

MCMC District 6 Candidate Questionnaire
2024 Primary Election Cycle

Candidate Name: Destiny Drake West

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1. Policy and Budget Priorities:

What are the top five policy and budget priorities you will pursue if elected to represent District 6?

As a candidate with a breadth of government experience, I am committed to leveraging federal resources and legislative capabilities to address both immediate and systemic challenges in District 6. Here are my top five policy and budget priorities:

1. Economic Development and Job Creation:

- As your representative, I will advocate for federal funding and incentives in emerging sectors such as green technology and healthcare. Through subsidies, tax incentives, and direct investments, we can stimulate economic growth and create stable, well-paying jobs in industries offering long-term growth potential, such as green technology, healthcare, and digital services. I will also ensure that small businesses gain expanded access to capital and federal contracts through agencies like the Small Business Administration (SBA), particularly those owned by minorities, women, and veterans, through grants and low-interest loans to help them grow and succeed.

2. Education and Workforce Development:

- I will push for increased federal funding for our public schools through programs like Title I and support initiatives at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) that expand vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities to provide our youth with the skills necessary for today's job market. Furthermore, I will work to make higher education more accessible through improved financial aid policies and educational grants, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to succeed.

3. Healthcare Access and Mental Health Services:

- I am dedicated to expanding healthcare coverage through adjustments to the Affordable Care Act, Medicare, and Medicaid to advance policies that aim for universal healthcare coverage, ensuring that no person is without access to essential health services. I will advocate for increased funding for mental health services, supporting comprehensive mental health reform and substance abuse treatment programs through federal agencies like the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) or HRSA.

4. Affordable Housing Initiatives:

- I will promote initiatives to increase federal funding for affordable housing projects through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Additionally, I will enhance homeownership programs by supporting federal mortgage assistance programs and tax incentives, making it easier for families in our district to own their first home. Increasing access to low-barrier shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness will also be a priority.

5. Public Safety and Community Relations:

- I will advocate for comprehensive reform of policing practices at the federal level, including funding for de-escalation techniques and bias training through the Department of Justice. I am also committed to supporting local efforts that engage our youth in positive activities and fund community policing initiatives to build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

2. Understanding of Muslim Community Issues:

Can you provide specific actions or initiatives that demonstrate your understanding of the issues important to the Muslim community in District 6?

To better address and support the needs of the Muslim community in District 6, I plan to implement several specific actions and initiatives that reflect my commitment to inclusivity and understanding of the unique challenges faced by this community:

1. Regular Community Engagement Sessions:

- I will hold regular meetings with Muslim leaders and representatives from various mosques and community centers across the district. These sessions will serve as a platform for open dialogue, allowing community members to voice their concerns directly and for us to collaboratively identify solutions to issues affecting them.

2. Enhanced Representation in Local Governance and on Capitol Hill:

- I aim to ensure that trusted Muslim leaders in District 6 are well-represented in advisory boards and committees that influence local and federal public policy. By promoting diversity in these groups, we can better address the specific needs of the Muslim community and ensure their perspectives are considered in decision-making processes.

3. Support for Religious Freedoms and Practices:

- I will advocate for federal policies that protect religious freedoms and accommodate the religious practices of Muslims, such as securing the rights to wear religious attire like hijabs and kufis in all public and private sectors, including schools and workplaces, without discrimination.

4. Cultural Competence Training for Public Officials:

- I propose mandatory cultural competence training for all federal employees, focusing on understanding and respecting Islamic practices and holidays. This training will help

reduce instances of bias and ensure that services are delivered in a culturally respectful manner.

5. Support for Islamic Schools and Educational Programs:

- Recognizing the importance of education in the Muslim community, I will support federal grants and funding opportunities for Islamic schools and educational programs that aim to promote a deeper understanding of Islamic culture and history, both within and outside the Muslim community.

6. Initiatives to Combat Islamophobia:

- I plan to support and initiate federal legislation aimed at combating Islamophobia and all forms of religious discrimination. This includes strengthening hate crime laws and enhancing the enforcement of existing statutes to ensure that Muslims, and all other religious groups, can practice their faith freely and securely.

