grant funding.

3) IF ELECTED OR REELECTED, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR HIGHEST PRIORITY? DESCRIBE THE MEASURES YOU WILL TAKE TO ADDRESS THIS PRIORITY.

My top-tier priorities include bringing more water to the Valley, creating good-paying jobs for local residents, and making health care more accessible and affordable. In addition to the federal funding I’ve secured for local water projects, I also introduced the SAVE Water Resources Act – a comprehensive water bill – which has bipartisan local support – which would fund storage projects, support groundwater recharge, and spur new research which would increase water-use efficiency to save our farmers money. I would also make it a priority of mine to protect and expand funding for infrastructure projects here in the Valley.

4) IS THE ORGANIZATION FOR WHICH YOU SEEK OFFICE OPERATING WITH A BALANCED BUDGET? IF NOT, WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS TO MAKE THE ORGANIZATION MORE SUSTAINABLE?

Congress does not operate with a balanced budget, and it’s my generation that will be left holding the bag. Fiscal discipline in normal circumstances is a high priority. That’s why – before the pandemic – I voted against a House budget which would have us spend well beyond our means. Unfortunately, we’re now seeing the pinch of poor fiscal management during an emergency. In good times, we have to reduce the deficit so we can spend what is necessary during an emergency.

5) Describe ways in which you as an elected official would encourage a collaborative and cooperative relationship with other units of local government.

I have been proud to work alongside local elected officials – most of whom are members of the other party. Many of our local leaders supported my water bill – and several even joined me for the press conference announcing the bill. I've also worked with local leaders to protect our shared constituents. Republican Assemblyman Heath Flora and I worked together to save a local veteran over \$500,000. The VA made an error and attempted to force this veteran to pay for care he earned out of his own pocket. Without our cooperation, this veteran would have been left behind by the federal bureaucracy and forced to pay money he should not have owed in the first place. Additionally, I've worked directly with local agencies on securing federal grants and services. Our region gets the short end of the stick when it comes to federal dollars, which is why I've supported the county, cities, law enforcement agencies and fire departments on funding advocacy and have provided targeted technical assistance, like hosting funding workshops for our fire departments.

6) WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS TO MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE TRANSPARENT AND RESPONSIVE (OR EFFECTIVE)?

In my first year in office I held 18 in-person town halls. Showing up and being accessible is the first step towards transparency. In terms of effectiveness, I've been proud to cosponsor the most bipartisan bills of any member of the House. Getting things done means finding common ground with members of both parties and then working to get those priorities passed into law.

7) HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE IMPACT TO BUSINESS WHEN MAKING VOTING DECISIONS?

As a former investor, I intimately understand how businesses will be affected by the votes I take. My family also runs Harder Optometry in Modesto, so business is in my blood. Free enterprise is a cornerstone of America and it's essential that government strike the appropriate balance between supporting unfettered markets with the need to protect the public and labor force. I take the impacts to business seriously of every vote I take.

8) MODESTO NEEDS JOBS. AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL, HOW WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE TO CREATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVING THE AVAILABILITY OF LOCAL JOBS?

I've heard loud and clear from the Central Valley that we need more good-paying jobs here at home. I believe one of the ways we do that is by expanding educational opportunities to give our families in-demand skills so they can stay and work here in the Valley. We have to start investing in trades and career education and stop telling our kids the only way to the middle class is through a four-year degree. I introduced a package of bills designed with the Central Valley in mind and will build out successful programs that are already here in our community. Right now, if you want a four-year degree in philosophy, you get access to grants and loans from the federal government. But if you want to study to become a maintenance mechanic – a position actually in demand here in the Valley – you're on your own. My bills would fix that problem to ensure we have a skilled workforce to meet our labor needs. We also need to ensure that we protect the current jobs that we have here at home. That's why when COVID hit, my office and I helped local small businesses secure PPP and EIDL loans.

9) DUE TO CHANGES TO THE LAWS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, OUR CITY/COUNTY NOW FACES PRISONERS RELEASED EARLY, NON-ENFORCEMENT OF MOST NON-VIOLENT OFFENSES, AND RAMPANT HOMELESSNESS. WHAT ARE SOME SOLUTIONS YOU PROPOSE TO THESE PROBLEMS?

