

JP Progressive Candidate Questionnaire

150 word maximum, no minimum. We will publish your answers in their entirety in the web version of this Candidate Survey. In the printed version, we reserve the right to edit for length, but not for meaning or intent.

(1) Budget

Next year, with federal stimulus dollars dwindling, the state may be facing a budget structural deficit of \$2 billion dollars or more. As a state legislator, how will you propose we bridge that gap? Please answer yes or no to each question, and explain your choices at the end.

REVENUE

Income tax increase?	y	n
Sales tax increase?	y	n
Gas tax increase?	y	n
Fee increases?	y	n
Eliminate, reduce or cap certain tax credits (i.e. film, life sciences, etc.)	y	n
Misc. other revenue sources (other tobacco products, candy/soda, expanding bottle bill, etc.?)	y	n
Freezing or increasing corporate tax rate?	y	n
Other?	y	n

CUTS:

Cuts to local aid?	y	n
Cuts to education funding?	y	n
Cuts to social safety net services?	y	n
Cuts to infrastructure maintenance and improvements?	y	n
Cuts to state payroll costs (i.e. layoffs, furloughs, benefit reductions, Quinn bill benefits, salary freezes, etc.). (If yes, please elaborate)?	y	n

PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR CHOICES.

(2) Expanded Gambling

Do you support expanding gambling in the Commonwealth? Why or why not? If yes, in what ways?

(3) Health Care

What are the successes, challenges, and disappointments you see stemming from the 2006 Massachusetts Health Care Reform Act? Do you have any improvements you would suggest, or areas of particular concern that need work?

(4) Immigration

During the last budget process, several anti-immigrant proposals were raised in both the House and Senate. These proposals have included costly bureaucratic measures to double-verify that no undocumented immigrant is receiving a benefit for which they are not eligible, and setting up hot-lines that would allow people to report their neighbors if they believe s/he is an illegal immigrant. Would you support proposals like these, and why or why not?

Labor/Workers Rights

(5) MINIMUM WAGE

Would you support indexing the minimum wage to inflation, so it keeps up with the cost of living? And would you also support raising the minimum wage to a level closer to an actual living wage?

(6) PAID SICK DAYS

Many workers in Massachusetts do not receive paid sick days. Would you support legislation that guarantees that all Massachusetts workers can earn paid sick days?

Criminal Justice

(7) YOUTH VIOLENCE

Given the resurgence of youth violence in the city, what specific steps do you think the Legislature should take to ensure the safety of youth in our city?

(8) MANDATORY MINIMUMS

Do you support efforts to reform our "mandatory minimum" sentencing laws for drug-related offenses? If so, what reforms would you like to see?

(9) MEDICINAL MARIJUANA

Do you support legalizing marijuana for medical purposes only? Why or why not?

Housing

(10) FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

What steps do you think the state should take to protect tenants and homeowners facing foreclosure?

(11) HOMELESSNESS

What steps do you think the state should take to prevent, reduce and ultimately eliminate homelessness?

(12) Environment

If elected, what would be your top three environmental and environmental justice priorities for the next legislative session?

Transportation

If elected, what would your transportation—and in particular public transportation—priorities be?

Education

(14) ED REFORM

Did you, or would you have if you were in office, voted for the education reform bill that was passed by the Legislature and signed into law? Why or why not?

(15) MCAS

What is your vision for how standardized tests, including the MCAS, should be used in our school systems?

(16) Women's Right to Choose:

Many states, including Massachusetts, have enacted or proposed barriers to women seeking to access an abortion—from waiting periods to mandatory ultrasounds. Would you oppose any additional legal barriers to women seeking abortion services in Massachusetts?

(17) Welfare

Each legislative session, many bills are filed that would reform our social welfare (cash assistance programs, food stamps, affordable housing & homeless shelters, etc.) systems in various ways. Are there ways in which you feel these systems should be reformed—and if so, what are they?

Government Reform

(18) ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

What are the top three specific steps you would suggest for improving accountability and transparency in state government?