3. Combatting Anti-Muslim Hate:

What specific measures do you propose to combat anti-Muslim hate, and to end ethnic and religious profiling in our society and institutions?

I plan to comprehensively address the issue by championing the following measures:

1. Enhanced Federal Legislation:

- I will champion stronger federal hate crime laws, advocating for stricter penalties and more robust mechanisms for tracking and reporting these crimes. Gaining bipartisan support will be essential, and I'll work to frame this initiative as a crucial step in protecting all communities against hate crimes, which has broad appeal across the political spectrum.

2. Comprehensive Training for Law Enforcement and Public Servants:

- I propose mandatory cultural competency and anti-profiling training for all federal law enforcement officers and public servants. This will be implemented through legislation or amendments to funding bills that allocate the necessary resources. I'll collaborate with other lawmakers to ensure these programs are seen as part of broader efforts to improve law enforcement practices and public service delivery.

3. Public Education and Awareness Campaigns:

- I will push for the allocation of federal funds to launch comprehensive public education campaigns aimed at dismantling stereotypes about Muslims. These campaigns will promote positive narratives and factual information about Islam, using various media platforms. Working through appropriations bills, I will partner with the Departments of Justice and Education to design and implement these initiatives.

4. Establishment of a National Task Force:

- I plan to introduce legislation to create a national task force focused on religious discrimination and profiling. This task force will collaborate closely with Muslim leaders and community organizations, providing a direct line to federal resources and strategic

interventions. Securing support will involve illustrating the task force's potential to enhance national security by fostering community trust.

5. Community Outreach Programs:

- I will advocate for increased federal support for community outreach programs that foster interactions between Muslim communities and the broader society. These programs, funded through social services or community development initiatives, will include town halls, interfaith dialogues, and community service projects designed to build mutual understanding and cooperation.

6. Legal and Support Services for Victims:

- I will work to expand federal funding for legal and support services for victims of hate crimes and discrimination. This will involve direct legislation or increasing budgets for existing programs under the Department of Justice, ensuring that victims have access to the necessary resources to recover and pursue justice.

7. Review and Reform of Surveillance Policies:

- I will call for a comprehensive review and reform of current surveillance policies to ensure they do not lead to religious or ethnic profiling. This will require careful negotiation and advocacy for civil liberties, positioning it as a necessary reform to uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens.

By integrating these strategic approaches with specific legislative and policy solutions, I aim to create a safer and more inclusive environment for Muslims and all other community members.

4. Immigration & Refugee Resettlement:

What reforms do you support to address the country's current immigration needs and challenges; how would you approach the refugee resettlement process in the United States?

I plan to support the following immigration reforms and refugee resettlement policies:

1. Comprehensive Immigration Reform:

- I support reforming our immigration system to make it more efficient and secure. This includes a clear and merit-based pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, aligning with values of fairness and the rule of law.
- Streamlining visa processing and status adjustments will help eliminate backlogs and ensure that our immigration system supports U.S. economic interests by attracting skilled workers.

2. Protection and Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees:

- Upholding the rights of asylum seekers and ensuring their cases are processed efficiently is crucial. We must also focus on integrating refugees into society quickly and effectively,

providing them with access to job training and language education, which aids in reducing long-term dependency on social services.

3. Language Access in Immigration Services:

- Ensuring that immigration services provide materials and assistance in multiple languages is not only about respecting individual dignity but also about enhancing the efficiency of the immigration process. By reducing language barriers, we can expedite integration and contribute to public safety and economic productivity. Families should not have to lose aspects of their identity, including language, during the immigration or refugee resettlement process.

4. Partnerships with Neighboring Governments:

- I advocate for strengthening partnerships with the governments of neighboring countries to help stabilize their economies and improve public safety, which in turn can reduce the pressures of illegal immigration. By investing in economic development projects and collaborative public safety initiatives, we can create more stable conditions in these regions, making migration a choice rather than a necessity.

