

Questionnaire for Candidates Seeking Alameda County Democratic Central Committee

BASIC CANDIDATE INFORMATION

1. Name as it will appear on the ballot: Marge Atkinson
2. Office sought (include office, jurisdiction, position/district number) AD 14 Democratic Central Committee
3. What is your current occupation or elected office? Albany City Council Member
4. Are you the incumbent? No
5. How long have you resided in this district and city? 33 years.

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Campaign Name:	Marge Atkinson
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STATEMENT

Please provide a statement describing why are you are running, what you hope to do, and any significant accomplishments you have achieved. Please limit your statement to 250 words or less.

I was encouraged to run for the AD 14 by Karen Weinstein, who is a current AD 14 member who has chosen not to run for re-election. I am ready to get involved in the Democratic Party apparatus in a more formal way. I have been involved promoting and campaigning for democrats in the past in many elections on the local level. I have been a precinct captain for half of Albany in the last major elections and during the 2000 and 2004 campaigns I traveled to Nevada to work with election workers and do GOTV. After the miserable years of the Bush administration and failure of that regime to support the people and true democracy I wanted to become more involved and make a difference and I ended up running for office in my own city. So, they say all politics is local, and in many ways that is correct. Being a city council member is only one step above the electorate and you have a direct effect and consequence in the community. But, on a bigger scale of what happens in this country, the effect of the State and Federal Government trumps what happens to us. To me the only way to change some of the really bad things that I see happening on a state and national level, like the influence of big business and destroying of what I consider basic individual rights, is to get involved in the democratic party, to work from the inside of the structure that is presently in place to effect the changes I want to see.

Politically, my claim to fame has to be the inordinate amount of time I have spent phone banking and organizing for campaigns in my community for school bond issues, UDC candidates, and democratic candidates. In my own campaign I had to combat a well-funded outside source that backed the big business candidates, but our grass-roots campaign persevered.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR YOUTH

Please describe in detail at least three of your accomplishments that have improved the lives of young people. These examples should illustrate skills and capabilities that apply to the office you are seeking. These accomplishments may have occurred at any time in your personal, professional, or public life.

1) I have been a high school teacher at Albany High for many years and strived everyday in the classroom to work with students in a caring, respectful, and meaningful way. Being a teacher means that every day is a new day to try to make a difference not only in the classroom but in the way you manage your students activities. Every day is a new day to try and work with a broad range of students and an effort to encourage the motivated and reach the ones who are more of a challenge.

2) I was secretary in the Counseling Office at Albany High School and I had a young student who kept coming into the office to help me with my menial tasks. This continued for a couple of years until this student was a senior. At the beginning of his senior year, it came to my attention that he did not have any place to live and had been freeloading off his high school buddies for room and board. I went home and discussed his situation with my husband and son and we agreed that we would take him in for the remainder of his senior year. The basic tenet for this arrangement was that he would have to study to the best of his ability and get at least a C grade point average, and we would pay all the expenses. He became our "foster son" and ended up going into the Air Force Academy and graduating in engineering. He still calls us Mom and Dad and has himself become a mentor to young people.

3) Because of having been a teacher and now being on the city council, I feel I have a unique role to play in promoting the communication between these two very important and dominant entities in our small city. It has been pretty traditional that the school district and the city did not talk to each other and did not work closely with each other for the benefit of the community. It was pretty much you do your thing and we'll do ours. One of my goals was to foster a better two-way communication between the schools and the city. For example, there was an incident between the police and an AHS student last year. The student and family thought the incident was racial

in nature. The police thought they were doing their job according to the book. It was not going well. Teachers, students and administrators were starting to get heated, taking sides and distorting the incident. I saw the potential for a poor outcome between the students and the police. The city has spent years trying to get past its historical reputation of the police being racist, and I thought this could ruin those efforts. I went to the city administrator and the police chief and insisted that they make an immediate meeting with the high school principal and figure out a way to address the students' concerns. The police chief at first did not think this was that important. But, I insisted that if he was police chief of the city, he was also police chief of the high school, an important part of our community, and it was his duty to see that he created a pathway to communication now, or he would be sorry later. He ended up holding many meetings with the students, administrators and his staff to foster better communication with the high school students and admitted that sometimes he and his officers need to think about perception of the students and not just the officer's idea of reality.

EXPERIENCE

Please list or describe your current and past activities in the community in which you have acquired skills that relate to the office you seek. Include your role in the activity and the year(s) in which you were involved. Involvement consists of many areas such as family, neighborhood, community, employment, or public life.

A teacher has to be very organized or the job is overwhelming. It is a stressful job, trying to teach, in my case, up to 150 students a week, and then dealing with papers, preparation, and then the parents, to say nothing of the many meetings that you need to attend. I have always felt that although you have to teach your subject at high school, the classroom and interactions are so much more than that and being a secure, solid, dependable role model for students is almost as important a job as teaching your subject. I have been to countless games, musicals, recitals and plays because a student wanted me to see them perform. I have stayed during lunch or after school so a student could get extra help or talk. I have tried to find out what makes a student tick when he or she seems unreachable. Sometimes you know if it worked, sometimes they come back later and tell you, but mostly you hope you make a difference in a positive way.

As an Albany Council Member for the last three plus years I have participated in trying to make the City of Albany a better place. Sometimes that takes the form of voting on measures that promote walking and biking, supporting climate change actions or making sure the public is informed and included in government actions. Other times there are ways that I work behind the scenes that have been very successful. One example, already mentioned, is the bringing together of the city and school district staff to collaboratively work together on citywide issues. Another was the idea of buying a house for sale next to the Senior Center that I promoted. Now we have preliminary specs for an expanded center that everybody is excited about. Additionally, there are small suggestions about changes of procedures or organization that I have made that affect the city positively. I also asked for the creation of an Economic task force to promote a business friendly atmosphere and streamline some paperwork to make it easier to do business in Albany.

I have been very active in the Unions I have been a member in. I was president of the CSEA union when I was a school secretary. As a teacher I was a union rep for the Albany Teachers Association and held every office except president.

I have also served as Department Chair of the AHS Language Department and as a mentor teacher for the BTSA program for new teachers and as a mentor teacher for student teachers. Currently I am a tutor for the WriterCoach Connection at Albany Middle, which is a mentor program to help students with their writing in English and History.