



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) District of Columbia – 2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Please return the completed form via email to cpac.dmv@gmail.com by Friday, April 20, 2018. Responses will be shared with C-PAC’s membership.

Office Sought: Attorney General

Candidate’s Name: Karl Racine

Current Occupation: Attorney General

Party Affiliation: Democrat

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1. Please explain your plan or approach to improve agency responsiveness and the quality of the District’s constituent services.

As the District of Columbia’s first elected Attorney General, I have built an independent office that serves residents and protects the public interest. Since my election in 2014, I have worked to connect the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to the community and make the agency more accessible and responsive to residents’ needs and concerns.

I created a Community Engagement team to directly respond to constituents concerns. In 2017 alone, the agency engaged in nearly 700 community meetings, events, and direct constituent interactions. In 2017, the office also introduced “OAG on Your Block” events, where community engagement staffers meet residents in their neighborhoods, share information about how our office can help them, and listen to concerns. In addition, OAG staff participated in events such as Educate Yourself: Resources for the D.C. Latino Community, Campaign Finance in the District of Columbia Town Hall, Violence Prevention and Interruption Town Hall, Protecting our Kids: Understanding and Preventing Human Trafficking, Financial Literacy Panel, and Family Unification: Barriers to Reentry and the Impact on Loved Ones.



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We are also working to improve the accessibility and ease of use of our services and information. Part of this involves implementing new technology. We recently launched a new, easy-to-use website for OAG as a whole, and will be launching one for our Child Support Services Division this year as well. Our Child Support Services Division also launched a mobile app that parents can use to easily access their information.

Moving forward, I plan to continue building on these successes. We are working to get more of the agency staff—not just the Community Engagement team—connected with members of the community. Right now, members of our Public Safety Division are running an anti-Truancy pilot program at Sousa Middle School, and I will encourage staff to build more of these partnerships in the future.

2. What specific actions have you initiated or will you take to support the Caribbean-American community in Washington, D.C.?

As a member of the Caribbean-American community myself, I have worked hard to support the Caribbean-American community in Washington D.C. in both my personal and professional capacities. As Attorney General, I have taken legal action to protect immigrants, and have used my bully pulpit to speak out against the removal of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) from Haitians and other groups. I also spoke out in our defense when President Trump outrageously insulted Haitians and Africans. In response to Trump's unfair and demeaning comments, I talked about my pride in my immigrant background and my love for Haiti to local and national outlets, including the New York Times and CNN. In my personal capacity, I have continued to mentor and give career advice to Caribbean-American young people, and participate in numerous events in the Caribbean-American community.

3. Unfortunately, throughout the City many Caribbean-owned businesses closed in recent years. How will you support the viability and competitiveness of the City's small, minority, veteran, women, and especially Caribbean-owned businesses?

It is critical that District leaders do whatever we can to support the viability of small, minority, veteran, and women-owned businesses. As the District's chief legal officer, I have brought legal action against businesses that fraudulently claimed to be CBEs when in reality they did not meet CBE requirements. I will continue to enforce District law and do all I can to advocate for CBEs and Caribbean-owned businesses.



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4. What policy actions would you propose or support to improve the opportunities and rights of Caribbean immigrants in the District of Columbia?

I would be interested in hearing from you about how you believe the District could improve opportunities and protect the rights of Caribbean. As Attorney General, I have been a staunch defender of the rights of all of the District's immigrant communities and have spoken frequently about my own background as a Caribbean immigrant. It is very important to me that I help to ensure that today's young immigrants have access to all of the opportunities that I had when my parents brought me to the District.

5. The City's Caribbean Community is the only immigrant community without an Office to address and support community affairs and services. Would you support the creation of such an office?

Yes.

6. How do you plan to help strengthen the Certified Business Enterprise (CBE) program since larger business take advantage of many small businesses, including Caribbean-owned ones, with whom they partner under this program?

I would be interested in learning more about this problem from you, and of course want to work to ensure that the CBE program functions as intended to support local small businesses.

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

As Attorney General, I've worked to protect DREAMers and the District's immigrant communities by standing up for DREAMers and other immigrants, joining lawsuits to protect immigrant rights, and providing guidance to the mayor and District agencies as we have worked to maintain the District's sanctuary city status and set up an immigrant justice grant fund.

Last year, I joined a coalition of 16 Attorneys General in filing a lawsuit to protect DREAMers, participants in the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program. This lawsuit is based on claims that the Trump administration's actions to rescind DACA violated the Equal Protection clause of the Constitution by discriminating against DREAMers of Mexican origin, who make up 78% of DACA recipients, violated the DREAMers' due process rights, and harmed our state's residents, institutions and economies.



