



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

1015 18th Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C., 20036 | 202-349-1498 | www.CaribbeanPac.org

Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC) Montgomery County, Maryland – 2018 Candidate Questionnaire

*Please return the completed form via email to cpac.dmv@gmail.com by Friday, April 13, 2018.
Responses will be shared with C-PAC’s membership.*

Office Sought: Montgomery County Executive
Candidate’s Name: George Leventhal, PhD
Current Occupation: Montgomery County Councilmember
Party: Democrat
Campaign contact information (Address, Phone, Fax, Email, Website):
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1. Please explain your plan or approach to improve agency responsiveness, outreach, and the quality of the Montgomery County’s constituent services.

Working on U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski’s staff for five years, including as her legislative director, I learned that the top priority for an elected official is constituent service. Senator Mikulski believed, as do I, that every communication, every call, letter and email, deserves a response. As a County Councilmember I make it a point to respond to each email and phone call. My office has a reputation for being the most responsive council office, and I am the councilmember who gets your pothole fixed, your streetlight working, your street plowed.

As County Executive, I will promote a culture of customer service. I will lead a government that works for the taxpayer and makes every effort to satisfactorily solve problems. I am not running as the outsider, I’m running as the experienced progressive who knows the mission of every agency and department, who knows how to build a coalition, who knows how to get work done.

2. Are there any legislative or policy proposals, which you support that would strengthen the opportunities and rights of Caribbean immigrants in Montgomery County?

Language proficiency will be the hallmark of my service as County Executive. I will make sure that services are delivered to residents in the languages the residents can understand, so they can get the benefit. I will also work closely with our school system to improve foreign language education so that we are graduating a workforce that can compete in the global marketplace. I’d like to provide higher education scholarships for Montgomery County students with language skills in return for a commitment to come back and work in the county in fields that require language ability – including as county teachers, law enforcement officers, health care providers, and social workers.



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3. What do you intend to do to strengthen small business access to government contracts?

As a County Councilmember, I initiated the legislation that created Montgomery County's Local Small Business Reserve. I also added language to the law creating the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) requiring the corporation to assist minority, female and disabled-owned business enterprises. As a result of my language in the MCEDC's authorizing legislation, Daniel Parra was hired by MCEDC as Director of Small and Minority Business Development. Martin Mayorga has endorsed me for Montgomery County Executive, saying I'm the only elected official in the county who has ever asked him how the county can help him. If elected County Executive, I will ensure fair contracting opportunities for small businesses with county government, advocate for local businesses adversely affected by county projects and establish a Small Business Advisory Group.

4. What policies will you support to address the challenges facing DREAMers, the administration's suspension of temporary protective status for many County residents, and the threats facing sanctuary communities?

I was the sponsor of the recent County Council resolution calling on the administration and Congress to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and provide a permanent path to citizenship for TPS and DACA participants

(http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/res/2017/20171212_18-991.pdf).

I am supporting a special appropriation to the Capital Area Immigrants Rights (CAIR) Coalition to provide legal representation to county residents facing deportation proceedings. I am the only candidate for County Executive who speaks Spanish, and I will continue to reassure our residents that they may avail themselves of county services without fear that they will be turned over to federal immigration authorities.

5. How will you support the viability and competitiveness of the Maryland's small, minority, veteran, women, and especially Caribbean-owned business?

See answer to question 3.

6. The Caribbean is a strong trading partner with the U.S., and there are opportunities to create economic benefits for both Maryland and Caribbean residents. How do you support strengthening business, social and cultural relations and exchanges between County residents and the Caribbean?

We should be building bridges, not walls, between the United States and our neighbors in the Caribbean and Latin America. Montgomery County is uniquely positioned to compete in the global economy because of the demographics and language skills of our population. I will seek opportunities for cultural and commercial exchanges between our county and nations from which a large portion of our residents originate.

7. What specific actions have you taken or will you take to support the Caribbean-American community in the Montgomery County?



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As mentioned above, I have been a leading champion of minority contracting opportunities, and for protecting the rights of immigrants. The Caribbean-American community has not been highly organized politically to date, and I'm not aware that it has approached me for help, although I would welcome dialogue with the community to see how we can work together.

8. Over 3,000 children of immigrants enter Maryland schools every year. Many of them are children of color with cultural idiosyncrasies and language accents or differences, which earn them labels such as "troublesome" or as having ADHD or other disorders. Still others end up in the juvenile justice system. What are your plans to ensure that we have a cadre of well-trained, culturally competent and sensitive teachers who understand and are willing to help these children succeed in school?

Education is the top priority in the county's budget, and will remain the top priority under my administration. In addition to prioritizing funds for education, I will prioritize my time for education. As County Executive, I will be a frequent and persuasive presence in Annapolis, advocating on behalf of our schools, student and teachers, and making sure that the Governor, Senate and House leadership, and members of the General Assembly fully understand our needs, brought on by a rising student population, changing demographics, immigration and pockets of poverty. I have decades of good and close relationships with legislators, and will work to build coalitions with other counties.