Homelessness is one of the common issues I hear about across the Valley. That's why I introduced the Homelessness Emergency Declaration Act, which would bridge the gap between Washington and Sacramento to leverage federal support to get people off the streets. My bill would allow governors to declare a homelessness state of emergency to access federal funding and resources. FEMA has the ability to distribute tents and trailers to immediately house get people off the street. It's this kind of policy that will resolve the issue. I was also proud to cosponsor the Fighting Homelessness Through Services and Housing Act, which would establish grant programs to support local efforts to combat homelessness.

TED HOWZE - UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE - DISTRICT 10

1) WHAT ARE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS TO RUN?

I've served 6 years on the Turlock Planning Commission and 4 years on the Turlock City Council during which time I served as the budget chair, vice-mayor and a Stanislaus Council of Governments representative.

2) IN YOUR OWN WORDS, DESCRIBE THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE POSITION YOU SEEK.

My primary duties as a Member of Congress would be representation of the District including securing Federal funding for local projects, legislation, and world-class constituent service.

3) IF ELECTED OR REELECTED, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR HIGHEST PRIORITY? DESCRIBE THE MEASURES YOU WILL TAKE TO ADDRESS THIS PRIORITY.

Healthcare. I have personal experience with the failures of our current healthcare system that I'd never wish on another family. It's broken and needs fixing. I support healthcare reforms that protects people with pre-existing conditions, remove roadblocks to care by giving Doctors the final say - not insurers, promotes competition and technology to lower costs, and reduces prescription drug costs.

4) IS THE ORGANIZATION FOR WHICH YOU SEEK OFFICE OPERATING WITH A BALANCED BUDGET? IF NOT, WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS TO MAKE THE ORGANIZATION MORE SUSTAINABLE?

The Federal Government is running huge annual deficits. I favor passing a balanced budget amendment, reducing waste at the Federal level and cutting onerous regulations to expand our economy.

5) DESCRIBE WAYS IN WHICH YOU AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL WOULD ENCOURAGE A COLLABORATIVE AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER UNITS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Building relationships with local leaders is fundamental to effective collaboration with local government. I'm proud to have built great relationships and to be endorsed by nearly every Mayor in the 10th District including: Amy Bublak, Mayor, City of Turlock - Mike Van Winkle, Mayor, City of Waterford - Ted Brandvold, Mayor, City of Modesto - Robert "Bob" Martina, Mayor City of Newman - J.R. McCarty, Mayor, City of Oakdale - Benjamin Cantu, Mayor, City of Manteca - Chris Vierra, Mayor, City of Ceres -Robert Rickman, Mayor, City of Tracy - Deborah Novelli, Mayor, City of Patterson.

6) WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS TO MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE TRANSPARENT AND RESPONSIVE (OR EFFECTIVE)?

I am a big proponent of:

- A) Posting government spending online in a standardized and downloadable format so that taxpayers can see where their money is going.
- B) Consolidating duplicative federal agencies and programs to eradicate repetitious overlapping programs that cost taxpayer billions of dollars annually.
- C) Using technology to create an efficient customer service focused congressional office.

7) HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE IMPACT TO BUSINESS WHEN MAKING VOTING DECISIONS?

As a business owner myself, the impacts of legislation and over-regulation are not lost on me. As a leader, I go to great efforts to engage fellow local business leaders in all aspects of the decision making process and maintain numerous relationships in Agri-business, manufacturing and logistics.

8) MODESTO NEEDS JOBS. AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL, HOW WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE TO CREATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVING THE AVAILABILITY OF LOCAL JOBS?

I am a strong proponent of reinstating redevelopment. My biggest accomplishment in office was being the financial architect of Turlock's Regional Industrial Park. I drove the project and prevailed in funding it in the face of the State's threats to steal Turlock's redevelopment funds. We now have more than a thousand new high paying jobs in the region today with a projected three thousand more expected to be created over the coming decade. All without raising taxes! This is a model I'd like to push at the federal level as a member of Congress.

9) DUE TO CHANGES TO THE LAWS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, OUR CITY/COUNTY NOW FACES PRISONERS RELEASED EARLY, NON-ENFORCEMENT OF MOST NON-VIOLENT OFFENSES, AND RAMPANT HOMELESSNESS. WHAT ARE SOME SOLUTIONS YOU PROPOSE TO THESE PROBLEMS?

I will prioritize an approach that seeks to treat the real root causes of crime and homelessness which are addiction and mental illness. We must re-empower law enforcement to enforce quality of life laws to keep our communities safe while investing in diversionary treatments, such as addiction therapy, to move the homeless out of a destructive cycle. After completion of a diversionary program we should provide transitional housing and job training programs to complete the transition back to mainstream society.