

Metropolitan Washington Council

2016 DC Election Candidate Questionnaire

The Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO, which represents 180 local unions in all industry sectors, including the public and federal sectors, has priorities which include

- creating family sustaining jobs for all
- investing in education, infrastructure, healthcare and transportation
- improving the lives of workers through education, quality job training, career advancement and livable wages with good benefits
- ensuring fair, progressive tax policies
- making high-quality, affordable healthcare available to everyone
- holding corporations and government more accountable to ensure that the public good is served by taxpayer dollars
- ensuring that a worker's universal right to organize and to bargain collectively for wages, hours and conditions of work are maintained and enforced

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Candidate Full Name: Vincent C. Gray

Office Seeking: Councilmember

Ward or At-Large: Ward 7

Office:

Democrat

Republican

Statehood/Green

Other (please specify)

Campaign Address: 2619 Branch Avenue SE Washington, DC 20019

Candidate Contact Information: 202.670.6823

Treasurer Name and Address:

Name Chuck Thies

Street Address 1609 Buchanan Street NE

City Washington, DC

State DC

Zip Code 20018

Accepts PAC Contributions Yes No

Restrictions on PAC Contribution [Click here to enter text.](#)

Previous Elected/Appointed Office:

Mayor

Council Chair

Councilmember, Ward 7

Terms of Previous Office:

2011-2015

2007-2011

2005-2007

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Have you ever received the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO endorsement?

Yes No

When:

Have you ever assisted a Labor organization to achieve any of its goals?

Yes No

If yes, please explain:

I strongly support the rights of District workers. I strongly support District workers' rights to fully and lawfully exercise their rights. I am seeking this endorsement because as the son of union member, I believe workers rights should be upheld and supported.

As mayor, I ensured that fair contractors were negotiated and approved to include wage increases and good working conditions. I worked to re-establish the Labor Management Partnership Council and served as Co-Chair with a labor leader. Also, reorganizing the importance of the D.C. One Fund, I led its reinvigoration and ensured that a labor leader served as Vice Chairperson.

Please explain why you seek labor's endorsement?

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Washington National and Dulles airports are an important source of employment for people in our communities. But instead of helping our communities move ahead, the low wages and poor conditions for food and retail workers at these airports are keeping workers behind. At Dulles, the estimated average wage for retail and food service workers is just \$9.74 per hour yet for every hour worked by a concessions employee at the airport, the government makes an estimated \$14. Major airports across the country have taken great strides in giving retail and food service workers a better deal by working with UNITE HERE. We believe that airport concessions workers in our nation’s capital deserve the same. D.C. appoints several members to the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority which governs these airports.

1)		What would you do to ensure that National and Dulles airport food and retail workers are paid fair wages and benefits?
		Answer A
		I met with Unite Here 23 leadership and workers as they requested, then reached out to members of the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority that I had appointed and asked that they meet with Unite Here 23 staff and members on this issue. Both indicated they would meet with the Union representative as I requested.
		Answer B
		Click here to enter text.

Many studies have shown that good patient outcomes and short hospital stays require adequate numbers of registered professional nurses at the bedside. When there are fewer RN’s to care for more and increasingly ill patients, complications multiply and expensive hospital stays are increased.

2)		Do you support the Safe Working Conditions for Healthcare Workers Amendment Act of 2015, also known as the Patient Protection Act, introduced by Chairman Phil Mendelson and four other members of the District Council (and passed 4-1 by the Committee on Business, Regulatory and Consumer Affairs) that would impose mandatory, minimum nurse-to-patient ratios in DC hospitals?
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> I strongly support proper hospital staffing ratios to ensure that patients receive

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		<p>quality care and promote the retention of experienced nurses. Initially, I had reservations about whether these duties should be mandated; left to the hospitals' professional discretion; or included in an accreditation process. After considerable reflection and review, I have concluded that a statutory requirement is the preferred approach because it provides the best form of patient protection. In no way does this impugn the integrity of hospitals, but on the contrary, it sends a powerful message to consumers about the extent to which patient protection is part of the civic culture.</p>
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More and more companies are springing up offering visitors to the City options other than registered businesses such as hotels and bed and breakfast inns, such as stays in people's homes and apartments in residential neighborhoods. This causes noise, parking problems, and loss of tax revenue.

