

**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 CONGRESSIONAL
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**



Candidate: Alex Morse

Office Sought: US House Representative, MA-01

Party: Democratic

Website: <https://alexmorseforcongress.com/>

Twitter: @AlexBMorse

Facebook: [Facebook.com/AlexMorseMA/](https://www.facebook.com/AlexMorseMA/)

Instagram: [/alex.morse](https://www.instagram.com/alex.morse)

Email questions to elections@progressivemass.com.

I. About You

1. Why are you running for office? And what will your top 3 priority pieces of legislation if elected?

AM: I am running because I am grounded in a community of working class people who struggle on a daily basis, are immensely resilient and powerful, but who are not receiving the federal support and advocacy that they need from our current Representative. I relate on a personal level to the challenges that people all across the first congressional district are struggling with and the ways that the government can help them live better lives. Furthermore, I am called to action by the movement for justice and fundamental change that people in Western Massachusetts and throughout the United States are fighting for. Progressive change takes building strong, grassroots coalitions. It takes reaching out directly to, engaging with, and empowering people who are too often left out and looked over. It takes transparency, responsiveness, and being present in the places that you represent - especially in those places which have been left behind by the system. It takes a willingness to stand for what is right regardless of the political or personal repercussions. This is what I will do in my campaign for Congress in 2020, and as Representative of the people in my community.

This campaign is focused on building an intersectional, grassroots movement in Western Massachusetts and, as such, is committed to fighting for a multitude of issues. However, three issues that are deeply important to me, and this campaign, are putting an end to the unending influence of millionaires and billionaires in our country by getting money out of politics; ensuring that every single American has access to affordable, high-quality healthcare; and combating the existential threat of the climate crisis in a just and equitable way.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

AM: My background growing up in a working-class family and my experience successfully implementing progressive change and engaging those who have felt disenfranchised by the political system has prepared me to represent the people of the first congressional district in Washington. My story in Western Massachusetts starts in a Holyoke housing project where my parents met and fell in love. Both my mother and father grew up in poverty. My parents started a family as teenagers and neither had a chance to attend college. They worked tirelessly with what they had, struggling from job to low-wage job on public assistance in public housing. Over time they were able to make their way into the working class. Now 33 years down the road, my father heads to the same meatpacking company in Springfield every day of the week for work. And I still recall the neighborhood family daycare my mom ran at my childhood home.

My parents worked hard to provide opportunities for me and my two older brothers that they didn't have. My gratitude to my parents, and for the city of Holyoke, led to my passion for public service. At 16, I came out as gay to my parents, and their response of unconditional love and support gave me the courage to bring my whole self into this life, and into this work.

My interest in public service brought me to Brown University, and on to become the first member of my family to earn a college degree. While a student, I spent my summers in Holyoke, coming back to my hometown to serve under-resourced youth to learn skills for future success. Returning to school every semester, my vision for organizing and helping my hometown grew

deeper. So when it came to deciding what I should do after college, instead of taking a job in a big city like Boston, or going on to graduate school, I chose to return home and to run for mayor. In 2011, I was elected at the age of 22, becoming the youngest and first openly gay mayor in the history of the city of Holyoke. Since 2012, I have served the residents of Holyoke in this role.

Throughout my tenure as Mayor, I have sought to bring progressive, positive change to Holyoke, and have worked to prove that the city's best days are not behind it. I did this in many ways, including by making Holyoke a sanctuary city to protect the LatinX community - who make up approximately 47% of the city's population - and opening a needle exchange program to ensure that residents who have an addiction illness aren't exposed to contaminated needles. I was the first Mayor in Massachusetts to support the legalization of marijuana, and succeeded in closing the last coal plant in the Commonwealth and replaced it with a 17,000-panel solar farm with storage. My Administration has invested in infrastructure and economic development in neighborhoods that had long been ignored. We rebuilt playgrounds, made way for two new middle schools, and brought new industry and green jobs to the city. Throughout my tenure, I strived to improve the lives of the people in our city who have been disenfranchised and forgotten about by those in City Hall. And I am proud to say that my administration's hard work has paid off. Crime is down more than 40% in every neighborhood of the city. The unemployment rate was over 13% in 2012. It's under 5% today. We've seen record levels of public and private investment. The high school graduation rate was 49% when I took office; now it's over 72%. But the thing I'm most proud of -- more than any statistic -- is the way in which we've opened up the doors of City Hall, and engaged and included residents who have never felt like the government was here for them.

3. What do you view as the biggest barriers to progressive policy on the federal level?

AM: The two main barriers facing progressive change on a federal level are the influence of corporate money in politics as well as structures in a system which favors the status quo.