(19) BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Many people feel as though the biggest barriers to progressive change in Massachusetts is the culture on Beacon Hill, and how the legislative system currently operates. Do you agree—and if so, what do you think is the source of this “cultural” problem? How would you suggest changing it?

Lightning Round - Please Answer Yes or No

1. Do you support ballot question #1, which would repeal the sales tax on alcohol?
2. Do you support ballot question #2, which would repeal the 40B affordable housing law?
3. Do you support ballot question #3, which would lower the sales tax to 3%?
4. Do you support a Single Payer health care system?
5. Will you support allowing undocumented students who have graduated from a Massachusetts high school to pay in-state tuition rates at state colleges and gain access to higher education?
6. Do you support expanding the Massachusetts Bottle Bill to include water, sport and fruit drinks?
7. Do you support legislation to allow for Election Day Registration (EDR) in the Commonwealth?
8. Do you support a woman's fundamental right to choose an abortion as stated in Roe v. Wade?
9. Will you support current legislation to extend civil rights (including employment non-discrimination, hate crimes, protections, and student rights) to transgender individuals?
10. Do you support same sex marriage?
11. Do you support restoring the Clean Elections system - with adequate funding - in Massachusetts?
12. Do you support the death penalty?

Senator Sonia Chang Diaz

(1) Budget

REVENUE

Income tax increase?	y	n
Sales tax increase?	y	n
Gas tax increase?	y	n
Fee increases?	y	n
Eliminate, reduce or cap certain tax credits (i.e. film, life sciences, etc.)	y	n
Misc. other revenue sources (other tobacco products, candy/soda, expanding bottle bill, etc.?)	y	n
Freezing or increasing corporate tax rate?	y	n
Other?	y	n

CUTS

Cuts to local aid?	y	n
Cuts to education funding?	y	n
Cuts to social safety net services?	y	n
Cuts to infrastructure maintenance and improvements?	y	n
Cuts to state payroll costs (i.e. layoffs, furloughs, benefit reductions, Quinn bill benefits, salary freezes, etc.). (If yes, please elaborate)?	y	n

PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR CHOICES

The last two budget cycles have been devastating for too many people. Next year's budget is likely to be even more challenging given the drop-off in federal stimulus funding and the fact that our health, education, and safety infrastructure has already been cut to the bone. Given this landscape, all revenue sources should be on the table for consideration in order to prevent further dangerous cuts. In a state with overall resources as plentiful as Massachusetts', we shouldn't have to choose between core values such as good public schools versus safer streets.

Additionally, we owe it to every taxpayer to be disciplined about cutting inefficiency where it exists and strengthening accountability. That's why I have fought for, and will continue to support reforms to our broken Probation Department, abuses of the state pension system, lax accountability in tax give-aways to corporations, and loopholes in our tax laws that don't make sense.

(2) Expanded Gambling

No. Expanded gambling in Massachusetts is a form of taxation on the poor. Because of that and several other

reasons, I will continue to work against the creation of a casino in the Commonwealth. However, if the unfortunate reality of a casino comes to be in Massachusetts I will work to ensure that the state is taking every step possible to reduce the negative impacts, though they can never be eliminated.

(3) Health Care

While we ought to be incredibly proud that approximately 97% of Massachusetts residents are now insured, there is an enormous amount of work still to be done. The most glaring shortcoming, and the one I hear about most frequently from my constituents, is that the costs are still much too high. Especially given the economic hardships our families are facing right now as a result of the economic downturn. I've heard from too many families and small business owners that they face increases in premiums that they simply cannot absorb.

We need to work together to craft creative cost containment measures that can suppress rapid escalations in cost. Moreover, we need to ensure that our healthcare systems is providing people with resources and encouragement to avoid preventable illnesses whenever possible, which will lower costs for everyone in the Commonwealth.

(4) Immigration

I am proud to have spoken out forcefully against these amendments, and am glad to report these mean-spirited, costly, and duplicative measures were removed from the final budget after their rushed and shameful passage in the Senate.

I also worked hard during my first term to protect healthcare coverage for more than 30,000 legal, taxpaying immigrants, and will continue to stand up for all of Massachusetts families. Moreover, I will continue to provide a reasonable and compassionate voice for immigrant families in Massachusetts, countering anti-immigrant fear-mongering and scape-goating whether it comes from talk-radio or the floor of the state Senate.