5. Community-Based Support and Public Safety:

- Supporting community-based organizations that assist immigrants and refugees is essential for their successful integration. These organizations provide valuable services such as legal assistance, cultural orientation, and skill development. Strengthening these organizations helps ensure that immigrants can become self-sufficient and contributing members of society sooner.
- Enhanced public safety measures and cooperation with law enforcement can ensure that communities remain safe and that immigration laws are respected and enforced.

6. Educational and Workforce Integration:

- Facilitating the integration of immigrants and refugees into the workforce with recognition of their skills and qualifications supports the U.S. economy. Providing targeted training that matches U.S. labor market needs can turn potential social service beneficiaries into taxpayers and community contributors.

5. U.S. policy towards Israel-Palestine Conflict:

What is your stance on U.S. policy towards the Israel-Palestine conflict

1. Do you support an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza? Yes

2. Do you support conditioning/halting U.S. aid to Israel due to Israel's war crimes in Gaza?

Yes, as a mother, the thought of any child suffering due to conflict is unbearable. My approach to U.S. aid to Israel is thus grounded in a fundamental desire to protect innocent lives and promote a nurturing environment for all children. As a woman of color who has witnessed systemic injustices, I support

conditioning U.S. aid to ensure it adheres to international human rights standards and does not contribute to violence against civilians. My plan includes:

- Conditional Aid: Implementing strict conditions on U.S. aid requiring adherence to human rights norms.
- Enhanced Oversight: Increasing transparency and oversight to ensure aid supports peace and not conflict.
- Promoting Dialogue: Using diplomatic channels to advocate for peaceful resolutions and accountability.

3. How can the U.S. help achieve the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the next two years?

With my academic background in Criminology, Law, and Society, I understand the structural dynamics of power, authority, and conflict. This informs my advocacy for a two-state solution respecting both Israeli and Palestinian sovereignty. My approach includes:

- Facilitating Dialogue: Actively participating in peace negotiations, applying criminological insights to promote fair mediation and address the root causes of conflict.
- State-Building Support: Directing aid to build the institutional capacities of a future Palestinian state, essential for its long-term viability.
- International Cooperation: Working with global partners to support a just and sustainable peace process, aligned with international fairness and equity standards.
- Security and Stability Initiatives: Implementing security measures to protect all citizens, especially children and families, during the transitional period.
- Economic Development: Advocating for economic investments that provide stability and opportunities, focusing on the youth in the region.

6. Foreign Policy and Human Rights Promotion:

How would you promote a foreign policy that promotes freedom and human rights, particularly in regions where violations are prevalent?

I plan to promote the following policies:

1. Diplomatic Leadership and Engagement: I will encourage the United States to assume a leadership role in international forums like the United Nations and the Human Rights Council, advocating for justice and fairness. Strengthening alliances with nations that uphold human rights will be a priority, working collaboratively to hold governments accountable for rights violations.

2. **Conditional Aid and Targeted Sanctions:** I propose making foreign aid and trade agreements contingent on the recipient countries' human rights records. This approach will ensure that U.S. aid does not support or exacerbate human rights abuses, with targeted sanctions against violators to reinforce accountability.
3. **Support for Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders:** Increased backing will go to NGOs and activists in oppressive regions, providing financial, educational, and logistical support. Offering asylum and protection to human rights defenders at risk aligns with the Islamic values of community support and safeguarding the vulnerable.
4. **Educational Initiatives and Cultural Exchanges:** I advocate for investment in education programs focused on human rights and democratic values, and promoting international exchange programs. These initiatives foster global understanding and grassroots reform, emphasizing education as a transformative tool.
5. **Transparency and Accountability:** I will ensure that foreign policy decisions are transparent and subject to oversight, with annual reports to Congress and the public on the state of global human rights and U.S. efforts, fostering a culture of accountability.
6. **Leveraging Technology for Human Rights:** Utilizing technology like internet freedom initiatives and satellite documentation of abuses will play a crucial role in promoting human rights, aligning with the innovative spirit of the Muslim American community.

7. Promotion of Positive Muslim Contributions:

In what ways do you intend to promote and highlight the wealth of positive contributions made by Muslims in the United States?

