



**CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
CALIFORNIA STATE SENATE/ASSEMBLY
PRIMARY ELECTION JUNE 2008**

CANDIDATE: Kriss Worthington

PHONE: 510 548-8796

ADDRESS: 2808 Hillegass Ave, Berkeley, California 94705

SEAT: 14th Assembly District CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE: _____

COMMITTEE NAME: Friends of Kriss Worthington

COMMITTEE ID#: 1301557

ADDRESS: 2808 Hillegass Ave, Berkeley, CA 94705

CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS: Doug Linney 510-444-4710 Mike Sheen 510-604-2776

GENERAL

Please explain and rank the three most urgent environmental issues in your district. Where do you stand on these issues?

Greenhouse Gas Emissions /Transportation and Land-use connections:

Working with the concerned community members to understand how to change our own lives, as well as how to change the structure of our government and society to respond to climate change. Since about half of greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation that takes a lot of my attention, ...

Environmental Justice for low-income communities:

Supporting low income communities in addressing the impact of corporations, including the Chevron refinery, on the health and safety of the neighborhood.

Green Jobs/Green Economy:

Working to promote good paying jobs for youth and low income residents, and supporting the small business people who are exploring how to be green and be successful.

P.S. Some people may not think of this as an “environmental” issue but I do: Clean Money.

Limiting the influence of large corporations might make many other environmental, consumer, and labor reforms possible. While we work to achieve sufficient support to get clean money on the state level, we can also implement it on the local level and seek to build momentum for statewide reform.

The State Chamber of Commerce and some business groups and their allies assert that environmental regulations cost the California economy jobs and have a negative effect on growth. What is your view of this issue for the state and for your district?

In making such assertions, the State Chamber of Commerce is only looking at a small portion of the picture, and failing to comprehend the phenomenal opportunities presented by the Green economy. The Chamber's shortsightedness can actually be counterproductive to the needs of many of their own members. Environmental regulations admittedly have some costs and limiting effects in the short term, but the long term benefits frequently far outweigh the immediate costs. In fact, in many ways, meeting the public's interest in environmental products and policies offers California the chance to be a national/international center of Greenhouse Gas conscious economic transformation.

For many years I have actively encouraged the creation of new green businesses. The last few years I have assisted established businesses in registering as green businesses and using the designation to promote themselves. More recently, I have been an active supporter and participant in the founding convention of the Green Chamber of Commerce.

I have also assisted small businesses, and minority and women owned businesses in expressing their opinions, which have been different from the Chamber's. I have even succeeded at getting the local Chamber itself to support good environmental policy. In the few instances when environmental regulation severely restricts corporations in their ability to maximize profit, the public interest and public health is more important, and ought to take precedence in setting public policy.

FUNDING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The state's game wardens are critical to protecting California's wildlife and their habitat, yet the Department of Fish and Game has fewer wardens today than it did 25 years ago, when California's population was much smaller. As a result poaching and other illegal activities are increasing. A major reason cited for the decline in the number of wardens is the low pay they receive compared to other law enforcement agencies. Would you support a proposal to tie the salaries of DFG game wardens to other law enforcement agencies such as the California Highway Patrol? Explain why or why not. Are there other steps you would take to increase game warden salaries?

Sounds like a good idea, but I do have questions. SB 1535 was a step in the right direction. The DFG budget needs to be brought into balance with inflation and sufficient fees. I would want to see a duties comparison before I committed to tie salaries to other jobs. Are there other environmental related jobs that are more comparable? With today's increased risk of wildfires, is the job description of a warden today more like a firefighter or more like a scientist? Perhaps we could do some recruiting amongst youth that might see these as good green jobs.

Many economists argue that pollution imposes costs on society – for example, the cost of harm to public health and the cost to clean up polluted air and water – and that it would be economically efficient to internalize the cost of pollution in products and business activities that pollute, in order to send a more accurate market signal about the true cost of the product or activity. What are your views on this concept?

