



**Metropolitan Washington
Council AFL-CIO
Committee on Political
Education (COPE)**

**2020 District of Columbia
Primary Election
Candidate Questionnaire**

Metropolitan Washington Council AFL-CIO • 2020 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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GENERAL INFORMATION:

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Ward: 7

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Candidate for: Councilmember-Ward 7

Campaign Committee Name and Address: Vince Gray 2020, 2619 Branch Avenue, SE,
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Does your campaign accept PAC contributions? Yes/No

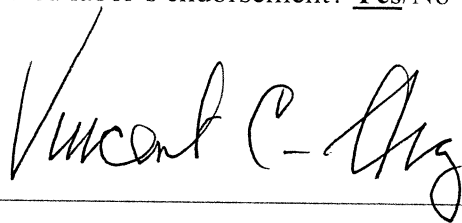
Previously elected / appointed office:

Office: Ward 7 Councilmember, Council Chairman, Mayor, Ward 7 Councilmember

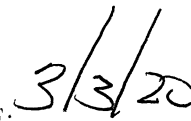
Term: 2005-2007, 2007-2011, 2011-2015, 2017-Present

Have you ever received labor's endorsement? Yes/No If Yes, When? 2016, 2010, 2006

SIGNATURE: _____



DATE: _____



Please return your signed questionnaire by Tuesday, March 3, 2020 to:
David Stephen, MWC Political and Legislative Director, dstephen@dclabor.org

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For questions, please email or call: 202-974-8222

Overview:

As the voice of working people across the United States, the Washington Metropolitan Council (MWC), is the heart of the American labor movement.

By uniting labor unions from across the region and mobilizing the local community, the MWC plays a critical role in local, state, and national issues.

The Council's affiliated unions represent over 150,000 area union members across the labor spectrum, from service and hospitality industries, retail sales, and communications to transportation, manufacturing, construction and building trades, and, of course, the public sector at all levels, including DC government.

Our priorities 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 accountable to ensure that taxpayer dollars serve the public good; and
- Ensuring that workers universal right to organize and to bargain collectively for wages, hours, and conditions of work are maintained and enforced.

CORNERSTONE ISSUES OF LABOR

ALL WORKING PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- **A Good Job with Fair Wages**
- **Quality Health Care**
- **A Safe Job**
- **Paid Time Off and Flexible, Predictable Scheduling**
- **Freedom from Discrimination**
- **Retire with Dignity**
- **Fully-Funded Public Education**
- **Freedom to Join Together**
- **A Voice in Democracy**

Better Wages and Benefits

When people negotiate through collective bargaining, they gain better wages and benefits. Decent raises, predictable schedules, and family-friendly policies do not just happen without working people coming together and advocating for better workplaces.

Workplace Safety

The labor movement has led the charge to protect working people from workplace injury, illness, and death. Working with allies, labor has won strong protections against hazards and stronger rights for workers. Through organizing and collective bargaining, unions have gained robust protections and a real voice in safety and health at the workplace.

Pay equity

In 2016, women in unions made 23 percent higher wages than those not in a union. Moreover, unions have narrowed the gender wage gap to just 6 percent (compared to 16 percent for non-union). In addition, unions are also more likely to have various types of paid leave to balance work and family.¹

Building Power for Working People

Union members work together to negotiate and enforce a contract with management that guarantees things like decent raises, affordable health care, safer workplaces, job security, and a stable schedule.

¹ Economic Policy Institute "Unions help narrow the gender wage gap," Gould, McNicholas April 3, 2017

2020 Candidate Questionnaire

PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN WHY YOU SEEK LABOR'S ENDORSEMENT:

I am seeking labor's endorsement because, as the son of a union member and shop steward, I believe workers' rights should be upheld and supported. I strongly support the rights of District workers and their right to fully and lawfully exercise those rights.

As mayor, I ensured that fair contracts were negotiated and approved to include wage increases and good working conditions. I worked to reestablish the Labor Management Partnership Council and served as CoChair with a labor leader. Also, recognizing the importance of the D.C. One Fund, I led its reinvigoration and ensured that a labor leader served as Vice Chairperson.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining is the process in which working people, through unions, negotiate contracts with their employers to determine the terms of employment, including pay, benefits, hours, leave, job health and safety policies, ways to balance work and family, and more. Collective bargaining is the heart and soul of the Labor Movement. Collective bargaining is a way to solve workplace problems, and is also the best means for raising wages in America. Indeed, through collective bargaining, working people in unions have higher wages, better benefits and safer workplaces.