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In addition, OAG provided legal guidance to D.C. schools about how to best protect and support all students and their families in a climate of heightened fears about immigration enforcement. This guidance helps ensure that students can take advantage of the opportunities education offers them without fear. This guidance also aims to answer frequently asked questions about how schools may choose to assist students and their families and how student privacy must be protected. We also provided legal advice and support to ensure that the District could set up the Immigrant Justice Legal Services Grant Program lawfully, despite threats from Congress.

As you know, the Trump administration has tried to force cities like DC to use our local police forced to enforce federal immigration laws. I know that the District is safer when all residents, regardless of their immigration status, feel free to work with law enforcement or go to the police for help. In order to protect the right of DC and other jurisdictions to remain “sanctuary jurisdictions,” where police are not compelled to enforce federal immigration law, I led a coalition of 11 state Attorneys General to defend sanctuary cities from the Trump administration’s threats to cut important public safety funding. Here, MPD does not, and will not, ask about immigration status and will not be used as a deportation force.

8. What concrete steps will you take to improve the District of Columbia’s Public School system – including facilities and equipment, teacher treatment, relationships with parents, as well as education standards and test scores in all wards of the City?

We need to make sure that all DC kids are safe in school and have opportunities to succeed. In order to improve student performance and close the achievement gap, we have to look beyond the education system and address broad family and community issues. I have long advocated for the District to fund and implement trauma-informed programs and will continue to do so. Additionally, in my role as the city’s chief juvenile prosecutor, I am primarily focused on improving our school system by breaking the school-to-prison pipeline.

As part of a broad juvenile justice reform effort, we have looked for innovative, data-driven programs that make our community safer and put young people who commit low-level offenses on a path to success. My office has significantly increased the rate at which we divert young offenders to the Alternatives to Court Experience (ACE) Diversion Program run by the DC Department of Human Services. It is an evidence-based program that aims to address the underlying problems that bring young people into contact with the justice system in the first place. ACE effectively rehabilitates young people by providing individually-tailored services, including therapy, treatment for mental health and substance abuse issues, anger management, mentoring and opportunities for enrichment. While prosecuting and jailing young low-level offenders can increase their risk of recidivism, ACE reduces that risk and helps them



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get on the right path. Of the over 2,000 young people diverted to ACE so far, about 78% have not even been re-arrested.

We have also launched a Restorative Justice Program as part of our effort to end the school-to-prison pipeline. Restorative justice is a way to resolve conflicts that focuses on repairing harm. It brings those affected by a crime together to hold offenders accountable and empower victims. Nationwide, statistics show these programs have better success at rehabilitating offenders, increasing victim satisfaction, and lowering costs. We participated in a successful pilot program at Ballou High School and subsequently hired staff to work on cases referred by our prosecutors. As far as we know, we are the first prosecutor's office to run an in-house restorative justice program. We believe that programs like this one will help make DC schools safer and make sure more children have the opportunity to learn and succeed.

9. In Washington, D.C., many seniors seek to age in their homes and/or communities. What efforts will you take to improve access of services and the quality of programs for the City's senior citizens?

I very much support seniors who choose to age in place in our community. We all benefit from diversity in our neighborhoods, including diversity in age, and it is important that we do all we can to enable seniors to stay in their homes if they choose to do so. My office has focused on keeping the District's seniors safe and financially secure so that they can enjoy their golden years without worry. Our Office of Consumer protection frequently runs educational programs to educate seniors about common types of fraud and scams and how to protect themselves, and other divisions within my office are working to guard seniors against financial exploitation and elder abuse. We are currently working on formalizing new enforcement procedures for the District's elder abuse laws along with the US Attorney's Office. These new procedures will allow my office to vigorously prosecute these types of crimes against seniors.

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

As Attorney General, I focus on using the law to improve the lives of District residents. Since my election in 2014, I have focused on establishing an independent office, reforming our juvenile justice system, preserving affordable housing, and protecting vulnerable District residents, including seniors, low-income tenants, and members of our immigrant communities. If I am elected to a second term, I will continue to build on all the excellent work my office is already doing on behalf of District residents. Moving forward, my top priorities will include reducing violence in the District, continuing to expand our public interest work into areas like civil rights



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and environmental protection, continuing to hold landlords and developers accountable, and standing up for the District and all our residents at the national level.