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.

A. An Equitable Tax System

- 1. What does a progressive tax system look like? Which specific proposals would you advocate for?*

AM: At the core of any conversation about our tax system is inequality. A progressive tax system is one that doesn't unfairly burden the middle class and the most vulnerable among us. It looks like a system that ensures the corporations and wealthy pay their fair

share. I support a range of policies such as Elizabeth Warren's "wealth tax" and expanding the estate tax. Furthermore, I would be in favor of evaluating the ways in which any tax policy proposal may perpetuate larger systemic and institutional harms and correct for that in its implementation.

B. Jobs That Pay a Living Wage

1. **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?*

AM: YES.

- a. *And eliminate the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers? **YES.***
 - b. *And index the minimum wage to inflation? **YES.***
2. **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.***
3. **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?*

AM: YES.

4. **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 the following efforts to strengthen the role of unions in our economy:*
 - a. *Prohibiting “right-to-work” laws at the state level? **YES.***
 - b. *Requiring employers to recognize a union when a majority of workers in a bargaining unit sign valid authorization cards? **YES.***
 - c. *Prohibiting employers from interfering with unionization efforts, such as by compelling worker attendance at anti-union meetings? **YES.***

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

C. Quality, Affordable Health Care

1. **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?*

AM: YES.

Specifically, I support the Medicare for All Act (H.R.1384) sponsored by Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal.

2. **Prescription Drug Prices.** *Prescription drug prices in the US are consistently higher than in other countries. Which policies would you support to lower the cost of prescription drugs?*
 - a. *Allowing Medicare to negotiate prices with pharmaceutical companies?* **YES.**
 - b. *Allowing patients, pharmacists, and wholesalers to buy low-cost prescription drugs from Canada and other industrialized countries?* **YES.**
 - c. *Allowing the federal government to manufacture lower-cost generic versions of prescription drugs when the market does not offer them?* **YES.**
3. **Reproductive Rights.** *Would you support repealing 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?*

AM: YES.

4. **Opioid Crisis.** *An essential part of addressing the opioid crisis, safe consumption sites allow medical professionals to respond to overdoses and engage participants in medical and behavioral health services. Would you support the legalization of SCSs?*

AM: YES.

Despite facing significant resistance from the city council, in 2012 I opened a needle exchange program in Holyoke.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

D. Quality, Free Publicly Funded Education

1. **Education Equity.** *More than six and a half decades out from the Brown vs. Board Supreme Court ruling, our public education systems remain highly segregated and unequal. Please name three policies you would advocate for in order to address this.*

AM: Where you are born, the color of your skin, or your native language should not dictate the accessibility and quality of the education you receive. As Mayor of Holyoke, I've worked directly on making sure that we made Holyoke Public Schools the number 1 choice for families. Although I list three specific education policies below it's important to mention that education can't be viewed in silo -- we must address injustices and unfair

practices across all our systems such as health, housing, criminal justice and jobs/economy.

1. Increase funding (Title 1) for public schools (evaluate the resource disparities between high income zip codes & low income zip codes)
2. Provide universal full-day child care
3. Challenge the school-to-prison pipeline and zero-tolerance policies that unfairly target Black and Brown youth

2. **Charter School Funding.** *The NAACP has proposed a moratorium on public funds for charter school expansion until a national audit has been completed to determine the impact of charter growth in each state. Do you support such a moratorium?*

AM: YES.

There is much work to do to ensure that existing charter schools are addressing the needs around financial and operational transparency.

3. **Charter School Accountability.** *Do you support requiring that charter schools comply with the same transparency and accountability requirements as public schools?*

AM: YES.

4. **High-Stakes Testing.** *Do you support prohibiting the use of standardized testing as a primary or significant factor in closing a school, firing a teacher, or making any other high-stakes decisions?*

AM: 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. Presidential candidates have put forth various schemes to forgive student loan debt. Do you support doing so, and what would your ideal scheme look like?*

AM: YES.

Student debt causes millions of people to question if they will ever build savings, own a home, or even afford basic family expenses. Forgiving federal and private student debt would save millions of families from financial uncertainty, refresh our economy, and invest in the American promise of self-determination.

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?*

AM: YES.

We must affirm the notion that college is not simply an experience for the wealthy, but inclusive of many education paths that provide practical job training for the 21st century.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

E. Affordable, Decent Housing

1. **Tenant Rights.** *Would you support legislation to establish a national just cause eviction standard, which would limit the grounds upon which a landlord may evict a tenant?*

AM: YES.

