



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 13, 2018.
Responses will be shared with C-PAC’s membership.

Office Sought: District of Columbia Council, Ward 1

Candidate’s Name: Kent Boese

Current Occupation: Law librarian / Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1A, 2011-Present

Party: Democrat

Campaign contact information (Address, Phone, Fax, Email, Website): 608 Rock Creek Church Rd., NW, WDC 20010, 202-904-8111, boese2018@gmail.com, <http://www.boese2018.com/>

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

Having lived in Ward 1 for eleven years and served on Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1A for eight years (the last five years as ANC 1A Chair), constituent services are extremely important. While the District Council has annual oversight hearings to address agency responsiveness, I believe that responsiveness must be a daily commitment. Over the past decade, I have built strong relationships throughout District agencies and use those relationships every day to solve the problems that impact our residents most. I am committed to continuing to make constituent services a significant focus of my role as Councilmember and will hold agencies accountable every day. One successful approach I have repeatedly uses to solve problems is to invite agency staff and representatives to meet with me and neighbors in the neighborhood to examine the problems first hand and open lines of direct communication.

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

I deeply value the many different cultures that make up the soul of the District. I miss the annual Caribbean Carnival that was held on Georgia Avenue from 1993 to 2011. I live a few short blocks from Georgia Avenue and know that many neighbors loved the carnival. Not only is the annual Caribbean Carnival no longer held on Georgia Avenue, it has left the District entirely. I would welcome the opportunity to work with the Caribbean-American community to return the carnival to its origins on Georgia Avenue. This year, the Mayor’s Office helped to find funding for the Funk Parade on U



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Street. I know that funding was also an issue for the Caribbean Carnival and think that the District should similarly assist with funding for it if that is necessary.

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?

One of the areas I currently represent as an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner is Georgia Avenue, which once had a thriving Caribbean business community. It has been heartbreaking to see Brown's Caribbean Bakery and Sweet Mango Café close in recent years. Despite the loss of local favorite Caribbean businesses, I have also seen Los Hermanos in Columbia Heights thrive and new restaurants like Mi Cuba Café on Park Road and Taste of Jamaica on Georgia Avenue maintain a Caribbean influence in Ward 1. I think the actions we need to take to support and grow our Caribbean businesses should include establishing an Office of Caribbean Affairs (see below) and make our business regulations and processes faster and easier to use. I would definitely advocate for a special business liaison within DCRA that would focus on small businesses from the Caribbean and Latino community. This would lead to specialized services making business regulations easier to understand, speeding up business applications and paperwork, and assisting small businesses with grant applications that are available for façade and capital improvement projects. There are a number of grants available to small businesses, but often times business owners either don't know about them or know how to apply for them. In addition to DCRA, we need to similarly work with our community Main Streets organizations and the Department of Small and Local Business Development to make sure that we have the resources available to the Caribbean business community that they need to thrive.

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

In addition to establishing an Office of Caribbean Affairs and providing funding to expand and provide free legal services for immigrants (see below), we also need to support and provide funding for non-profits that provide education, adult education, daycare, and senior services for our immigrant community. Often, these non-profits are established and operated by members of the immigrant community who understand the challenges and are best positioned to provide the services required. One such place in Ward 1 is "The Family Place", a non-profit operating on 16th Street for 48 years and one I have supported both as an ANC Commissioner and as a donor.



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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, I would support the creation of an Office of Caribbean Affairs. Having allies in government is a good, but it cannot replace the advocacy that will only come from having a seat at the table and an Office of and for the Caribbean community.

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?

One of the chief issues with larger businesses partnering with CBEs in the District is that CBEs have become a gateway for large businesses to secure District access – but they often have not delivered the training, jobs, and expertise to CBEs we desire. I would revisit this relationship and set higher expectations for non-District businesses when they partner with CBEs. This is an opportunity for on the job training, knowledge transfer, and developing skilled labor. We should evaluate and consider if non-District businesses who fail to achieve these goals when partnering with CBEs are eligible for future opportunities when they are reviewed, or if they are subject to a short-term ban until their processes have been amended to produce the jobs and training expected.

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?

While the District cannot control the decisions made at the Federal level, we can choose to value people by not enforcing discriminatory Federal practices and focus efforts on changing the hearts and minds of Congress to do the right thing. This includes direct lobbying with Congress to include allowing the District to be the primary law enforcement agency in DC. It is unacceptable and intolerable for Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids to occur in the District and they must stop.

Where the District does have power and where it can make a difference is to help expand and provide legal resources for those needing help with their temporary protective status. Many DREAMers and immigrants may not know what legal protections exist for them, or if they have protections at all. We need to fund and expand free legal services necessary to protect our neighbors from discrimination. This includes establishing safe places where immigrants have access to the legal expertise that can establish residency and protect them and their rights in the future.



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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?

The key focus areas to improve the DC Public School system need to be:

- **Create a fair and predictable school modernization process;**
- **Empower teachers to be part of the school improvement process by freeing them from the local Hatch Act, which denies them from fully participating;**
- **Review the current IMPACT evaluation tool and overhaul it; and,**
- **Requiring school principals, and others, that disagree with Local School Advisory Team recommendations to explain why they disagree so that there can be a dialogue and an open process.**

Access to quality public education is the civil rights issue of our time. The city's achievement gap remains at an unacceptably high level. Factors leading to achievement gaps include hunger, testing and teaching methods that may not be culturally aligned to students, do not fully consider socio-economic factors, and a reliance on technology and computers for testing when children from lower income families don't have access to these tools on a regular basis. Given the constraints of the IMPACT evaluation, teachers are further hindered from providing holistic, hands-on and interactive teaching opportunities. Without the ability to meet students' social and emotional needs through emotionally safe learning communities, the achievement gap will continue to widen rather than narrow.

