

**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS  
2018 CONGRESSIONAL  
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**



**Date:**

**Candidate: Ayanna Pressley**

**Office Sought: Massachusetts' 7th Congressional District**

**Party: Democratic Party**

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*Questionnaire Responses (excepting sections labeled CONFIDENTIAL) will be published on our website.*



## **I. About You**

### **1. Why are you running for office? And what will your top 3 priorities be if elected?**

My motivations for running for Congress are to continue building upon the work I've done on the Boston City Council to address inequality in all forms, and to fight for creative policy solutions to address the most pressing issues facing our communities. The 7th Congressional District is the most diverse in the Massachusetts delegation, but at the same time is one of the most unequal in the entire country. From life expectancy to educational attainment to median income, inequality has grown in this district over the last twenty years. In Congress, my priorities will remain the same as they have been throughout my eight years on the Boston City Council -- to cooperatively govern alongside community members, stakeholders, and those most impacted by harmful policies to create, advocate for, and pass legislative solutions aimed at addressing the inequality that is all too prevalent in the 7th Congressional District.

### **2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?**

My life's work has been that of organizing, advocating, and legislating for solutions to address inequality in all forms. During my time as an aide for Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy II and Senator John Kerry, I had a firsthand education in the power of government to be a positive force in the lives of its constituents, and that belief has continued to guide me during my time on the Boston City Council. On the Council, I worked to address some of Boston's most entrenched social issues, from comprehensive sex education in Boston Public Schools to reforming the state's antiquated liquor license policy, among many others. These fights were not easy, but, by viewing our constituents as a co-pilot in governing, I was able to bring diverse, often ideologically opposite groups together to support policies that would improve the lives of many Bostonians. I hope to bring the same philosophy of governing to Congress as I fight to pass solutions for our most urgent issues.

## **II. The Issues**

*Our questionnaire is based on our [Progressive Platform](#): Shared Prosperity, All Means All/Racial and Social Justice, Good Government and Strong Democracy, and Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection.*

*Each section begins with an open-ended question about a plank in our platform. The subsequent questions will be mostly yes/no questions. In such cases, your response should begin with YES or NO. You are welcome to expand beyond just YES/NO to further elaborate on your position, but please keep answers < 150 words.*

### **A. An Equitable Tax System**

1. What does tax justice mean to you? What would a fair tax system look like?

Tax justice ensures that those at the very top of the socioeconomic ladder pay their fair share of taxes, and that regressive taxes that most affect those with little means are minimized. A fair system would ensure that companies who avoid taxes are penalized, that capital gains taxes are raised to reflect the reality of our current stock market, and that financing transportation, education, and other critical social service programs do not disproportionately fall on the backs of those with the least.

2. **Financial Transaction Tax.** Would you support legislation that imposes a tax of a fraction of a percent on transactions done by Wall Street firms and stock traders? Yes
3. **Capital Gains Tax.** Would you support taxing capital gains and dividends at ordinary income rates for households with income over \$250,000? Yes
4. **Corporate Tax Avoidance.** Would you support legislation to tax corporations on all of their profits, ending the current practice that allows US corporations to avoid paying taxes on overseas profits? Yes

### **B. Jobs That Pay a Living Wage**

1. What is the role of Congress in creating good-paying jobs? In which sectors do you see the most potential?

Congress can encourage sustainable economic development through investments in infrastructure, workforce development, and housing that support a robust workforce and make our communities attractive to businesses. Congress can also be more proactive about supporting the small and medium-sized businesses that form the backbone of the economy in many communities. Certainly, there are incredible opportunities to create jobs in the environmental sector, as well as healthcare, technology, and other emerging fields..

2. **Minimum Wage.** The gap between productivity and wages has grown dramatically since 1973. Moreover, the federal minimum wage remains stuck at \$7.25—what it was in 2009. Would you support legislation to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour? Yes
  - a. And eliminate the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers? Yes
  - b. And index the minimum wage to inflation? Yes

3. **Job Guarantee.** Would you support legislation to create a federal job guarantee? If so, what would it look like? Undecided

Without doubt, the goals that a federal jobs guarantee and universal basic income seek to achieve are incredibly important to closing the wealth gap. At this point, I believe that there are other ways to achieve the same goals -- higher wages, equitable access to health care, and solving other socioeconomic ills. That said, I am willing, as always, to listen to the input and opinions of all, and welcome a further discussion of these proposals.