3)		<p>Do you support stronger enforcement of our zoning laws, which are designed to protect our neighborhoods and affordable housing from the unchecked growth of short-term rentals?</p>
		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Many kinds of festivals, concerts, promotions occur on city property or on property controlled by the City and some of these vendors exploit the workforce used to operate these events, paying lowest wages tolerated, providing no healthcare, offering no job training to enhance the skill set, and treating these workers as "1099 independent contractors", thereby avoiding Social Security and payroll taxes. This situation also disadvantages the "brick and mortar" permanent facilities providing arts and entertainment in our city.

4)		<p>Would you be willing to support DC legislation that would require any and all presenters, promoters, vendors, "Events DC", et al doing any form of for-profit theatrical presentation, show or concert on City property or on property controlled by the City to pay all of their employees an area-standard wage, provide health care coverage and access to job training in the Technical Entertainment Industry?</p>
		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

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The Davis-Bacon Act of 1931 requires the payment of local prevailing wages for the construction of DC government public works projects, such as public schools, fire and police stations, and roads and bridges. Relying on a narrow definition of public works that is currently the subject of a court challenge, the District requires some government-assisted development projects to pay construction workers the local Davis Bacon wages, but not others. For example, development projects receiving Tax Increment Financing from the District are required to pay their construction workers local prevailing wages, but projects receiving property and other types of tax abatements, using the District’s industrial revenue bond program, or leasing or purchasing District-owned land are not required to pay local prevailing wages.

5)		<p>As a DC Councilmember, will you introduce and support legislation to require the payment of Davis Bacon wages by construction contractors and subcontractors working on ALL projects receiving property and other tax abatements, involving the sale or lease of District-owned land, or participating in the revenue bond program?</p>
		<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>We should do all we can to ensure that programs designed to facilitate development provide prevailing wages to workers while creating jobs for as many District residents as possible. For example, I have been a strong proponent of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs), as clearly evidenced in the agreements I approved for the new D.C. United Stadium to be built in coming months and for construction of the new Frederick Douglas/South Capitol Street Bridge. These two projects taken together total about \$900 million and will pay Davis Bacon wages to workers.</p>

6)		<p>What 2-3 things would you do to close the large and growing achievement gaps in our public schools? What would you do to ensure that all students and their schools have a healthy physical environment, quality teachers, instructional supplies and other resources they need to be successful?</p>
		<p>I will continue the work I started while serving as Mayor. In 2008, I lead the passage of the Pre-K Expansion Act, making us the nation’s leader in early-childhood education. While other cities and states are still focused on pre-K quantity, we have shifted our focus to increasing</p>

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	<p>quality. As mayor, I worked to ensure that our youngest children benefit from quality child care. We started the process of establishing an innovative community-based Quality Improvement system that will allow children and families to benefit from comprehensive child-development and family-support-engagement services.</p> <p>Additionally, I believe we should continue to invest in the 21st-century version of vocational education. During my administration, the District launched nine new high school “career academies” at six DCPS and two public charter schools in partnership with the National Academy Foundation. The NAF Academies prepare students in three of the District’s most vital and fast-growing career sectors: information technology; construction and engineering and hospitality. It is crucial that we find opportunities that meet the needs of all our students and allow them to graduate with skills that will set them up for future success. The career sectors chosen represent career academies has continued to expand and now include additional schools. This has led to the implementation of 21st Century Career and Technical Education.</p>
	<p>School buildings reflect a community’s investment in its children’s education, and better buildings create better learning environments. As mayor, the District’s ongoing school-modernization efforts were accelerated, with nearly 30 schools modernized including, Cardozo High School, Dunbar High School, H.D. Woodson High School, Anacostia High School and Ballou High School. Additional modernization projects which were included in the Capital Budget when I was mayor are currently underway. This includes schools like Roosevelt (substantially completed), Ellington School for Performing Arts and Coolidge which is undergoing SIT process. New schools speak strongly to the value we place on public education, but alone they won’t get the job done. Investments must go on to support the work underway inside of schools. During my administration, public education funding grew in each of the my budgets, culminating in a historic \$112 million additional investment for DCPS and public charters in my final budget. This included a \$60 million investment in a new “at-risk” weight targeted towards students who are at the greatest risk for academic failure.</p>
	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>