I agree. Externalizing the cost of pollution is grossly unfair to the taxpayers who often have to pick up the bill for the negative environmental and health effects of unsustainable polluting companies. It is also unfair to the company that may spend more to produce sustainable products, and may be unable to meet a competitor selling a cheaper product that hurts nature and people. To the extent

we can quantify real world externalized costs we may be able to use that information to reduce pollution dramatically.

AIR QUALITY

Petroleum accounts for more than 99 percent of all transportation fuel used in California and is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. What steps, if any, do you think the state should take to achieve greater use of cleaner alternative fuels?

AB 493 was a clever attempt to combine discount incentives, with surcharges on the dirtiest vehicles. Hopefully it can be retooled to avoid veto. AB 1012 designated 50% of vehicles by 2020 as well as requiring gas stations to offer alternative fuels. SB 757 was vetoed. State agencies should be supporting the alternative fuels market in purchase and use, rather than pretending to do so and then using exclusively petroleum as the Governor's administration was caught doing. In my role as a member of the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency I have already raised these concerns and would do so strongly at the state level. In addition to alternative fuels, we should promote alternative transportation options (and land use policies that support these options) such as bicycling and walking.

TOXICS

What steps should the state take to cause manufacturers to produce products with the least amount of toxic content?

Bills like AB 558 and that get us information on what hazardous chemicals are in use are a good step. We need to address this in the workplace as well as at home and school. We should restrict products that have toxic content when alternatives are available. The states also needs an environmental preferential purchasing policy. In the City of Berkeley...

The California Air Resources Board's proposed Environmental Justice Guidelines encourage and, in some cases, require local land use decision-makers and air districts to take into account cumulative emissions, exposure and health risks in permitting, planning and other land use decisions. How will implementation of this policy impact your district?

I hope that implementation of these guidelines will make more information available, and help decision makers think more about impacts on minority and low-income communities. While having guidelines is a step forward, most likely there will only be small positive impacts until there is legislation seriously requiring consideration of these important issues.

What do you consider to be the biggest problem in the area of toxics in your district, and what do you propose to do about it?

Supporting low income communities in addressing the impact of corporations such as Chevron on the health and safety of the surrounding neighborhood.

ENERGY

2007 saw many legislators introducing bills to mandate green building standards for government buildings. Such standards can dramatically increase energy efficiency and lower costs over time. As yet, there is no state mandate for applying green building standards to private construction either commercial or residential. What is your view?

Government buildings should live up to very high green building standards. I personally would like to see commercial AND residential green building standards, AB 888 was a good proposal to start with commercial construction but it was vetoed.

What else should California do to insure a stable supply of electricity?

Increase conservation for residential buildings, including apartments.

Increase conservation for commercial buildings and agriculture.

Increase solar, wind, geothermal and biomass.

Berkeley has begun the process of finding a way to loan people the money to convert their homes to solar energy. I think this is a good example of what we could do on the state if not the national level.

LAND USE

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in California. The state has taken steps to require cleaner fuels and vehicles, but land use patterns that lead to urban sprawl, high vehicle miles traveled and traffic congestion also have been cited as contributing to global warming. Do you believe the state should encourage different land use practices to promote more compact development and reduce vehicle miles traveled? Would you support financial and regulatory incentives for local governments to adopt land use policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Please explain.

YES. As a member of numerous regional transportation committees, including ACTA, ACTIA, and ACCMA, I have been an outspoken supporter of linking land use and transportation, and creating financial incentives to that end. Every year for ten years, I have participated in TALC's events to keep informed on state and local efforts. Transit-oriented development and improved jobs/housing balance are central to both my City and County roles and would continue to be so at the state level.

When I first advocated for a retreat topic to cover these issues at the CMA eight years ago, there was some opposition and significant doubts. Within a few years we were getting unanimous votes for baby steps in this direction. I support state bills such as SB375 to create preferred growth plans and help cities plan more transit options. Vehicle miles traveled can also be reduced by allowing workers to work at home and having child care close to employment centers.