Do you support for the District of Columbia (please respond Yes or No):

- Yes** The rights of public and private sector workers to organize and have union representation.
- Yes** The right to freely exercise workplace rights free from harassment, intimidation and/or delays.
- Yes** The right to bargain collectively with a legal obligation on both sides to negotiate in good faith.
- Yes** The right to resolve differences in a fair, impartial and timely manner, including a timely resolution to binding arbitration.

Additional Comments or clarification: *Collective bargaining is an essential part of Samuel Gompers' work and legacy. Through collective bargaining, our labor practices have lifted our capitalist economy higher than the simple bottom line of a company by using the collective power of working people to make sure their intrinsic value and the value brought to a company are neither forgotten nor diminished. Freedom in our nation, much like rights and liberties in the workplace, are only as good as their protection.*

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RIGHT TO WORK

“Right to Work” laws prohibit workers from negotiating a “union shop” or “union security” clause in their contracts. Such a clause obligates those in the bargaining unit to pay their fair share of the collective bargaining representation costs. By wiping out that protection, “Right to Work” legislation, actually weakens the rights of working people and dismantles unions. Would you commit to:

Opposing legislation to bring “Right to Work” in DC?

Yes

No

Other (explain below)

Additional Comments or clarification: *As the son of a union member and shop steward, and longtime labor supporter, I believe in and support the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively for their wages, hours and working conditions.*

UNION DUES AND JANUS V. AFSCME DECISION

In 2018, the Supreme Court issued what is probably its single most consequential ruling in *Janus v. AFSCME*. The ruling was a devastating blow against public-sector unions barring them from applying “agency fees” to the public employees for whom they negotiate pay increases and benefits if those employees decline to join the union as full members. Would you commit to:

Working with labor to find a legal remedy to allowing unions to collect a service fee from nonmembers for the cost of union representation as long as there are protections for those who object on religious grounds.

Yes

No

Other (explain below)

Additional Comments or clarification: *This is a very complex issue that the Supreme Court has weighed in on. If legislation is introduced that withstands constitutional scrutiny, I am open to finding a way to resolve the problems caused by Janus for workers employed by local and state governments.*

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HEALTHCARE WORKERS & ACCESS

Universal Health Services Inc. (UHS) hospital (background):

Mayor Muriel Bowser's administration has been negotiating with UHS to be the operator of the new hospital in Ward 8. The deal with UHS is expected to be announced to the public early this year.

Community groups, labor groups, and residents of Wards 7 and 8 have serious concerns about UHS as a bad actor because the company puts profits over patients.

- George Washington University Hospital has just sued UHS because "Instead of investing" in GWU's mission, "UHS has paid itself" with "outsized dividends from artificially inflated, excess profits."²
- UHS was found to violate labor law by the National Labor Relations Board in 2019. The Court found they attempted to illegally bust the union at George Washington University Hospital.
- A \$127 million judgment was levied against UHS by the Department of Justice after being sued for defrauding Medicare and Medicaid services.
- UHS understaffs its facilities across multiple states, putting patients and workers at risk.
- UHS refuses to create an independent committee to protect rights and health of patients and workers. This secrecy threatens patients' health and workers' jobs.
- UHS does not have plans to build a level-1 trauma center nor a high-risk obstetrics unit or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), despite great need East of the River.
- UHS and Mayor Bowser's office will not give any guarantees that staff from UMC will have jobs at the new hospital. The deal has no plan for these devoted caregivers, some of whom have worked at the hospital and lived in the community for decades.

Community and labor groups have been left out of this process and the deal has been secretive and rushed, thus leading to a lack of critical services and labor protections. This lack of services and protections will affect the whole city. The labor community believes that DC residents deserve a world-class hospital East of the River. Will you support efforts to:

See comments below Require the new hospital to hire the workers from UMC in their current position with their current benefits and union representation.

See comments below Guarantee neutrality for workers at the new medical facility to organize.