4. **Retirement Security.** With the decline of pensions and other defined-benefit retirement plans in the workplace, retirement is becoming more insecure, and seniors are having to work longer just to stay afloat. Would you support legislation to....
  - a. Increase the benefits provided by Social Security? Yes
  - b. Raising the cap on earnings that are taxed for Social Security? Currently, only earnings up to \$118,500 are subject to the payroll tax. Yes
5. **Paid Leave.** The US is the only industrial nation without paid family leave. Would you support federal legislation ensuring that workers can take up to 12 weeks of paid leave for a pregnancy, the birth or adoption of a child, to recover from a serious illness, or to care for a seriously ill family member? Yes
6. **Paid Vacation.** The US is the only industrial nation that does not require employers to provide any paid vacation time. Would you support legislation requiring employers to provide employees at least two weeks of paid vacation time? Yes
7. **Union Rights.** Unions play a key role in building a strong middle-class; however, unions have been under attack in recent years. Would you support legislation like the Workplace Democracy Act that prohibits “right-to-work” laws and requires employers to recognize a union when a majority of workers in a bargaining unit sign valid authorization cards? Yes

### **C. Quality, Affordable Health Care**

1. What do you see as the role of the federal government in health care? What are the most important next steps to build upon the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act? Health care is a human right, and the federal government ought to guarantee its availability to all those who need it -- regardless of cost. The Affordable Care Act was an incredibly productive first step towards universal coverage, but, as President Trump and his allies in Congress seek to weaken the legislation, it is imperative that leaders in our party support the creation of a Medicare for all system of health insurance.
2. **Medicare for All.** Would you support the creation of a single payer/“Medicare for All” health insurance system in the country that would guarantee health care as a right? Yes
3. **Medicaid.** Would you oppose any effort to add a work requirement to Medicaid? Yes

4. **Medicare.** Would you oppose any effort to increase the means-testing of Medicare? Yes
5. **Drug Price Negotiation.** Would you support legislation requiring the federal government to negotiate the price of Medicare prescription drugs with pharmaceutical companies?  
Yes
6. **Access to Prescription Drugs.** Would you support legislation to reduce monopolies for brand-name drugs and help generic competitors come to market more easily? Yes
7. **Reproductive Rights -- Part I.** Would you oppose any legislation that seeks to roll back a woman's fundamental right to choose an abortion as set out in *Roe vs. Wade*? Yes
8. **Reproductive Rights -- Part II.** Would you supporting legislation to repeal the Hyde Amendment, which bars the use of federal funds to pay for abortion except to save the life of the woman, or if the pregnancy arises from incest or rape? Yes

#### **D. Quality, Free Publicly Funded Education**

1. What role should the federal government play in guaranteeing high-quality K-12 education for all students? In guaranteeing access to affordable higher education?

I believe the federal government has a critical role to play in providing adequate funding for high-quality instruction, programming and resources for students and educators in K-12 settings - especially in under-resourced communities - and in providing strong guardrails to ensure accountability for student success while empowering Local Educational Agencies and educators to pursue educational strategies that are in the best interests of their students.

Related to higher education, I believe the federal government must be more proactive in its efforts to support student loan borrowers, including allowing borrowers to refinance student loans, increasing awareness of income-based repayment plans, and expanding loan forgiveness programs. We also need to increase the federal investment in public higher education in response to significant decreases in state-level funding. And the federal government must hold accountable for-profit and other institutions of higher education that saddle students with debt while not providing a high-quality education.

2. **Race to the Top.** The Race to the Top program, created in 2010, was a competitive grant program for school districts that incentivized public school districts to adopt performance-based evaluations for teachers and to increase the number of charter schools. How would you evaluate the success of the program?

I believe the legacy of RTTT is mixed. I support efforts to invest greater federal resources in education, and leverage those resources to produce the greatest positive benefit for students. I support many of the stated goals of the RTTT program, including recruiting and developing high quality educators and school leaders and turning around our lowest performing schools. I believe

that, in some areas, early results from RTTT show significant progress for certain students and schools. However, I believe the program also reinforced some of the damaging elements of No Child Left Behind, including an overemphasis on standardized metrics for student and educator success, which led educators to “teach to the test” rather than employing strategies that may have been more effective for their students. Going forward, I believe the federal government should always be looking for ways to incentivize and support positive innovation in our K-12 schools, while establishing an accountability framework that doesn’t rely as heavily on one-size-fits all standards.

