

# PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS 2020 CONGRESSIONAL ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE



**Date:**

**Candidate:** Becky Grossman

**Office Sought:** Congress in MA-04

**Party:** Democratic

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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 priority pieces of legislation if elected?**

We're at a make-or-break moment in this country. We're either going to tackle issues like gun violence and climate change head on—or our kids are going to pay the price. As a mom of young kids, I can't accept that. There is absolutely nothing that a mom won't do for her children. The NRA is threatening our kids' safety at school. Our planet is in peril. Drug companies are charging thousands of dollars for prescription drugs that people like my mom need to stay alive. And Donald Trump is tearing up Obamacare and going after Planned Parenthood. If there was ever a time to step up and fight, it's now. I want to show my 8-year-old daughter Madeleine and my 5-year-old son Jack that together, we can fix this. For their generation and generations to come. My top three legislative priorities will be combatting the climate crisis, reducing prescription drug costs, and enacting common-sense gun reform.

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

I'm currently an At-Large member of the Newton City Council, representing residents of one of the district's largest cities, with a focus on improving school building facilities, addressing the city's infrastructure and transportation challenges, and supporting local efforts to combat the climate change crisis. Most recently, I was appointed as Chair of the Finance Committee where I will spearhead the Council's work to ensure the health of Newton's long-term financial future. Before joining the Council, I served as an Assistant District Attorney for Middlesex County and as an Associate at the law firm of Goodwin Procter. I was also the Director of Operations for Steve Grossman's campaign for Treasurer in Massachusetts in 2010. I received my undergraduate degree in economics at Cornell University and earned a J.D. and M.B.A. from Harvard Law School and Harvard Business School. I believe my interdisciplinary professional experience and educational background have prepared me well for this role.

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

One major barrier is the lack of diversity in terms of who has a seat at the governing table. We need stakeholders of every color, creed, socioeconomic background, and gender in order to make meaningful progress in progressive policy. One of the biggest challenges we have is politicians in Washington are more worried about getting re-elected than passing meaningful legislation to help future generations. If we had 250 moms of school-age children in Congress, rather than 25, we wouldn't see the gridlock on guns, climate, and healthcare.

Additionally, I believe money in politics is the single biggest impediment to progressive policy at the federal level. Our campaign finance system and the extraordinary power held by special interests underly everything that is wrong with Washington. In a democracy, everyone is supposed to have an equal voice, and that will necessarily not be the case until we make meaningful campaign finance reform. Time and time again – and especially in the past decade since *Citizens United* opened the floodgates for dark money and corporate money – we've seen a direct link between the corrosive influence of money in politics and legislative outcomes that favor those who can buy influence in Washington. Whether it's health insurance companies lobbying to end coverage for pre-existing conditions, or Big Pharma indiscriminately jacking up prescription drug prices, or Big Oil persuading the EPA to roll back essential regulations, we see how abundant money in politics isn't merely an affront to American values, but also a destructive force with material outcomes that damage the public good.

## **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?

Right now in this country, the middle class is getting squeezed while wealth inequality continues to soar. Right here in the 4th District, there is a dramatic disparity, with a five times differential in annual median household income from the north in Dover down to the south in Fall River. I think that if we are one district, we should have one robust economy. There are too many who are struggling to make ends meet and get ahead despite working multiple jobs. And from the outset of this administration, President Trump and Republicans, pushed along by corporate special interests, have exacerbated this issue by giving the wealthy and corporations huge tax breaks without providing any relief to middle class and working class people. That's among the reasons why I refuse to take contributions from corporate PACs. The most fortunate among us and corporations need to pay more in taxes in order to fund our priorities at home – infrastructure, fighting climate change, healthcare – and share their prosperity so those less

fortunate can have a chance at security and prosperity. We need a far more progressive tax code, including by investing in tools and manpower to combat rising tax avoidance. Overall, we need a model of inclusive economic prosperity.

## **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?

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.)

I support the “Donut Hole” approach that President Obama and candidate Bernie Sanders have campaigned on, lifting the payroll tax cap only on earnings above \$250,000. I would support raising the cap for the highest income earners to protect Social Security without raising taxes on middle class families.

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?

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.*

I have seen first-hand how to build good paying jobs for workers and create companies that are built to last. My family's company, Grossman Marketing Group, has been a successful union shop since 1952. During all that time (68 years), three generations of Grossmans have never had a strike, a lockout, or a single matter go to arbitration.

### **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?

I absolutely believe healthcare is a human right and should be guaranteed. In order to get to Medicare for All and universal coverage, I would start with Medicare for All who want it. My underlying value is to get as many people covered in a quality and affordable way as quickly as possible, and I think starting by creating a public option is the best way to do that. Right now, too many families across the Commonwealth and the country are in crisis, and we need to provide immediate relief so people don't have to choose between the roof over their head or the medicine they need to stay alive.

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?

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?

Yes

*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.