See comments below Ensure high level quality of services needed for the Ward 7 and 8 communities including high-risk obstetrics and a minimum Level 2 trauma unit.

² GWU sues corporate hospital partner, leaving fate of Southeast project uncertain, Washington Post, Peter Jamison, Dec. 10, 2019

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Additional Comments or clarification: *I have made fighting for health equity for the residents on the East End of the District a top priority for the past decade. And, I too believe the 150,000 residents living in the East End of the District deserve a world-class hospital. I had campaigned on the promise of bringing not just a hospital but a real comprehensive health care system to Wards 7 and 8. This new hospital will be a state-of-the-art trauma-certified hospital with obstetrical care, which will be connected to a system of urgent care, primary care, ambulatory care and specialty care, including medical offices for independent physicians.*

As to the state of United Medical Center (UMC), on May 1, 2017, an article by the Washington Post highlighted the worsening financial condition of UMC under Veritas as its operator. Therefore, during the FY 2018 budget process, I worked with my Council colleagues to restore \$300 million for the construction of a new East End hospital. I then supported additional funding for a mandatory Project Labor Agreement on the hospital's construction. Subsequently, OB services at the hospital were shut down leaving residents on the East End of the city with no option to have their babies delivered at an East End hospital. During the same time, the District of Columbia Nurses Association voted "No Confidence" in UMC leadership. Meanwhile, I wrote a letter to the City Administrator requesting the immediate funding of the \$3.4 million retroactive portion of the United Medical Center nurses' contract. These efforts were successful and helped to move forward on the long-delayed raises for the nurses at UMC.

UMC's building is over 50 years old which makes it impossible to deliver modern quality health care services without continuously escalating maintenance costs. And despite no cuts to programs or services this fiscal year, inpatient volume at UMC continues to decline. Therefore, we must move with a great sense of urgency. We need a new hospital as quickly as possible. I am committed to adjusting the statutory closure date of UMC to ensure that we have a continuous hospital presence in the East End of the District and a smooth transition to our new state-of-the-art hospital.

I intend to hold a hearing and closely scrutinize the partnership contract when it is sent to the Council. I will not approve it if it does not have strong requirements for training, hiring guarantees for current UMC employees who can pass a skills examination, and neutrality provisions. I am committed to ensuring that the new hospital has obstetrical and trauma care services, however, please note that UMC currently has neither. The District currently has four level-1 trauma centers (Washington Hospital Center, Howard University Hospital, George Washington University Hospital and Children's National Hospital), which is more than many states. I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with organized labor as we build a world-class health care system, not just a hospital, in Wards 7 and 8.

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EDUCATION:

Affiliates of the MWC represent teachers, bus drivers and other school related personnel in DCPS. Despite an increase in Mayor Bowser's education budget for FY2020, 20 public schools, including 17 schools in Wards 7 and 8, saw significant budget cuts for the current school year.

**Please note that ensuring the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula receives at least an inflation adjustment every fiscal year is a challenge we should all be prioritizing. In both the FY18 and FY20 budgets, the proposed budget included anemic increases in public school funding. In FY18, I called for a 4% increase in the funding, and along with my Council colleagues, was able to achieve a 3% increase. In the FY20 budget process, I was able to contribute millions to restoring funding to the 31 DCPS schools that were slated for funding reductions in the proposed budget, many of which were in Wards 7 and 8.*

Overall funding for DCPS has not kept up with rising costs, leading to cuts in many schools. Additionally, the Labor Movement believes that regardless of where a student attends school, they are entitled to the same rights as a student, including transparency and adherence to local laws. To serve the best interest of education in the District, will you commit to:

- Yes** Proving school that receive a net flow of students throughout the school year additional resources.
- Yes** Working with teachers through their union to implement methods to close the opportunity gap of schools in lower-income communities.
- Yes** Working with the community and labor union representatives to address gun violence and student safety including enforcing trauma informed practices and screening.
- No*** Supporting the right of all public sector unions and DCPS to collectively bargain on teacher evaluation standards and procedures?

**I believe teachers should participate in the crafting and refinement of performance assessment approaches and their invaluable input must be solicited and strongly considered in order to improve performance assessment tools.*

See comments below Ensuring that all Local Education Agencies (LEA) are subject to FOIA, Open Meetings and transparency laws.