Labor/Workers Rights

(5) MINIMUM WAGE

Yes. I support both of these measures. We need a minimum wage that ensures parents are making enough to put food on the table and still have enough hours in the day to help their kids with homework and be involved in their lives.

(6) PAID SICK DAYS

Yes. Some 1.5 million workers in Massachusetts lack even a single paid sick day a year. In my first term, I co-sponsored legislature to establish paid sick days for workers in Massachusetts and I will be proud to do so again and work actively for its passage next session.

Criminal Justice

(7) YOUTH VIOLENCE

We have to do two things, immediately, to stem the tide of violence in our neighborhoods:

1. Provide safe, positive, and accessible alternatives for young people, as well as more relationships with caring adults – through measures like youth summer jobs, after school programs, and a longer school day (as well as, as mentioned above, a living minimum wage for their parents).
2. Reduce access to illegal guns in our neighborhoods. I am also incredibly proud of the passage of CORI reform, which was one of my top legislative priorities. This legislation will help to reduce crime across all age levels by increasing jobs access to people who have paid their debt to society.

I have been active on all of these issues in my first term, and will continue to push forcefully for the changes we need so that our communities live up to our aspirations for them.

(8) MANDATORY MINIMUMS

Yes. I was proud to support the successful passage of mandatory minimum reforms for non-violent drug offenses in the crime bill passed this session in the legislature. This bill allowed for those serving sentences in county houses of correction for such non-violent offenses to be eligible for consideration for parole (though not automatically qualified for it) after serving half of their sentence.

(9) MEDICINAL MARIJUANA

I would support such a measure because I believe that all citizens should have access to health care as recommended by medical professionals. I understand the particular importance of pain medication in cases of terminal or otherwise severe illnesses, in which limited options for treatment of pain may be effective. It is important that patients have appropriate access to safe and effective treatments for pain, nausea, and other debilitating symptoms, as recommended by their doctors.

Housing

(10) FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

As a member of the Joint Committee on Housing, I was thrilled with the passage of major foreclosure reform legislation this term, which included several provisions that I had pushed for. This legislation, which was a top legislative priority for me, will prevent the unfair eviction of renters in good standing, whose landlords are facing foreclosure. Additionally, the changes establish greater procedural protections and negotiating opportunities for homeowners facing foreclosure.

Foreclosure reform legislation was among the first bills I filed upon coming into office because it's an issue that so disproportionately affects our district. Our communities are stronger when all families have access to affordable housing

options—options that allow families to stay in the neighborhoods they've helped build over the years and that help keep new, young families in the communities where they've started to put down roots.

(11) HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is the most pernicious effect of a lack of stable, affordable housing. However, the real solutions to homelessness draw on virtually every element of public policy. In addition to preventing needless evictions caused by foreclosures, and creating more affordable housing across the state, we must also address countless other issues that can lead to homelessness. These issues include improving our public schools, expanding jobs access, improving access to substance abuse prevention and treatment, making healthcare more affordable, and many other safety-net programs that should catch people when they are at risk of being homeless, and help guide them back to safety.

(12) Environment

1. I will continue to fight for bills like SB388, which I filed this session, that would help identify communities in Massachusetts that suffer disparate health outcomes due to environmental pollution and require certain projects to complete a health impact assessment before approval. Such a measure is a vital first step in ensuring environmental justice for all our communities.
2. I will co-sponsor and advocate for the passage of expanded bottle bill legislation.
3. I will continue to fight for improving the financial solvency, scope, accessibility, and environmental impact of public transportation, through revenue reforms including an increased gas tax.

In addition to these specific priorities, I will continue to work on broader strategies to improve our environment, increase economic justice and promote alternative energy and green business, whether it be through alternative energy, green building, or combinations of the two.

