

*Diane Papan
Assembly District 21
Jan. 26, 2024 Zoom 11 AM*

Summary of League of Women Voters 2024 Legislative Interview

Question 1: What can we learn about open meetings from the pandemic?

Overall, Asm Papan feels that virtual meeting participation offers an opportunity for people who might not otherwise be able to participate or serve in government (disabled persons, older adults, and young mothers, for example). She highlighted the need to balance equity participation with government transparency. In some ways, COVID was the Beta test for virtual meetings, and we survived. However, the issues around access and transparency are complicated, and the legislature needs more consensus on any additional changes to meeting policy.

Asm Papan was unaware of the League's request for a comprehensive re-evaluation of California's open meeting policy. Still, she liked the idea when asked and thought it might be a place to start building consensus.

Question 2: What legislation would you introduce or support to mitigate the health effects of climate change, particularly air pollution and extreme heat?

Asm Papan spoke about several issues related to climate change, which is one of her legislative priorities. Beyond lowering greenhouse gas emissions, Asm Papan is

focused on building resilience, whether it is the effects of rising sea levels, drought, groundwater, air quality, or other impacts of climate change.

Air

Asm Papan sees promise in new technologies for carbon extraction under development by local companies such as Ebb Carbon (Burlingame) or Charm Industrial (San Francisco). For example, Charm converts biomass into a liquid pumped deep underground.

Furthermore, as a member of the Port Committee, Asm Papan is aware of the impact of idling trucks at seaports on local air quality. She supports hydrogen as an alternative to electricity for industrial trucking due to the potential limitations of battery technology. In addition, she is looking into several options to reduce the ill effects of truck emissions, including offshore wind turbines.

Heat

Asm Papan recognized heat as a serious health threat. In particular, she mentioned the urban heat effect and her support for initiatives like rooftop planting and green schools to help mitigate extreme heat in public schools.

Water

Asm Papan is the chair of the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife where climate change and health intersect. One idea for a bill she is considering is for smaller sewage treatment plants using uphill topography. This might lead to cheaper water recycling for gray water usage.

In general, Asm Papan understands California's climate mandates and sees climate resilience as a priority. However, she is mindful of the state's looming budget gap and limited ability to take on additional debt through bond measures. Protecting needed spending for climate measures might require hard choices in the coming budget cycle.

12. Question 3: Housing underproduction has been identified as one of the most significant problems facing California today. How do we make substantial progress to increase housing and decrease homelessness?

Considering homelessness separate from housing affordability, Asm Papan is in favor of Proposition 1 on the March ballot to bring back housing and treatment for the mentally ill. She believes targeted housing money for the unhoused is long overdue.

Regarding housing affordability, there is no magic pill for solving the problems facing California today, and she does not believe California will reach 3.5 million new housing units by 2025. Asm Papan weighed in on many of the possible remedies outlined in the question:

Roll back property zoning or land-use regulation.	Asm Papan pointed out that in the last 30 years, only one building permit was denied in San Mateo; local governments may be getting a bum rap on this issue.
Financial bond measures for local communities.	There are many bills focused on helping local entities increase low-income housing. However, bond funding constraints (see above) limit how much can be done through bond measures. At this moment, high-interest rates are the greatest drag on these projects. She highlighted a project approved four years ago that still needs to break ground due to high-interest rates.
Increased reduction of CEQA by the Legislature.	Not covered in the interview
State-funded fees for builders of low- and moderate-income housing.	Budget constraints limit what can be accomplished through state financing. However, Asm Papan is open to creative ideas to support affordable housing, such as working to streamline and unify financial objectives across diverse private funding sources or providing state backing on loans
State-funded grants to communities to reduce the time delay in granting building permits.	Not covered in the interview.

Asm Papan did support increasing the housing inclusionary requirement so that 20% of new residential units must be sold or rented to lower-income residents. However, this can affect developer financing. It's a tricky balance and may not work for all situations.

Beyond housing, Asm Papan considers herself a voice for the working poor. For example, she opposes raising revenue to deal with transportation issues through fees paid by drivers. Asm Papan opposed raising bridge tolls because these fees adversely affect working families.

Question 4: What other major issues do you think the legislature must deal with in 2024? What are your personal priorities?

Asm Papan's priorities are water issues, childcare and support for working families.

Water

California either has too much or too little water. Climate change has put our backs against the wall, making water management an urgent need.

As chair of the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife, Asm Papan intends to hold regional water boards accountable for abatement work to be funded by fines and penalties paid by water quality violators.

Childcare and support for the working poor

Asm Papan supports increased reimbursement for childcare. She noted that 80% of California childcare providers are over 70 and do not have retirement benefits. She sees current reimbursement rates as untenable for our state's childcare needs.

Although Gov. Newsom did not approve Asm Papan's proposed improvements to Paid Family Leave this remains a priority for future consideration.

Other Priorities.

Asm Papan supports the Teacher Housing Bond and will work with county school associations to move it forward.

Asm Papan introduced a bill to remove forever chemicals from menstrual products. The Governor refused to sign it because it was an "orphan" bill with no enforcement mechanism. Asm Papan plans to bring the bill back.

Local League Question(s) related to issues of particular local concern. This is entirely optional, but you are welcome to include a question related to local issues.

14. Question 5: Local Issues

The Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA) has proposed a bond measure for significantly more funding than is currently available to each Bay Area county. BAHFA focuses on affordable housing, building new and retaining existing units... but “affordable” is still a broad category. What’s needed is to provide for the lowest level, in our affluent county. Do you have a position on this proposed bond, and/or suggestions about how to edit it?

Asm Papan acknowledged the need and challenges of addressing the housing crisis in the Bay Area. She has yet to take a public position on the draft bond measure and would like to see more developed language before weighing in. She is not ruling out supporting it but she is taking a wait and see position until the final draft is ready and there is more clarity on financing.