2. **Inclusive Communities.** *Federal funding can be a major source of leverage in shaping state and municipal policy. Would you support legislation to tie transportation or housing funding to...*

- a. *Ending exclusionary zoning practices? **YES.***
- b. *Repealing state prohibitions on rent stabilization policies? **YES.***

3. **Public Housing.** *Would you support the repeal of the Faircloth Amendment, which bans HUD from funding the construction or operation of new public housing units beyond the total that existed in 1999?*

AM: YES.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

F. A Fair and Efficient Criminal Justice System

1. **Ending Mass Incarceration.** *The past few years have seen a growing recognition that the “tough on crime” legislation passed in the 1980s and 1990s has had a devastating impact on communities of color and has not improved public safety. Which of the following proposals do you support?*
 - a. *Legalizing marijuana? **YES.***
 - b. *Repealing mandatory minimums for non-violent drug offenses? **YES.***
 - c. *Eliminating cash bail, so that no one is held in jail solely for an inability to pay? **YES.***
 - d. *Abolishing the death penalty? **YES.***
 - e. *Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which has been proven to have significant racial disparities ? **YES.***

- f. *Barring the federal government and state and local jurisdictions from contracting with private corporations to run prisons and detention facilities? **YES.***
2. **Prison Conditions.** *In addition to having incarceration rates that far outpace those of other countries, the US is known for violating both domestic and international law in the conditions of its prisons. Which of the following steps would you support to emphasize the rehabilitative, as opposed to punitive, nature of the system and protect basic rights?*
- Preventing companies from charging prisoners unreasonable fees for banking and telecommunications services? **YES.***
 - Requiring that incarcerated individuals be paid for their work at a rate no lower than the federal minimum wage? **YES.***
 - Restoring Pell Grant access to prisoners? **YES.***
 - Limiting the use of solitary confinement to no more than 15 consecutive days, beyond which it is defined as torture by the United Nations? **YES.***
3. **Police Accountability.** *Lax or nonexistent systems of accountability and perverse incentives at the federal, state, and local level, combined with a legacy of systemic racism, too often lead to law enforcement neither enforcing the law nor keeping the public safe. Which of the following steps would you support to promote a more humane, community-focused policing?*
- Prohibiting the transfer of military weapons from the federal government to state and local law enforcement? **YES.***
 - Eliminating qualified immunity, which allows law enforcement to violate people's constitutional rights with impunity? **YES.***
 - Restricting the use of civil asset forfeiture by police departments and prosecutors' offices? **YES.***

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

G. A Humane Immigration System

1. **Comprehensive Immigration Reform.** *The approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants in the US are important contributors to strong economies and strong communities. Due to political and economic instability abroad, as well as a labyrinthine and discriminatory immigration bureaucracy at home, this number could very well continue to grow. However, comprehensive immigration reform legislation has remained elusive in Washington. Which of the following policies would you support?*

- a. *The DREAM Act, which would allow certain US-raised immigrant youth to earn lawful permanent residence and American citizenship?* **YES.**
 - b. *A path for undocumented immigrants to gain US citizenship?* **YES.**
 - c. *Repealing the three-year, ten-year, and permanent bars of reentry for undocumented immigrants?* **YES.**
 - d. *Decriminalizing border crossing?* **YES.**
2. **Upholding Rights, Ending Perverse Incentives.** *Every day, we hear new unconscionable stories about how the US is treating immigrants at the border, fueled by both bad laws and lawlessness at the federal level. Our immigration system should reflect our values. Which of the following policies would you support?*
- a. *Ending the practice of family detention?* **YES.**
 - b. *Ending the practice of family separation?* **YES.**
 - c. *Ending ICE's daily bed quota?* **YES.**
 - d. *Imposing a moratorium on the construction of new detention facilities?* **YES.**
 - e. *Abolishing ICE?* **YES.**
3. **Ending Mass Deportations.** *Would you support a moratorium on deportations until a comprehensive immigration reform bill is passed?*

AM: YES.

4. **Refugees.** *In October of 2019, the number of refugees resettled in the US hit zero, and the Trump administration would like to keep it that way going forward, abandoning historic humanitarian commitments. What do you see as the appropriate number of refugees for the US to accept each year?*

AM: I do not have a specific number in mind. However, I believe that it is the United State's responsibility to take-in and provide refuge to the most vulnerable people across the world and would support an increase in the number of refugees we commit to resettle from historic commitments. This is particularly important today given the projection that by 2100 there will be between 100 million and 1 billion climate refugees. The U.S. and other industrialized nations are disproportionately responsible for climate change, yet as we are seeing, the most vulnerable people are, and will be, at much greater risk from its effects. Therefore, I view the United State's commitment to resettling refugees to be part of its commitment to environmental justice.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

H. A Diverse and Welcoming Society

1. **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?*

AM: YES.