Financial incentives also need to address affordable housing to be truly effective. I have succeeded at getting up to a million dollars annually from the City General Fund for affordable housing, and we are close to getting a great federal Affordable Housing Trust Fund established.

TRANSPORTATION

California's traffic situation and our transportation infrastructure are degrading year by year. However, public transit faces budgetary shortfalls year after year. A rapidly expanding population and California's chronic budget deficits only make the problem worse. What is your plan to deal with California's public transit needs?

I have been a leader in efforts to meet transit needs at the local level. I actively encouraged students to start the Class Pass Program against UC management's opposition. I wrote the proposal to start the Eco-Pass for city employees, against City management's opposition. I worked with a coalition to get an employee pass for UC employees. As a member of the San Pablo Policy Area Committee, I worked on the creation of the San Pablo Rapid Bus. I advocated for expanding the area covered to include Contra Costa County. As a member of the A.C. Transit Berkeley, Oakland, San Leandro Policy Area Committee, I helped create the Rapid Bus and am still trying to get an ecological and economical BRT implemented. At the Plans and Programs Committee for several years, and at the Planning Area Committee I have been a vigorous and successful advocate for increased transit funding.

At the state level, I already lobbied strenuously against the Governor's transit cuts, and testified at the Assembly Committee hearing against them. I will continue to fight for T.O.D. incentives that give transit more riders. I will prioritize dedicated revenue streams for transit operational and maintenance funds.

There are a host of funding and pricing mechanisms that can generate funding to pay for alternative transit options and to create disincentives to driving, such as indexing the gas tax to inflation, pay-as-you-go insurance, vehicle license fees, etc. What is your position on using pricing to support and provide incentives for transit alternatives?

I support pricing as a tool to fund and encourage transit use. I prefer not to call it a "disincentive to driving" but rather a way for vehicles to pay for some of the congestion and pollution they cause. I would change the name of the gas tax to a "Petroleum Pollution fee" or a "Greenhouse Gas fee". Convincing employers to fund Eco-passes for their own employees is one effective mechanism, which reduces parking needed, and increases worker job satisfaction. On the local level, we have increased parking ticket fees and parking meter rates (with the Chamber of Commerce's support!) because the increased revenue was for a commonly agreed-upon purpose.

Please describe the transportation issues of concern in your district. What would you do to address these as a State Legislator?

Insufficient transit, goods movement, and freeway congestion. I will fight to prioritize transit on the state level just like I have on the local level. Our district is very transit-dependent, with many riders regularly using buses, BART, and ferries. That is why I have worked so hard and succeeded in increasing transit funding to our region. I support SB 974, a valuable tool to help attain funds to address the safety of port truck drivers, the surrounding neighborhood, and the ports themselves. Creating transit alternatives is top priority but I will continue to work to ameliorate the commute delays as well.

WATER

According to climatologists and water experts, Global Warming is expected to diminish snow pack in the Sierra causing a major impact on California's water supply. Expected earlier melting of mountain snows and more moisture falling as rain require that California increase its ability to store water to insure an adequate supply for agricultural and urban users. The Governor has proposed increasing surface storage capacity (building more dams) while others advocate increasing water conservation measures and increasing use of existing underground storage (natural aquifers) to meet California's needs. What is your understanding of the monetary costs associated with each of the proposed solutions? What is your view of the environmental impacts?

Dams are bad for the environment and bad for the budget. Conservation is much more economically and ecologically sensible. Water recycling is another valuable tool. Groundwater storage is central to long term plans. SB 820 and SB 1640 provided for increased reporting on groundwater usage to help us plan better. Unfortunately, both were vetoed. Nonetheless, some combination of these three tools offers the most promising possibilities for environmentally and economically sound water planning.

Hundreds of California's water bodies have been identified as being "impaired" under the Clean Water Act, or so contaminated that the pollution has eliminated some former uses of the waters (such as drinking, fishing or swimming). Runoff from farms, pastures, timberland, factories and cities adds toxic chemicals and disease-causing organisms to our state's waters, including drinking water sources. What polluted runoff and storm-water policies or programs would you support to restore both the health of our water bodies and protect drinking water quality?