(13) Transportation

Lower-income communities and communities of color continue to be drastically underserved by existing public transportation infrastructure. I will continue to push for expansion of the MBTA into parts of the Greater Boston area that are currently underserved, or not served at all. Improvements such as full implementation of the Silver Line service, improvements to the Blue Hill Ave. transit corridor, and thoughtful implementation of the Fairmount/Indigo Line improvements are all vital to revitalizing and connecting these underserved communities. We must also continue to push for completion of commitments at the Arborway Yard bus site. In addition, I will continue to be a strong advocate for raising the revenue needed to keep our buses and trains running safely and on time and at a price that's accessible to working families.

Education

(14) *ED REFORM*

Although the Achievement Gap bill passed this year was not a perfect bill, I voted for it and believe this vote was a positive and necessary step forward. I just don't consider inaction an option in the face of the chronic problems that face students in our schools. Although incredible victories happen in Boston schools every day—against incredible odds—we are also systematically failing to educate thousands of students every year. That means we need to do something different, period. The Achievement Gap bill aims to systematically improve student success; narrow the achievement among low-income, black, and Latino students; and increase accountability in school administration. I supported this bill because, while it is not a complete solution, I believe it addresses some of the most urgent reforms needed in our public education system. As a former educator, this issue is at the core of why I choose to run for public office.

(15) *MCAS*

I believe high-quality standardized testing is a valuable part of a standards-based, evidence based public education system that holds to high expectations for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, family income, gender, or zip code. Standardized testing should never be a sole measure of student performance. It is also critical that we use test results in a thoughtful and fair way when it comes to measuring school performance, being sure to also measure the growth or “value-added” that schools and teachers accomplish over the course of a school year in addition to simple raw test scores. Taken alone, raw test score may reflect pre-existing factors such as socio-economics as much as they reflect teaching quality.

(16) **Women's Right to Choose:**

Yes.

(17) **Welfare**

Public benefits and programs that provide pathways out of poverty and vital resources for struggling families are a frequent target for political attacks, especially in tough financial times. There seems to be a perennial supply of bills and plans that promise to find and eliminate “millions” in waste, fraud, and abuse. Make no mistake: I strongly support increasing transparency and accountability across government, and have been an active champion of many such measures in my first term. But I do not believe our social welfare system is a special or leading source of waste or inefficiency at the state level. And I believe that when we identify instances of fraud and abuse, those resources should be funneled into the improvement of vital safety net services and into asset development programs that are proven effective at actually helping people build out of poverty.

Government Reform

(18) *ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY*

1. Improve public reporting of how money given to corporations is actually spent, and whether corporations are fulfilling the goals for which they are given public subsidies and contracts. Reporting measures must also include accountability on whether local residents and workers and business owners of color are sharing in the job creation benefits often promised in exchange for public dollars.
2. Continue to monitor and push for permanent reforms to the state's Probation Department, to follow up on the initial reforms passed by the Legislature this year and the task force recommendations due later this year.
3. Strengthen our elections systems by eliminating barriers to voting with reforms like bilingual ballots (successfully passed this year), same-day registration, and pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds; and campaign finance reforms that reduce the influence of special interests and big money, especially in light of the Supreme Court's troubling decision in the Citizens United case.

(19) *BARRIERS TO CHANGE*

I ran for office in the first place because I believe we need to raise expectations for our elected officials—not just on Beacon Hill, but across our state, from the first time voter, to the news media, to every person considering running for office. We have a lot of work to do to get there. But that task is a principle that will always guide my work in public office.

I've witnessed some cultural aspects on Beacon Hill that are discouraging and frustrating, and some that genuinely inspire me with belief in my colleagues. It's a human institution. The best bottom line I always tell people, because I truly believe it myself, is: if you want good government, you've got to get good people. In the short space here, I'd say elections are our single best tool for getting the government we want.

Lightning Round

1. Ballot question #1. **No**
2. Ballot question #2. **No**
3. Ballot question #3. **No**
4. Single Payer. **Yes**
5. In-state tuition. **Yes**
6. Expanding the Bottle Bill. **Yes**
7. Election Day Registration. **Yes**
8. Right to choose. **Yes**
9. Transgender Rights. **Yes**
10. Same sex marriage. **Yes**
11. Clean Elections. **Yes**
12. Death penalty. **No**