3. **Achievement Gap.** Since 2005 alone (13 years of K-12 education), Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which provides funding to states and districts to improve education for disadvantaged students, has been underfunded by \$347 billion. Would you support legislation to fully fund Title I? Yes
4. **Special Education.** When Congress first passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal government promised to pay 40 percent of the cost of educating students with disabilities. That promise has not been kept, with federal funding standing at just 15.7 percent. Would you support legislation to fully fund IDEA? Yes
5. **Student Loan Debt.** Student loan debt is holding back the economy, as graduates are unable to make important long-term investments in their future. Senator Elizabeth Warren has filed legislation to allow those with outstanding student loan debt to refinance at current, lower interest rates. Would you support such legislation? Yes
6. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** More and more jobs are requiring a college degree, but the cost of higher education has been growing faster than wages, contributing to a ballooning student debt burden. Would you support legislation to guarantee free tuition at public colleges and universities? If so, how should such a program operate? Yes

#### **E. Affordable, Decent Housing**

1. What role do you believe the federal government should play in guaranteeing affordable, decent housing for all?

Housing is a human right. The federal government ought to ensure additional funding is made available for housing assistance programs, vouchers, the National Housing Trust Fund, and other policies. Additionally, Congress must reauthorize the PTFA to protect tenants at risk of foreclosure. Also, the government should pass nationwide legislation, modeled on the pending Jim Brooks Community Stabilization Act, protecting the rights of renters from arbitrary evictions and ensuring that residents know their rights when faced with eviction.

2. **National Housing Trust Fund.** The National Housing Trust Fund was created in 2008 as part of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act to complement existing federal funding sources for affordable housing. Would you support legislation to increase funding for the National Housing Trust Fund? Yes

3. **Tenant Rights.** Prior to the passage of the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act (PTFA) in 2009, tenants were often required to move with as little as a few days-notice. However, the PTFA expired in 2014. Would you support legislation to reauthorize such tenant protections? Yes
4. **Foreclosure Prevention.** Would you support legislation to strengthen requirements for and increase oversight of Federal Housing Administration mortgage servicers so that every homebuyer with an FHA mortgage is given a fair chance at avoiding foreclosure? Yes

### **F. A Fair and Efficient Criminal Justice System**

1. What role can Congress help deliver on the promise of “liberty and justice for all”? Reforming our criminal justice system is inextricably linked to expanding educational, economic, and social opportunity in our communities. I believe Congress should take steps to reverse the worst effects of the War on Drugs, eliminate mandatory minimums and cash bail, prevent the use of private prisons, end the militarization of local and state police departments, and prevent racial profiling among law enforcement.

2. **Marijuana Legalization.** Do you support removing marijuana from the list of controlled substances, making it legal at the federal level? Yes
3. **Mandatory Minimums.** Do you support the repeal of mandatory minimums for non-violent drug offenses? Yes
4. **Bail Reform.** Do you support the elimination of cash bail, so that no one is held in jail solely for an inability to pay? Yes
5. **Private Prisons.** Would you support legislation to bar the federal government and state and local jurisdictions from contracting with private corporations to run prisons and detention facilities? Yes
6. **Federal Parole System.** The abolition of the federal parole system in 1984 has played a large role in the rise of mass incarceration since the 1980s, as prisoners are now required to serve at least 85 percent of their sentence. Would you support legislation to reinstate the federal parole system? Yes
7. **Price Gouging.** Would you support legislation to prevent companies from engaging in unfair practices and charging prisoners unreasonable fees for banking and telecommunications services? Yes
8. **Solitary Confinement.** Do you support limiting the use of solitary confinement to no more than 15 consecutive days, and eliminating the use of solitary confinement for at-risk populations, including pregnant women, LGBTQ people, those with mental illness, and those under age 21 or over age 65? Yes



9. **Police-Community Relations.** Recently, the US House of Representatives passed a bill to create a *federal* penalty of up to 10 years for assaulting a police officer. Such laws already exist on the books in states, and there is no lack of prosecution (some might even argue that such charges are used as a cudgel against protesters). The ACLU, NAACP, Southern Poverty Law Center, and other civil rights groups criticized this bill for pushing a statistically unproven “war on cops” narrative and threatening to do further damage to police-community relations. Would you oppose such legislation? Yes
10. **Militarization of Police.** Would you support legislation to prohibit the transfer of some of the military weapons from the federal government to state and local law enforcement? Yes
11. **Data Collection.** Would you support legislation to require police departments and states to collect data on all police shootings and deaths that take place while in police custody and make that data public? Yes
12. **Racial Profiling.** Would you support legislation to ban racial profiling by law enforcement? Yes