The issue of de facto segregation in our schools is too important for our future for the next County Executive to take a hands-off approach. As County Executive, I will ensure that our schools provide opportunities for every family in our community regardless of race, income, or zip code. For too long, we have failed to address the fact that outcomes for Black and brown kids are deeply inequitable, as compared to outcomes for white and Asian American kids, and that access to the programs that can change kids' lives and trajectories are concentrated among families that already have the most resources. It's a disgrace that in our community, where we express progressive values and promote diversity and inclusion, that we would tolerate schools where segregation by race and income is increasing (<https://ggwash.org/view/31601/de-facto-segregation-threatens-montgomery-public-schools>).

As County Executive, I will pursue radical inclusion when it comes to our public schools. I will push the school system to expand choice and language programs at sites throughout our county, and seek to ensure that any child who wants to pursue rigorous coursework can do so at any school available. We must stop the practice of rationing access to rigor based on the number of seats available, which gives even more advantages to high-income and well-off families who understand and are familiar with the system. We need to push our school board to review school boundaries holistically, instead of taking a piecemeal approach that pits cluster against cluster. It is an inefficient use of scarce resources to build additional schools for well-off clusters that are overcrowded when we have schools in other clusters that are undercapacity (<http://www.justupthepike.com/2014/04/montgomery-county-schools-are.html>).

We also need to promote equity in our housing policies, and enable people and families of all means, including teachers, police officers and others, to live in every neighborhood in our county. As a councilmember, I have consistently been willing to make the tough votes in favor of affordable



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housing, including in well-to-do areas of the county (<https://ggwash.org/view/64238/montgomery-county-says-bethesda-neighbors-are-more-important-than-affordabl>), a practice that one study of our county found promotes academic success (<https://tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-Schwartz.pdf>).

I will also direct county resources to support wraparound services and opportunities before and after school for the families that need them most. That includes fighting for an expansion of prekindergarten, with universal prekindergarten for every family in our county as a top priority. Only by investing in every child can we end the shame of racial segregation and provide them chances that will ultimately secure our county's future.

I understand the disparities in special education referenced in the question, and will consistently work to ensure equal and fair outcomes for all students.

9. What initiatives will you champion or support to strengthen services and programs for Montgomery County's senior citizens?

-support the expansion of Senior Villages, a successful development in our County. In FY-13 the Council created the Senior Village Coordinator position. The Village coordinator provides technical, planning and outreach assistance to develop new "villages" throughout the County where seniors can age in place with supportive services that meet their needs.

- seek additional opportunities to provide more affordable housing for seniors and all residents with middle and lower incomes. I strongly supported a 149 unit mixed income senior living apartment, The Bonifant, which is a joint venture between Montgomery Housing Partnership and Donohoe Development.

- see that the County continues to improve conditions for all residents to age and thrive in our community.

-examine having small buses or vans that circulate into cul-de-sac neighborhoods to take people to recreation/senior centers, shopping and medical office buildings .

- create special routes for special transportation that operates only between 9-3 (like ride-ons for reduced senior fares) but helping those who can't walk to a bus stop which are usually ½ mile away.

-survey to identify areas such as in Cabin John, for example, where ride-ons don't even run after 9 am or before 3 pm.

-ensure full funding for senior transportation assistance.

-expand the current rebate on property taxes to help low middle income residents who also need it - consider a new proposal to lower property taxes to people 80 years of age or older who have lived in their homes for 40 years or more and have incomes under \$150,000 to encourages people to stay in their homes as they age.



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-continue to promote the Design for Life Property Tax Credit for Accessibility Features legislation, which I introduced, which provides tax credits for home improvements that allow seniors to remain in their homes.

-ensure full funding for the senior care assistance program which helps residents by supplementing the costs of Adult Day Care, medications and other possible needs not covered by other resources. The county also offers a senior group home subsidy, transportation assistance, and a robust senior nutrition program that provides meals in a group setting where seniors can interact and take part in activities as well as obtain other services.

- provide in-home medical care instead of expensive assisted living with mobile health units each with a doctor and nurse for regular, even daily if needed, visits to homebound adults over 65 coupled with a county-wide long-term care insurance or assistance program to help pay for in-home care.

10. What issues are you most concerned about in your run for political office?

--High quality education - Our schools should provide opportunities for every family in our community regardless of race, income or zip code. We must stop the practice of rationing access to rigor based on the number of seats available. We need increased funds for facilities to accommodate our growing student population, reduced class size for improved learning, and improved supports for our teachers to ensure our schools remain some of the best in the nation. We also need to provide universal pre-kindergarten to make sure our youngest learners are ready for kindergarten. For our graduates, I would offer a free tuition at a Maryland college or university in exchange for five years of work in Montgomery County.

--Universal health care - Access to healthcare is a right, not a privilege. One of my proudest achievements as a county councilmember is the establishment of the Montgomery Cares program, a network of community clinics that this year will provide 70,000 doctor visits to patients without health insurance. With the Affordable Care Act under attack, it is more important than ever to maintain access to care for all members of our community.

--Immigration and protecting those residents who are threatened by President Trump's efforts to intimidate and victimize them.