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7)		<p>The collective bargaining agreement covering DC teachers expired 3 years ago. The effect of this is to deny collective bargaining rights to those who democratically voted to join a union. What is the role of the City Council in ensuring that contract negotiations are not intentionally stalled by labor or by management? How would you ensure that the voice of workers is heard and encourage a broader, productive, and a more healthy labor/management relationship?</p>
		Answer A
		Click here to enter text.
		<p>Contract negotiation and execution is the role of the Executive Branch.</p> <p>However, the Council is vested with the responsibility and authority to approve these contracts. In that regard, I would not hesitate to express my support for moving expeditiously to complete negotiations and I would also introduce a resolution for Council approval to urge that the contract be completed give the potential negative consequences to our students and teachers, if not done. I also would urge that the Labor Management Partnership Council, which was rejuvenated under my leadership as Mayor, remain an active part of ensuring healthy and constructive dialogue. I would not hesitate to use the Council's oversight role to help keep negotiations on track. I am a strong supporter of DC worker rights and have a well-established track record of doing just that.</p>
		Click here to enter text.

8A)		<p>MetroAccess is a share-ride, door-to-door, paratransit service in the region for the most vulnerable transit passengers (the elderly and those with disabilities that can't take traditional transit). Do you support the allocation of additional funding to paratransit that will allow the companies to provide pay and benefits equivalent to their WMATA bus operator counterparts?</p>
		<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>MetroAccess employees provide an important service to District residents. The people who drive for MetroAccess are expected to have skill levels equivalent to other drives in the Metro system and thus should be equally compensated. I spent much of my career working with and on behalf of people with disabilities. Thus, I have an enormous appreciation for the importance of skilled and sensitive workers engaged with people who may be especially vulnerable because of their disability.</p>

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8B)		<p>Additionally, would you support the crafting of legislation that would set standards that would ensure that paratransit operators are not required to accept money outside of their vans and set schedules that would ensure that riders do not have to be transported for hours before they are dropped off?</p>
		<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Maximum efforts should be put forth to ensure that benefits, like medicaid, are fully used on behalf of riders who are eligible for said benefits. If the question implies that there is an exchange of cash that endangers riders and drivers an alternative billing system should be used. I heartily support schedules that reduce the amount of time riders are required to be on a van.</p>

9)		<p>In 2014, at least 170 Metrobus operators reported being assaulted and in 2015, there were even more incidents, including a station manager being stabbed and a bus operator who was caught in gun crossfire. Would you be willing to work with labor to craft legislation that would ensure the consistent enforcement of the law to protect transit operators who are assaulted on the job and protect them from excessive discipline when they are assaulted?</p>
		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Worker safety on the job is crucial; we need stronger collaboration and cooperation between the Metro Police and the Metropolitan Police Department. I would be happy to craft and introduce such legislation. But first, I would like to spearhead an effort to identify where there are gaps in existing legislation so that we maximize the likelihood of success in any new legislative proposals.</p>

Congress extended the Abolishment Act (D.C. Code §§ 1-624.08 et seq.), effectively allowing the DC government to define the procedures governing any RIF initiated by an agency head, by limiting the procedures to which an aggrieved employee is entitled, and rendering those procedures nonnegotiable. Although this was a misguided effort to help

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DC government reduce costs, agency heads exploited this Act, often using it as a means to rid their agencies of unpopular employees. The use of such improperly targeted RIF's is an abuse of authority and does not serve the interests of the District. DC workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement have been unfairly deprived of any meaningful opportunity to assert the rights that they were intended to have under the District of Columbia Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act.

10)		Will you support legislation to repeal provisions of the Abolishment Act that override collective bargaining agreements?
		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

11)		Should DC government be able to override collective bargaining agreement provisions regarding RIFs?
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collectively bargained agreements should reflect the law and the applicable statutes should have fairness to workers as a key principle. The Council should use its oversight role to ensure employee fairness and exercise its legislative role to correct problems where evident.