### **G. A Humane Immigration System**

1. What does “comprehensive immigration reform” mean to you?

Comprehensive immigration reform means that DREAMers are protected and given a path to citizenship, that TPS recipients from all countries have a path to citizenship, and that those living in the United States without documentation are able to become citizens. It also includes the abolition of ICE and the rehousing of its critical responsibilities (human trafficking prevention and drug trafficking prevention) into other agencies. Comprehensive immigration reform does not include funding or construction of President Trump’s border wall, or the cruel separation of families at the border, nor does it include the mass deportation of families or individuals living in the United States without documentation.

2. **Border Militarization.** A border wall, as proposed by Trump, would be an economic, environmental, and humanitarian disaster. Would you categorically oppose any legislation that includes funding for such a border wall? Yes
3. **DREAM Act.** Would you support the DREAM Act, which would allow certain US-raised immigrant youth to earn lawful permanent residence and American citizenship? Yes
4. **Path to Citizenship.** Would you support legislation that creates a path for undocumented immigrants to gain US citizenship? Yes

5. **Keeping Families Together.** Would you support legislation to repeal the three-year, ten-year, and permanent bars of reentry for undocumented immigrants? Yes
6. **Protecting Immigrant Families.** Over the past few years, ICE has adopted policies that are particularly harmful to children: the practice of detaining women and children when they cross the border despite legal obligations to place families with children in the least restrictive setting possible (family detention), and the practice of separating parents and children (family separation). Would you support legislation to end both of these practices? Yes
7. **ICE Bed Quota.** Would you support legislation to end ICE's daily bed quota, which requires the detainment of 34,000 immigrants? Yes
8. **ICE Detention Centers.** The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) have consistently found that ICE detention facilities undermine the rights of the individuals being held, as sexual abuse, medical negligence, and insufficient access to counsel remain rampant. (A) Would you support legislation to impose a moratorium on the construction of new ones? (B) Would you support a review of private detention centers and the termination of contracts with repeat human rights violation offenders? Yes
9. **ICE.** ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement), is a fairly new federal agency, birthed in the post 9/11/2001 restructuring of the Department of Homeland Security. Since its start, ICE has operated under a harmful and erroneous paradigm: that undocumented immigrants *ipso facto* pose a fundamental security threat. Over time, ICE has operated in an increasingly unconstitutional matter, embracing practices that, according to judges, "shock the conscience" and have received condemnation from the United Nations. Would you support the elimination of the current agency in favor of a more humane alternative? Yes

#### **H. A Diverse and Welcoming Society**

1. What do you believe are the most important factors in building an inclusive community, and what role can Congress play in advancing them?

Congress must protect the rights of *all* minority communities from discrimination, by updating the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include LGBTQ+ individuals, by putting in place legal remedies and protections for victims of sexual harassment and assault, and by fighting against efforts to weaken affirmative action and other policies aimed at increasing diversity.

2. **LGBTQ Rights.** Over the past several years, we have seen numerous states try to deny trans individuals the right to exist in public spaces as well as conservative lawsuits seeking to legalize discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. Would you support

legislation to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Civil Rights Act of 1964?  
Yes

3. **Sexual Harassment.** Would you support legislation to end the use of forced arbitration clauses in sexual harassment cases? Yes
4. **Indigenous Rights.** Would you support legislation to ensure that tribal cultures and sacred places are federally protected? Yes
5. **Gun Safety.** A welcoming society is one in which people feel safe. Would you support the reinstatement of the federal assault weapons ban? Yes

## **I. Good Government and Strong Democracy**

1. What does democracy mean to you?

Democracy cannot function properly without the full participation of everyone, especially historically underrepresented groups. As foreign powers interfere with our elections and President Trump undermines our democracy every day, Congress must swiftly act to protect the integrity of our elections, and to expand opportunities for participation in our democracy to those historically left out.

2. **Diversity in Leadership.** How can the Democratic Party better work to improve a pipeline of young and diverse candidates for elected office and party leadership? The upswing in women, people of color, and young people running for office following the 2016 election has been inspiring, and the Democratic Party needs to encourage historically underrepresented groups to continue running for office and making their voices heard. The Democratic Party should permanently devote financial resources to training new candidates **and their staff**, and should support the efforts of organizations like Higher Heights, Justice Democrats, and other organizations dedicated to increasing representation in government.