It has been my practice and remains my commitment to use the Council's oversight powers to promote and achieve transparency and accountability, particularly around the public school budget processes, and ensure the law is executed with fidelity.

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I am committed to working with my Council colleagues as well as our public school students, families and stakeholders to see how we can improve transparency and accountability in our public schools.

Would you support ending Mayoral control of schools and educational policies and placing them in the purview of an elected School Board?

Yes

No

Other (explain below)

Additional Comments or clarification: *The DC State Board of Education plays an important role in approving a number of critical elements of our state education policy, advising OSSE on a range of policy issues, and elevating key areas of interest to stakeholders and the general public. But, I do not believe that there are any specific needs that call for expansion of the SBOE's authority, but would always be open to specific proposals as needs shift. Further, there is little evidence that an appointed or elected local board of education would make a material difference in educating our children. I would like to see consideration accorded to determine the feasibility of the elected State Board of Education hiring and supervising the State Superintendent.*

Consistent with the adopted recommendations of the DC Advisory Committee on Student Assignment, I believe that public education in the District would benefit from increased cooperation and coordinated planning across all of our public schools – DCPS and PCS. In order to optimize public resources and ensure that the full range of student needs is addressed, I would support the establishment of a structure and process that brings transparency, student-centered interest, and comprehensive data to decisions on any proposed changes in school supply (including new school openings, closures, expansions, and site changes) across DCPS and PCS.

ACCOUNTABILITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Entertainment

Accidents in the event/entertainment industry are far too common. Thankfully you would have to go back in time over 20 years to the last fatal accident in Washington DC when a lighting supervisor working for upstaging fell 90 feet from the catwalk of the DC Armory and died the night before a Marilyn Manson concert, but it has happened, and without regulation it could happen again. Look at what happened to the deputy Mayor this past March, a speaker falling on a person attending a rally should never happen. Unfortunately, accidents like that go un-reported far too often. This is a public safety issue that needs to be taken seriously.

Would you be willing to support DC legislation that would amend Title 47, Chapter 18 of the District of Columbia Official Code to ensure:

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- 1) that a person or party responsible for the staging and operation of a special event in the District holds a basic business license and an Entertainment endorsement to such license and
- 2) to establish a safety qualification program for technicians employed in the staging of special events by requiring that at least one member of the staging crew hold a rigger's certification issued by the Entertainment Technician Certification Program, and that all persons employed in such operations complete a minimum safety training course (OSHA-10) prior to working on the event?

Yes

No

Additional Comments or clarification:

Wage Theft

While wage theft is pervasive and highly damaging, there is some good news: the problem is not unassailable. To be most effective, anti-wage theft laws must be meaningfully and effectively enforced, and must be accompanied by other legal provisions that empower victims to speak up against their abuse, such as strong anti-retaliation laws.

Will you work with community groups, city administration and other advocates to support proven programs that combat wage theft??

Yes

No

Will you commit to supporting an increase in funding in the departments and programs that work to ensure that workers are paid correctly, including the Department of Employee Services (DOES), as well as securing funding for community members who are third party enforcers, and a robust public awareness and accountability program?

Yes

No

Additional Comments or clarification: *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. As Mayor, I was proud to sign the Workplace Fraud Act into law to offer workers additional protections from wage theft or other insidious practices. No employee should be treated unfairly by an unscrupulous employer. During my administration, key staffers at the Department of Employment Services and the Office of Attorney General took important steps to identify and fully investigate worker claims of misclassification, beefing up the number of DOES staff members assigned to OWH to investigate claims, and better coordinating between DOES and OAG to ensure that violations were prosecuted to the full extent of the law. I look forward to continuing to improve the District government's enforcement of current District and federal law, and working with organized labor to draft legislation to make any improvements that might be needed to improve*

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the process - including increasing penalties to strongly deter violations and strong anti-retaliation laws.

Transportation: (Please provide your response on a separate sheet).

Transit Worker Assaults

There are dozens of incidents where bus and train operators, as well as station managers, have been spat on, slapped, tased, stabbed, and even doused with urine. Transit worker assaults are not only a danger to the workers, but also to the riding public, who are also placed in harm's way when these incidents occur.