One part of the solution would be to address the impact of DC's local Hatch Act laws that prevent school teachers from fully participating as advocates for education. School teachers in the District of Columbia should have the same rights and privileges as any other jurisdiction in the United States. I feel even more strongly about this for DC since we are a small jurisdiction with an incredible number of talented residents and teachers. We want our brightest and most capable residents to be engaged civically, including serving in public office. Teachers must be allowed to speak freely about school conditions without fear and be allowed to run for public office and serve on the State Board of Education.

Lastly, we need to rethink our current methods of standardized testing, and create an environment where testing is more adaptable to the needs of students. Standardized testing does not strike me as currently being an instrument design to measure learning or educational success. Rather, it is being used to make decisions on school operations, whether schools should remain open, and even which teachers should get raises, be retained or terminated. This does not create an environment where education can thrive and has, at times, lead to a higher emphasis on getting students to pass the tests



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or even altering test scores to make the schools have a false appearance of success. Testing is necessary, and tests should be as standardized as possible, but testing should not be linked to anything other than measuring the individual progress of each student. The purpose of education is to teach students 1) the basic information they need to be successful in life, and 2) the ability to be a critical thinker. A successful education teaches students how to teach themselves when they encounter a subject and want to learn more. We need to instill curiosity, and how to feed that curiosity whether in the classroom or in the home.

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 have actively worked to maintain and improve services at the Bernice Fonteneau Senior Wellness Center in Ward 1 as well as assist seniors when they need dedicated reserved parking spaces do to disabilities. I've also helped make seniors aware of the Senior Citizen Homestead Deduction which every senior can receive at age 65. I would actively seek to change the senior homestead deduction, however, as the current law only allows for seniors to receive benefits from the day they apply, and many seniors are not aware of the benefit until a few years following their eligibility. I believe the benefit should be retroactive to the first year of eligibly.

I've also been mindful of providing opportunities for seniors to stay in their neighborhoods even if they are no longer able to stay in their home. In working with the development team for both The Hebrew Home building at 1125 Spring Road, the project is creating 90 senior apartments that will be at 60% AMI or lower. Similarly, the redevelopment of the Park Morton community is creating 155 apartments that will be at 60% AMI or below (including 76 apartments for seniors). I have been fighting for and alongside the residents of the Park Morton public housing complex since the Spring of 2013, and when the original redevelopment efforts faltered, I played a key role in getting the project back on track and identifying the Bruce Monroe sites as the solution for the build-first site which got the project back on track.

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

- **Housing: As local housing prices continue to rise; the District must do all it can to prevent displacement and create more housing. By not creating opportunities for new housing to be developed in our commercial corridors, and by not leveraging District-owned properties to include new housing that is available to low- and moderate-income families, we fail those most in need of housing and accelerate displacement. I don't want a single family to leave the District due to rising rents, increased taxes, and a lack of affordable housing for families making between**



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\$30,000-\$60,000 a year. Therefore, housing must be a high priority. A large part of this will be identifying underperforming public land where more housing can be accommodated. An example of this would be the Third District Police Station on V Street and Engine Company No. 9 on U Street. These properties are one- to two-stories tall in an area zoned for mixed use buildings 50 ft. tall. In essence, 3 to 4 stories could be added to each of these sites by-right, and more through a PUD process. We need to consider rebuilding public owned properties like these to both meet the existing needs of the police and fire departments as well as gain the additional floors of below market housing that District residents desperately need.

- **Jobs: No matter how much housing we build, or how affordable District housing is, no housing is “affordable” to residents who are unemployed. It is critical that we focus on maintaining and growing quality jobs that pay living wages and provide opportunities for growth. While the District has significantly improved conditions for employees, ranging from increasing the minimum wage to establishing paid family leave – it also needs to review the challenges small local businesses face. We must support our small local business community and allow them to succeed. This is particularly important because these businesses tend to hire from the neighborhoods in which they are located. Overall, while slightly more than one-quarter of all jobs in the District of Columbia are filled by DC residents, when you look at the hospitality industry the percentage goes up to 60% – and these are the jobs that are created by the type of small business that have opened in Ward 1 over the past two decades and the types of businesses that residents want. Two areas where I think we could do more for our small local businesses are:**
 - **Create a competitive environment for DC workers by establishing tax credits for District businesses that hire local. In a metropolitan area that is larger than just the District of Columbia, providing an incentive to hire locally benefits us all; and,**
 - **Reduce the regulatory burdens for small business owners operating in the District of Columbia, or who are considering it. Recently restaurateur John Andrade announced that he would focus his future enterprises in Virginia rather than the District of Columbia stating the inefficiency and regulatory delays that occur at DCRA. For the District to be competitive, we need to be in sync with our surrounding jurisdictions. Every business that closes or chooses to locate outside of DC due to regulatory burdens decreases employment opportunities for residents. We need to change that.**
- **Education: (see above) Access to quality public education is the civil rights issue of our time. The city’s achievement gap remains at an unacceptably high level. Factors leading to achievement gaps include hunger, testing and teaching methods that**



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