Allowing local communities the possibility to raise funds to address or prevent these problems, has been proposed for coastal communities, and vetoed. Perhaps we could bring that back at a lower dollar amount and try again. Applying the precautionary principle we would also seek to find ways to stop the urban runoff by having effective clean water (street sweeping) programs. In rural areas a high priority would be to focus on limiting pesticides in the storm water.

SOLID WASTE/RECYCLING

Take-out food packaging, much of it plastic or styrofoam, is a large portion of litter and non-recyclable solid waste. The fast food sector alone generates about 4 million tons of food packaging waste in California annually. Up to 80% of all marine debris is plastic, and 80% is land-based, meaning human litter and solid waste is a major source of marine pollution. To address this litter and marine pollution problem, would you support legislation requiring that take-out food packaging from fast food restaurants be compostable or recyclable?

YES, I support AB 904 which would protect our coastline and our wildlife precisely by requiring that take-out food packaging from fast food restaurants be compostable or recyclable. I stood up to the plastics industry at the City Council level and received an environmental award for doing so. I would continue to do so at the state level, (even without any awards).

While we are talking about recycling, I am working hard to expand residential recycling programs in multi-unit buildings, and establishing effective recycling at public events. At the state level we need to find ways to place responsibility for product and packaging waste on the manufacturer. Construction and demolition waste plans offer a giant potential for increasing recycling opportunities. I sponsored the Zero Waste Ordinance for Berkeley, and would seek to create a model Zero Waste facility in the state of California (If New Zealand can do it, so can we).

FORESTRY & FISHERIES

On California's North Coast, salmon populations have plummeted to just 1% of their historic numbers. This decline has been directly linked to logging and water diversions. How would you restore wild salmon populations?

Since the local Congressperson has made this a major federal issue, there is a good chance for significant improvements in this particular location. On the state level, AB 1032 would have protected some salmon from suction dredge gold mining but it was another veto victim.

Since California became a state in 1850, over 95% of our old growth forests have been cut. Are you concerned about the logging of the remaining old growth trees in the state that are on private lands and, if so, what do you believe is an appropriate state response?

Yes, I am concerned about logging old growth trees. California should do whatever we legally can do to protect old growth trees, including but not limited to negotiating with the private land owners, and restricting or prohibiting certain kinds of destructive logging practices. I sponsored the City of Berkeley resolution to oppose logging of old growth trees, as part of a state wide coalition. I also sponsored the Headwaters resolution.

COASTAL/MARINE

The legislature established the Coastal Commission as a permanent land use regulation agency governing the coastal zone in coordination with local governments along the coast. Development pressure on the limited resources of the coast continues to increase, requiring tough decisions on controversial development proposals. What do you believe have been the strengths and weaknesses of the Coastal Commission with particular regard to its mandate to protect coastal resources and ensure public access? What qualifications do you believe potential commissioners should have to be appointed to the Commission? What do you think are the most important challenges facing coastal protection, and how would you suggest they be dealt with?

Over the years there have been problems with lack of ex parte disclosure on the part of certain Coastal commissioners. AB 771 would have required standard disclosure, but was vetoed in 2005.

CHEMICALS POLICY

Every year thousands of synthetic chemicals are introduced into the environment through their use in a wide range of products from cosmetics to carpets. Some of these chemicals have been identified by the state as known to cause cancer or birth defects. Some environmental and public health advocates argue that chemicals known to cause cancer and birth defects should not be used in products if safer alternatives are available, while industry representatives claim the use of these chemicals should be allowed unless they are proven to be unsafe at the levels used in products. Where do you stand? Should chemicals known to cause cancer or birth defects be banned in products if safer alternatives are available, regardless of the amount used in the products?

I sponsored the Precautionary Principle Ordinance, and the Stop Cancer Where It Starts Resolution, for the City of Berkeley. Those principles would suggest that we play it safe and use chemicals that are not in question when they are available. I would follow the precedent set by Assembly member Wilma Chan's series of environmental health bills such as AB 1953 which targeted lead and won, and AB 319 which targeted bisphenol A and lost, (but which came back this year and won).