In October 2015, the DC City Council passed emergency legislation creating a pilot program to address the “crisis” in the management of Emergency Medical Services. The emergency legislation created a two-tiered strategy of EMS calls: Basic Firefighters/Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) would respond to all EMS calls. Patients with low priority medical conditions would be required to wait for a private ambulance to transport them to a hospital. If a private ambulance does not arrive in 10 minutes, the patients would then be required to wait for a fully staffed EMS medic unit to arrive.

The EMS stakeholders consists of many unique and well-trained committed individuals who have a vested interest in the well-being of the District of Columbia residents who

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depend on emergency services. They are committed to delivering quality care, providing safe transport, and ensuring that DC residents receive continuous care before and during their transport to the appropriate facility.

12)		In your opinion, are important government services such as emergency medical transport better served by strengthening DC workers who provide those services or by privatization?
		X <input type="checkbox"/> Keep work in house
		<input type="checkbox"/> Privatize

13)		Would you be willing to introduce or support legislation that would mandate annual safety testing by an approved and recognized entity of all Fire and EMS equipment and apparatus?
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/>
		This should be an inherent executive function and practice but legislation would ensure this important effort is carried out.

The Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act of 1974 (CMPA) establishes the right of DC government employees to form unions if they so desire, and sets out how representation elections will be held, how collective bargaining will be conducted, and how disputes will be resolved.

14)		Some ES employees (paraprofessionals) work only 10 months out of 12. Would you support legislation to allow these workers to receive unemployment services during the summer months when they are deemed as officially being laid off employees?
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/>

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15)		Will you vote to uphold the provisions of the CMPA if they are challenged in any way which reduces workers' rights?
		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

16)		If elected, what would you publicly do to ensure guaranteed healthcare for all is a right and not a privilege?
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/> <p>The District has some of the strongest health benefits programs in the nation. With one of the best Medicaid programs in the nation supported by the Health Care Alliance for people who do not qualify for Medicaid, along with the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), we have about 94% of our adults covered by health insurance, which is the second highest in the nation. We have 97% of our children covered, which is the highest in the nation. We need to continued to use the Affordable Care Act aggressively until everyone in the city is insured. We should not allow private employers to use public benefits program as a substitute for their own insurance coverage.</p>

17)		In a City where the cost of living is incredibly high, do you support raising the minimum wage in the District of Columbia to \$15 an hour?
		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <p>As mayor, I was pleased to sign into law a bill that raised the District's minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour (although I regret that the Council did not raise the rate to \$10 an hour as I had originally proposed). Under this law, the minimum wage is slated to increase by \$1.00 on July 1 each year through this year, capping at \$11.50 per hour. I recently announced that I will support an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour as New York state and California have done. Given the success of our city, the increases in the cost of living and the continuing challenges of poverty, this will ease some of the economic strains of living in the District. It will be hugely important to continue to invest in preparing our residents with increasingly sophisticated skill levels.</p>

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18)		Rent control has helped maintain affordable housing in DC. Do you support making rent control permanent in our City?
		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		I support the District's current rent control statute.

Although the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively for their wages, hours and working conditions is a right recognized in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and although federal labor law protects this right, employers routinely fire, harass, demote and otherwise punish workers who try to form a union. In order to help protect a workers' right to unionize, would you be willing to:

19)	X	Urge employers to respect their employees' right to form a union by remaining neutral during a union organizing campaign?
	X	Write a letter to unorganized workers endorsing an organizing drive by a labor union?
	X	Write a letter to urge an employer to re-hire a worker fired because he/she supported the union during an organizing drive?
	X	Urge the public to utilize union produced products (the labor federation can provide lists)?
	X	Walk a picket line in support of a labor union?
	X	Other (please specify)

20) For the measures above that you have agreed to support, would you be willing to:

- Co-sponsor legislation X
 - Work with our lobbyists to pass the bill X
 - Testify at a hearing in support of legislation X
 - Speak at public events in support of legislation X
 - Write a letter in support of legislation X
- Other (please specify):