1. **Cultural Recognition and Celebration:** I will champion the establishment of a National Muslim American Heritage Day or Week. This requires federal recognition through a resolution passed by Congress, similar to other heritage observances. I plan to organize nationwide events, including art exhibitions, literary readings, and public discussions, to highlight the profound cultural impact of the Muslim community in the U.S. Additionally, I will support initiatives to promote and fund Muslim American arts and media, enhancing visibility and fostering broader appreciation. Importantly, I'll involve Muslim leaders from District 6 in planning and executing these events to ensure they reflect the unique cultural fabric of our community.
2. **Educational Initiatives:** I will push for the integration of the history and contributions of Muslim Americans into the national educational curriculum, influenced by federal education standards and funding. Though education is primarily managed at state and local levels, the federal government can provide guidelines and incentivize states through

grants and resources to adopt this vital educational content. In District 6, I will work with local Muslim leaders and educators to ensure that our schools incorporate these studies in a way that's both informative and respectful of our diverse community.

3. **Public Policy and Community Engagement:** At the federal level, I will facilitate more inclusive policymaking by involving Muslim American leaders in advisory roles, commissions, and other participatory forms. Specifically, I plan to establish a council of Muslim leaders from District 6 to provide direct input on policies that affect their communities. Additionally, I will promote the visibility and participation of Muslim Americans in federal public service and leadership positions, demonstrating their integral role in our society.
4. **Media and Public Relations Campaigns:** While direct influence over media content is limited by First Amendment rights, I will sponsor public relations campaigns that promote diversity and highlight the contributions of Muslim Americans. These efforts will form part of broader federal initiatives aimed at combating discrimination and promoting inclusivity. In District 6, I will collaborate with local Muslim leaders to ensure that the campaigns we launch accurately represent and amplify their voices and stories.
5. **Community Support and Infrastructure:** I am committed to supporting the funding and maintenance of community centers and cultural institutions through federal community development and cultural preservation programs. These centers serve not only the Muslim community but also as bridges for intercultural dialogue and understanding, fostering an inclusive society. In District 6, I will ensure that Muslim leaders are involved in the planning and management of these centers, making certain that they meet the specific needs of our local Muslim population.

8. Housing Crisis:

How do you propose to address the housing crisis and lack of affordable housing across the country, to include District 6?

To address the housing crisis and the lack of affordable housing across the country, including in District 6, I am committed to implementing a comprehensive set of strategies that leverage federal resources and policy reforms. Here's how I plan to make a substantial impact:

1. **Increase Federal Funding and Subsidies:** I will push for a significant increase in federal funding for affordable housing programs such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and Section 8 housing vouchers. By expanding these subsidies, we can incentivize developers to build more affordable housing units and help more families in District 6 and beyond secure affordable homes.
2. **Collaborating with Local Housing Authorities:** To ensure that our solutions are effectively tailored to the specific needs of District 6, I plan to work closely with local housing authorities and officials. This collaboration will focus on developing localized housing strategies that address

the unique challenges faced by our community. By partnering directly with those who understand our district's specific needs, we can craft policies that are both innovative and directly impactful.

3. **Streamline Regulations and Expedite Building Permits:** To increase the housing supply, I will encourage local governments to streamline the process for obtaining building permits and reduce regulatory barriers. I plan to work at the federal level to offer incentives for these reforms, helping to reduce construction costs and speed up the completion of housing projects.
4. **Enhance Support for First-Time Homebuyers:** Making homeownership more accessible is crucial, especially for young families and minority groups in District 6. I will support enhancements to federal programs that assist first-time homebuyers, such as expanding eligibility for FHA loans and increasing down payment assistance. Additionally, I will advocate for more robust homebuyer education programs to help people navigate the complexities of purchasing a home.
5. **Promote Rent Control and Tenant Protections:** In regions experiencing rapid rent increases, I support the implementation of reasonable rent control measures and enhanced tenant protections. These policies will provide immediate relief to tenants facing financial pressures and help stabilize communities affected by gentrification.
6. **Address Homelessness with Comprehensive Services:** Recognizing that homelessness is a symptom of the broader housing crisis, I propose increasing federal support for comprehensive services that address not only housing but also the underlying causes of homelessness. This includes funding for emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing programs.
7. **Leverage Technology and Data:** Finally, I plan to leverage technology and data analytics to better understand housing market trends and efficiently match housing resources with needs. Implementing smart technology in housing development can lead to more cost-effective building methods and better management of housing stock.