WILDLIFE

California has more endangered species than any other state on the continent. The most pressing danger to our wildlife and plant species is the loss of land due to the state's rapid growth. The California Endangered Species Act and Natural Communities Conservation Planning Act are California's main laws intended to protect declining wildlife populations and their habitats. What is your opinion of how these laws are working? If you believe that these laws need to be changed, please explain.

They are somewhat helpful. They need to be strengthened significantly. It is important to maximize coordination with land use planning to provide as much protection of wildlife populations as we can.

Californians spend billions of dollars on outdoor activities, including wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing. Yet, California spends comparatively few dollars to protect wildlife, particularly through its state agencies such as the Department of Fish and Game. While bond dollars have been critical to continue land acquisition and easements, California continues to fall further behind in funding data-gathering, mapping, research, land management, and fish and game staff. How do you propose that California step up its efforts to fund these necessary components to natural resource conservation?

Before we figure out ways to increase funds, we need to defeat the wrongheaded 20% cuts that would drastically impact our parks. Tax and fee increases need to be part of the solution. Parks are also threatened by multiple development proposals – like casinos that could severely undermine what kind of parks we have. On a local level, I have strongly supported parks and helped to get parks the funds and staff they need. I would continue that energy and enthusiasm on the state level.

The California Endangered Species Act (CESA) is the primary vehicle for protection of California's rarest species. However, despite the fact that plants are central to effective science-based conservation of our natural heritage, there is some confusion surrounding the legal requirements for protection for state listed plants. This confusion is largely due to a 1977 law, the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA). This law, despite its name, allowed destruction of, rather than protection for, plants. The NPPA remains on the books, although the legislature clearly intended to replace this obsolete law when it created the CESA in 1984 and updated it in 1997. What, if any, concerns might you have about changing California law to clarify protection levels for threatened and endangered plants?

My primary concern about proposing to update the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) at this time is that it might be vetoed. If it is, a defeat could be interpreted to misuse the law more than now. After we get a new Governor, this seems like a likely candidate to be fixed, but I would rely on environmental groups' advice, since this subject is totally new to me. It is not new to me that we need to protect trees and plants just as strongly as we protect creatures, because plants are an essential component of our ecosystem.

As California's population continues to grow, development is pushing further outward onto farm, ranchland and wildlife habitat. One of the best ways to protect these important natural resource areas is to know where these areas exist. Current land use planning and regional blueprint planning processes are based on a limited understanding of where the important lands exist. Do you believe that the state should take a leadership role in procuring and producing this biological information for use by state agencies and local governments? If so, would you be willing to support directing funding so the state can map areas such as key habitat area, wildlife corridors, and vegetation types? Would you be willing to support mandating requirements that such information must be used as it becomes available in land use planning?

YES, the state should take a leadership role in providing biological information. Of course I support AB 828 which would have provided important information on wildlife corridors and natural habitat, except that it was vetoed. YES, I support getting environmental information considered in land use planning since that is vital to good decisions.

While we must be active in directing development to urban areas and away from open space and farmland, we must be very careful not to be tricked by the deceptively labeled “ California Property Owners and Farmland Protection Act” put forth by the Howard Jarvis group. This dangerous initiative threatens environmental policy in many ways, not the least of which is the confusion and litigation that may ensue. Masked as an eminent domain reform it might be used against many environmental policies. I have been an active opponent of this initiative and am working to build coalitions with others who feel threatened by this as well. Also through the League of California Cities, we have created an alternative measure seeking to be on the ballot at the same time (June).

CAMPAIGN

What issues do you intend to emphasize in this election in order of their importance to your campaign?

Education, Environment, Health care, Labor, and Diversity

Who are your major individual and group supporters?

Machinists Local 1546, Equality California, and Progressive Democrats of the East Bay

Very few organizations in general have endorsed so far.

Please provide a list of endorsements.