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21)		<p>There are companies with bad labor relations records (i.e. not paying their employees prevailing wages, retaliating against employees for organizing activities, or failing to pay fair wages etc.) that still receive DC government contracts. Will you support policies barring these companies from receiving government contracts or any government assistance?</p>
		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I strongly support the rights of District workers. I commit to fully enforcing the law to protect workers and District taxpayers and deny government contracts to any “bad actors” to the fullest extent the law allows.</p>

22)		<p>Do you support allowing teachers who teach in DC public charter schools to join a union if they so choose so they can have the same rights to bargain for wages, benefits, and working conditions as other public, federal and private sector workers do?</p>
		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I strongly support the rights of District workers. I also strongly support current District and federal law that allows employees to join a union.</p>

23)		<p>There are independent DC government agencies such as the Public Service Commission, The Office of the Tenant Advocate, Office of the People's Counsel, the Public Employee Relations Board, and University of the District of Columbia Board of Trustees, and others that must function without political interference. The Mayor appoints the heads of these independent agencies and members of these Boards with the confirmation of the City Council. Boards can be stymied and stopped if timely replacements of those whose terms expire are not made by the Mayor; leaving the board without a quorum means no work can be done by the commissions. Will you support legislation that will allow the heads of these independent agencies and members of these independent boards to continue to serve past their terms until they are replaced by someone who is appointed and qualified?</p>
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		<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>In most cases, current District law allows appointees to either hold over for 180 days past the expiration of their term or until their successor is appointed and confirmed. When I came into office as Mayor, I inherited from the prior administration roughly 900 vacancies – roughly 40% of all executive branch appointments– in the membership of District boards and commissions with several key board unable to produce a quorum to conduct important business. I am pleased to report that my Administration eliminated this backlog by appointing diverse, highly qualified members from all parts of the city and that all boards and commissions then had enough members for a quorum. I am also pleased to say that my Administration worked closely with key stakeholders, including organized labor, to ensure that all important communities and voices were represented on these important boards and commissions. I worked hard to ensure that members of organized labor were appointed to the Boards and Commissions where such background was relevant.</p>
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24)		<p>Justice delayed is justice denied. Likewise pay and benefit improvements denied is not justice. Once a collective bargaining contract has been reached between a union representing public employees and the City, do you pledge to fully fund those contracts and require the Mayor to send the contract to the City Council for approval within 30 days after the contract has been ratified by the union members?</p>
		<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes. I ensured that happened as Mayor.</p>

25)		<p>Freedom of speech and the right to protest are fundamental American rights honored above all others. Will you oppose any attempt to limit these freedoms, especially by workers who must protest to protect their livelihoods and their rights?</p>
		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I strongly support the rights of District workers. I strongly support District workers' rights to fully and lawfully exercise their First Amendment rights.</p>

A study released in June 2015 found that the majority of people who work in retail and food service in the District receive their work schedule less than one week in advance and are scheduled for fewer hours than they would like to work.

26)		<p>Do you support bill B21-512, the "Hours and Scheduling Stability Act of 2015" – introduced and sponsored by 8 Councilmembers -- that would ensure chain retail and food establishments offer available work hours to qualified current employees and post employee schedules three weeks in advance?</p>
		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>This is highly desirable and fair. It is my understanding that negotiations on the bill are actively underway. I would like to be kept abreast of any changes that might materially impact legislation. At the conclusion, I want to do what is best for the workers so that they have the best possible working conditions.</p>

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The role of the central labor council is to organize in the community to promote social justice for all working People.

27 A)		<p>What do you believe are the 3 most important issues facing working people in the District, and how will you make an impact on those issues if elected to this office? Please include both short-term and long-term specifics.</p>
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>The Cost of living in the District.</u> I will continue to support a fair and equitable negotiations process and wages that facilitate people being able to live in the city if they wish. 2. <u>Affordability in housing.</u> That can be facilitated not only by tax investment in affordable housing but also be ensuring that we have a trained workforce which sees wage earnings growth so meeting the cost of living is achieved not only from tax dollars committed to housing but that workers earn more, thus more readily addressing their financial obligations. 3. <u>Getting a first class public education for children.</u> Families will benefit mightily including the children of working families who will feel less compelled to move to another jurisdiction.