9. Gun Violence:

Tens of thousands of Americans die each year by firearms, while mass shooting events are becoming all too common. What policies would you pursue to reduce gun violence?

1. **Universal Background Checks:** One of the most effective ways to prevent firearms from falling into the wrong hands is to ensure that all gun purchases and transfers, including private and online sales, undergo thorough background checks. I will push for federal legislation that closes existing loopholes in the background check system, ensuring that every firearm transaction is accounted for.
2. **Assault Weapons Ban:** I support reinstating and strengthening the federal assault weapons ban that expired in 2004. Assault weapons and high-capacity magazines are often the tools of choice in mass shootings and contribute to the high number of casualties in such incidents. Banning these firearms and restricting magazine capacities can significantly reduce the lethality of gun violence.
3. **Red Flag Laws:** Also known as Extreme Risk Protection Orders, red flag laws enable family members and law enforcement to petition a court to temporarily remove firearms from individuals

who pose a risk to themselves or others. I will advocate for national red flag laws that respect due process but provide a crucial tool to prevent tragedies before they occur.

4. **Funding for Gun Violence Research:** Understanding the root causes of gun violence is critical to developing effective interventions. I will work to secure federal funding for research into gun violence, including its social, economic, and psychological drivers. This research will inform policy and help develop targeted programs that address specific aspects of gun violence.
5. **Community-based Intervention Programs:** Many instances of gun violence occur in communities that are disproportionately affected by poverty, lack of economic opportunities, and other social inequities. I will support the expansion of community-based intervention programs that work directly with individuals most at risk of violence. Programs like Cure Violence and other successful models use conflict mediation, social services, and community engagement to reduce gun violence at the local level.
6. **Safe Storage Laws:** Encouraging responsible gun ownership is key to preventing accidental shootings and firearm thefts. I will promote legislation that requires gun owners to safely store firearms, especially in homes with children and vulnerable adults. This includes mandating the use of gun safes and trigger locks which can prevent unauthorized access to firearms.
7. **Education and Awareness Campaigns:** Public education campaigns on gun safety and the risks associated with firearms can play a significant role in reducing gun accidents and suicides. I will champion initiatives that raise awareness about safe gun storage, suicide prevention, and the importance of early intervention when someone is at risk of violence.

10. Unique Qualifications:

What unique qualifications do you possess that distinguish you from the other candidates in this race?

As the only candidate in this race with comprehensive government experience at every level—including federal, state, and local—I bring a unique perspective and set of skills that are unmatched by my competitors. This extensive background equips me to effectively navigate the complexities of government to create meaningful change for our community. My tenure has not only been about career appointments within the government sector; I have also been elected to public office, representing 40,000 residents on the neighborhood council in Los Angeles, where I directly engaged with the community's needs and aspirations.

In addition to my professional qualifications, I am a working mom of five and a proud military wife. These roles have imbued me with a profound understanding of the challenges and triumphs that face working families every day. My life is a testament to the resilience and dedication that define our district.

As a woman of faith who comes from a long line of Christian clergy—including pastors, missionaries, preachers, and evangelists—I carry forward a legacy of service and moral commitment. My faith inspires me to advocate for justice, compassion, and community service, principles that guide my vision for our future. My education at California Baptist University, where I studied a wide range of religions including

Islam, has enriched my appreciation for diverse beliefs and practices, enhancing my ability to serve a multi-faith and multicultural constituency.

This blend of deep government experience, personal resilience, faith-driven service, and educational insight makes me uniquely positioned to represent the diverse needs of our community in Congress. I am committed to leveraging my background to advocate for policies that support working families, enhance healthcare and housing access, and uphold the values of dignity and opportunity for all. Together, we can forge a path toward a brighter, more inclusive future for every resident of our district.