3. **Ethics.** What do you see as the role of Congress vis-a-vis the Trump presidency with regard to ethics enforcement?  
Congress's Constitutionally mandated oversight role of the Executive branch is more important now than ever. Congress should vigorously investigate the corruption of the Trump Administration, as well as doing everything possible to support and protect the Mueller investigation.

4. **Voting Access.** Would you support legislation to...
  - a. Require states to provide same day registration? Yes
  - b. Require states to offer automatic voter registration through the Registry of Motor Vehicles and other agencies as appropriate? Yes
  - c. Make Election Day a federal holiday? Yes

- d. Prohibit states from adopting discriminatory laws that require select photo identification in order to vote? Yes
5. **Voting Rights Act.** Would you support restoring the “pre-clearance” formula under the Voting Rights Act, which extended protections to minority voters in states and counties with histories of discrimination, as well as further expanding the law? Yes
6. **Prisoner’s Rights.** Would you support legislation to prohibit states from taking away the franchise from anyone because of a criminal offense? Yes
7. **Citizens United.** Would you support a constitutional amendment to overturn the Citizens United decision and allow limits on corporate political spending? Yes

### **J. Sustainable Infrastructure & Environmental Protection**

1. The current administration in Washington has overturned, or is seeking to overturn, a number of Obama-era environmental regulations, setting the US up for years of just playing catch up. What are your top priorities on environmental protection? How can the US avoid falling even further behind?

The United States must set and meet the goal of 100% renewable energy generation by 2035. Also, the EPA must be held accountable for its lack of oversight and punishment of polluting agencies, and Congress must not abdicate its responsibility to oversee and investigate the EPA’s failures. Additionally, Congress should protect and expand incentives for the production of renewable energy sources, and should pass a nationwide carbon tax. Finally, Congress should pass legislation preventing new leases on fossil fuel extraction, as well as preventing the construction of new fossil fuel pipelines.

2. **100% Clean Energy.** Would you support legislation to put the US on a pathway to replacing fossil fuels with 100 percent clean energy generation and use by 2035, with support for transitioning workers? Yes
3. **Carbon Pricing.** Would you support putting a price on carbon emissions and investing the revenue in clean energy and green infrastructure? If so, how should such a pricing scheme operate? Yes
4. **Keep It in the Ground -- Part I.** Would you support legislation to prohibit new leases for coal, oil, and gas on all federal lands and waters? Yes
5. **Keep it in the Ground -- Part II.** Would you oppose any legislation that authorizes, or expedites the permitting or approval of, new fossil fuel pipelines? Yes
6. **Clean Water.** Would you support legislation the to require natural gas drillers to disclose the chemicals that go into the ground during the hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) process

and to close the so-called “Halliburton loophole,” which prevents the EPA from conducting rigorous oversight? Yes

7. **Environmental Justice.** Would you support legislation to codify environmental justice into law; require federal agencies to address environmental justice through agency actions and permitting decisions; and strengthen legal protections against environmental injustice for communities of color, low-income communities, and indigenous communities? Yes
8. **Fuel Efficiency.** Would you support legislation to increase fuel economy standards to 65 miles per gallon by 2025? Yes
9. **Public Transportation.** Would you support greater investment in public transportation? Yes
10. **Science and Policy.** Would you oppose any effort to restrict the ability of federal policymakers from incorporating peer-reviewed science in the decision-making process around new environmental regulations? Yes

#### **K. US in the World.**

1. **Foreign Policy.** What are the principles and priorities you would bring to discussions of US foreign policy?

US foreign policy must be guided by the priority of respect for our allies, respect for international institutions that have helped keep the peace for generations, and a renewed call for Congressional oversight to the President’s ability to declare and execute military operations abroad. I believe in international cooperation to solve global issues -- from climate change to refugees, to terrorism, the United States must never be afraid to cooperate with allies around the world in building a safer and more prosperous global community. I strongly oppose unilateral military action, as well as short sighted decisions like withdrawing from the JCPOA that only threaten global and regional stability and further isolate the United States.

2. **Trade.** Will you oppose any trade deal that allows corporations to sue governments in private tribunals, that fails to include binding requirements to implement both the Paris climate agreement and adopt living wages, or that otherwise fails to support a clean environment, healthy communities, and good union jobs? Yes