Following the urine-dousing incident on a Metro bus operator in 2018, unions began calling on the respective legislatures of District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia to increase the penalties for transit assaults. Will you work to ensure the District of Columbia raises the penalty of assaults on transit employees?

Yes **No**

Additional Comments or clarification: Worker safety on the job is crucial; we need stronger collaboration and cooperation between the Metro Transit Police and the Metropolitan Police Department. I would be happy to consider such legislation. I think it is important to first identify where there are gaps in existing legislation so that we maximize the likelihood of success in any new legislative proposals.

Privatization

Will you support efforts by transit workers in preventing privatization of future services at WMATA?

Yes **No**

Likewise, will you support efforts by to prevent privatization of future services by the District government at the DC Streetcar and DC Circulator?

Yes **No**

Uber and Lyft represent one of the largest threats to public transit in the country. Do you support laws, similar to AB5 in California or New York City's 2019 Rideshare Law, to clarify the rights of rideshare workers?

Yes **No**

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Additional Comments or clarification: *I would also use this as an opportunity to clarify the rights of taxicab drivers as well.*

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Freight Crew Size Legislation

The District of Columbia is a major gateway for north/south and east/west freight railroad traffic. By 2040, freight railroad traffic is projected to triple from 15 to 48 daily freight trains.

Today, the average freight train is 1.5 – 2 miles long and three (3) stories tall. The size, length, and commodities, including hazardous material transported by these freight trains, pose significant public safety risks for the communities adjacent to the rail corridors.

Currently, freight trains in the United States are operated with a minimum of two crew members: locomotive engineer and conductor. The coordinated efforts of the crew ensure the safe movement of the freight train. In the event of an accident or incident, the crew coordinates immediate assistance and provide critical information to fire and emergency responders.

The freight railroad industry based on new technology and operating paradigm are seeking to reduce the crew size to just the locomotive engineer.

A reduction of the crew to only a locomotive engineer would create a major public safety risk for the District of Columbia. Locomotive engineers and conductors each have different specific responsibilities they perform to ensure the safe movement of a freight train.

More importantly, the major functions for safely moving a freight train can't be performed by a single crew member.

Single-man railroad operations have been proven unsafe and directly contribute to several horrific accidents, including the 2013 disaster in Lac Megantic, Quebec - Canada.

Seven (7) states: California, Illinois, Colorado, Nevada, Wisconsin, Arizona, and West Virginia, have enacted legislation requiring a minimum two-persons crew on all freight railroad trains.

QUESTION:

To protect the communities adjacent to our rail corridors, would you support legislation requiring a minimum two-person crew on all freight rail trains operated in the District of Columbia?

Yes

NO

OTHER

Additional Comments or clarification: Rail safety is of particular concern to me given that Ward 7 has the only freight rail yard in the District. I would be delighted to receive and review examples of well-crafted legislation from other jurisdictions which the District of Columbia might evaluate.

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Rail Safety Inspections and Oversight

In 2016, D.C. Law 21-254 authorized the creation of the Emergency Response and Rail Safety Division (ERRSD) within the Department of Energy and Environment. ERRSD is the State Rail Safety Office responsible for monitoring and overseeing all railroad activity in the District of Columbia. ERRSD is comprised of an Associate Director and Rail Safety Inspectors trained in specific railroad disciplines. Unfortunately, ERRSD has been underfunded each fiscal year since it's creation.

QUESTION 1.

Would you support full funding for ERRSD in the FY 2021 and future budgets?

Yes NO OTHER

QUESTION 2.

Would you support an amendment to D.C. Law 21-254: "Rail Safety and Security Amendment Act" authorizing the District of Columbia to assess penalties and fines for safety and security violations on the railroads operating in the District of Columbia.

Yes NO OTHER

Additional Comments or clarification: Again, rail safety is of particular concern to me given that Ward 7 has the only freight rail yard in the District. I would like to authorize the return of proceeds from fines to the rail safety program in the city.

I certify that the responses in this questionnaire are mine and reflect my political positions for consideration by the MWC.

SIGNATURE: Vincent C. Gray DATE: 3/3/20

Candidate (Please Print Legibly):

Thank you.