2. **Reparations.** *Would you support legislation to create a commission to study the impact of slavery on the social, political, and economic life of the US and propose appropriate remedies (such as HR40)?*

AM: YES.

3. **Sexual Harassment.** *Would you support legislation to end the use of forced arbitration clauses in sexual harassment cases?*

AM: YES.

4. **Gun Violence Prevention.** *The US has the largest number of guns per capita in the world--and consequently one of the highest rates of gun deaths. For too long, the federal government has refused to play a constructive role in preventing gun violence. Which of the following proposals would you advocate for?*
 - a. *Reinstating the federal assault weapons ban? **YES.***
 - b. *Banning high-capacity magazine ammunitions? **YES.***
 - c. *Requiring a license to purchase a gun? **YES.***
 - d. *Limiting the number of guns an individual can buy to one per month? **YES.***
 - e. *Repealing the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which shields the gun industry from lawsuits? **YES.***

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

I. Good Government and Strong Democracy

1. **Comprehensive Democracy Reform.** *Will you commit to voting on HR 1, the For The People Act, as introduced in 2018? Among other things, HR1 ("For the People Act") contains automatic voter registration, Election Day Registration, the expansion of early voting, the prohibition of partisan gerrymandering, and other vital reforms.*

AM: YES.

2. **Ending Prison Disenfranchisement**. *Currently, Maine and Vermont are the only states that provide full suffrage to the incarcerated. Do you support ending the disenfranchisement for those currently incarcerated?*

AM: YES.

3. **Ranked Choice Voting**. *Do you support the 2020 ballot initiative to adopt ranked choice voting for state, county, and (non-presidential) federal elections?*

AM: YES.

4. **Campaign Finance -- Part I**. *Do you support public financing of Congressional elections?*

AM: YES.

5. **Campaign Finance -- Part II**. *Would you support a constitutional amendment to overturn the Citizens United decision and allow limits on corporate political spending?*

AM: YES.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

J. Sustainable Infrastructure & Environmental Protection

1. **Green New Deal**. *Do you support the concept of a Green New Deal? If so, what should it look like?*

AM: YES.

A Green New Deal means two things. First, it means adopting a climate policy framework that centers environmental justice and empowers, prioritizes, and directly engages frontline communities who are disproportionately affected by climate change, including indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth. Second, it means a mass mobilization of resources, at a scale that we have not seen since FDR's New Deal policies, to combat the existential threat of the climate crisis. These resources would be used to directly mitigate climate change, to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure in a way that strengthens community resilience, to protect and support our most vulnerable communities, and to transition workers out of the fossil fuel economy."

2. **Transitioning to Clean Energy**. *We need to rapidly decarbonize our economy if we are to keep global warming within safe levels. Which of the following policies would you support to accelerate that transition?*

- a. *Setting a goal of 100 percent clean energy generation and use by 2035? **YES.***
 - b. *Putting a price on carbon emissions and investing the revenue in clean energy and green infrastructure? **YES.***
 - c. *Prohibiting new leases for coal, oil, and gas on all federal lands and waters? **YES.***
 - d. *Opposing any legislation that authorizes, or expedites the permitting or approval of, new fossil fuel pipelines? **YES.***
3. **Climate Emergency.** *With rising temperatures and sea levels threatening significant harm to Massachusetts' coast, ecosystems, public health and well-being, do you support declaring a Climate Emergency to drive an aggressive response?*

AM: YES.

4. **Clean Water.** *Would you support legislation 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?*

AM: YES.

5. **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?*

AM: YES.

6. **Electric Vehicles.** *Would you support legislation to phase out the sale of gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles by 2030?*

AM: YES.

7. **Public Transportation.** *What would be your top priorities for federal reinvestment in transportation and infrastructure if elected?*

AM: We are in a state of emergency with our public transportation systems and you would never know we have one of the most powerful members of Congress representing us here in Western MA. Our system is disjointed and not accessible. We need to invest in regional rail (such as East-West Rail), in regional bus networks and transportation authorities, more bike lanes, etc I want to ensure that the voices of marginalized and rural communities are included in the process and that we link all conversations about public transportation with issues of education, the economy, healthcare and climate justice.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

III. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Limit answer to 150 words or fewer.

Use this space to add any other issues important to your vision for Massachusetts or any other matter you think progressive voters should know about your candidacy.