First, I think we need a massive increase in hiring diverse teachers and faculty members across the country. In order to enable students from historically discriminated against communities to thrive, educators and mentors at school must be more representative of their students' backgrounds. Second, the government should target its federal dollars effectively by creating expanded incentives for schools and districts to move toward integration. Additionally, one of the biggest underlying economic issues is segregated housing and a housing affordability crisis. We need a larger supply of affordable housing across this country and especially in high-income neighborhoods.

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?

I'm a strong believer in public education. I'm a product of public education, and my kids are in public school. I also recognize that in Massachusetts, charter schools have played a role in offering a strong educational offering especially in our most vulnerable communities. However, I do worry about the financial impact that charter enrollment has in taking resources away from public schools. Though I think our charter schools that are currently operating should be allowed to continue to work, we should work out any funding kinks before expanding the program further.

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

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?

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?

We need to help those who are buried under the crushing weight of student debt. I would prioritize providing relief to lower-income workers.

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?

I think we must make college much more affordable than it is today. There should be a range of approaches, including expanding community colleges and technical and vocational education opportunities.

*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?

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?

Yes

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

Throughout my tenure on the Newton City Council, I've been a strong supporter of development and affordable housing, including supporting the recent Northland project.

### **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?

We need to have some mechanism available to bring people back to court, though jailing people for their inability to pay bail is not an appropriate solution.

d. Abolishing the death penalty?

Yes

e. Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which has been proven to have significant racial disparities?

I believe we need far stricter scrutiny and oversight for those who are being sentenced to life without parole. There are proven racial disparities that need to be rectified in order to ensure a just and equitable criminal justice system.

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?

a. Preventing companies from charging prisoners unreasonable fees for banking and telecommunications services?

Yes

b. Requiring that incarcerated individuals be paid for their work at a rate no lower than the federal minimum wage?

Yes

c. Restoring Pell Grant access to prisoners?

Yes

d. 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?

- a. Prohibiting the transfer of military weapons from the federal government to state and local law enforcement?

Yes – I support reinstating the Obama era limits. A peaceful protest should not be met by police officers carrying AR-15s.

- b. Eliminating qualified immunity, which allows law enforcement to violate people’s constitutional rights with impunity?

Yes.

- c. 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?

No one should be punished for trying to make a better life for their family.

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?

What is happening at our southern border is appalling and Donald Trump's cruel immigration policy is utterly indefensible. I believe we need to drastically overhaul ICE and provide a much clearer direction for the agency that prioritizes actual dangers such as weapons smuggling, human trafficking, and the importation of illicit drugs. In order for ICE to operate appropriately, we need to reform their culture and ensure that there is compassion within their personnel and policy.

3. **Ending Mass Deportations.** Would you support a moratorium on deportations until a comprehensive immigration reform bill is passed?

I would support a moratorium on deportations until comprehensive immigration reform is passed with the exception of those detained for violent crimes.

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?

Immigration is deeply personal to me. I am able to have the life I have and run for Congress because my family was able to escape Poland and immigrate to this country before the Holocaust. Through hard work and a love of the United States, they built a life here. The Trump Administration appears to be treating the families at the border in an intentionally cruel manner. We need to reestablish the U.S. as a beacon of light for those fleeing oppression and violence, and therefore I believe we should reinstate the refugee admittance standard of the Obama years.

*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?

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)?

Yes

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

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 – particularly with respect to handguns and assault weapons.

- 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 believe it's vital that we act on the national level to disarm domestic abusers, implement red flag laws, and close the gun show loophole.

## **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.

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?

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?

Yes

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

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?

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?

I absolutely support the Green New Deal. We need a national mobilization plan to overhaul our infrastructure and transportation system, phase out fossil fuels, transition to a fully green economy, and ensure environmental justice for frontline communities – all while putting millions of people to work with good-paying union jobs. We need to meet the scale of the climate emergency with fierce determination and urgency.

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 – though a rebate structure would also be important here so we're not hurting the most vulnerable among us.

- 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 – though I think it's vital to provide retraining and education for workers who will lose pipeline jobs.

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?

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?

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?

Yes

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

Yes

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

My top priorities would include reinvesting in mass transit – making public transportation faster and more accessible while working to ensure we move quickly to electrify our fleet of buses and trains. Too many people in the Commonwealth and across the country are experiencing diminished quality of life as a result of long commutes and increasingly bad traffic. This is also having a harmful effect on our climate. In order to connect workers to job hubs, we need to produce more efficient systems for mass transit. Additionally, we are racing against time to make our infrastructure climate-resilient in order to avoid the most devastating consequences of climate change. We should be looking to overhaul vulnerable infrastructure with an eye towards environmental justice for those communities who have experienced or will experience the worst effects of climate change. Throughout my tenure on the Newton City Council, I’ve been a strong supporter of smart, transit-oriented development and affordable housing, including supporting the recent Northland project.

*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.



Out of 435 members of Congress, only 25 are mothers of school-aged children. I believe if we had 250 moms of young kids in Congress, we could move the conversation forward in so many realms – from immigration reform, to combatting the climate emergency, to enacting aggressive gun control measures. We need new and different types of people stepping into leadership roles at the federal level, and I'm prepared to bring this valuable perspective to Congress.