

Christians for Equality 2024 Anchorage Municipal Election Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

This questionnaire was sent to the official campaign address of all candidates for Mayor of Anchorage who have a visible and online campaign for mayor of Anchorage. Not all candidates chose to respond in full prior to the publication deadline.

It is not the role of this distributing congregation, nor of Christians for Equality, to endorse any specific candidate, and we do not do so. This information is made available to you, the voter, as background information on matters that are relevant to our practice of following Christ in the world.

Please vote, that your voice may be heard.



*Notes: Responses are listed in the order received.
Current incumbent Mayor Dave Bronson failed to respond to this questionnaire.*

Anchorage is a diverse community. If elected mayor, how would you address the challenges and opportunities of diversity to equitably serve all Anchorage residents?

Breck A. Craig: Failed to respond to this question.

Bill Popp: As a professional economic developer, I have been guided over the last 16 years by a key concept in my work. If a city is to be successful it must maintain a sharp focus on the principals of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of government, community, and economy. I strongly believe that Anchorage must assure that all citizens of our city are given every equal opportunity to participate fully in the decisions being made by our local government. That every resident of Anchorage and every visitor to our city has the right to feel safe on our streets and in our neighborhoods. That every child and adult in our community must have equal access to the best educational and training opportunities our school system can provide. It's vital that there are equal economic opportunities being provided for every worker, every business owner, and every entrepreneur.

As Mayor, I will assure that every citizen has equal access and input to our government. Equal access in the decisions made that affect the services our government provides to all members of the community. To accomplish this, I will seek to engage our distinct communities within Anchorage regarding safety and other city services that are so important to the quality of life found in our neighborhoods. I will ask whether our citizens whether they feel safe in their own neighborhoods and why? Are your streets and public spaces clean and well maintained? Do you have confidence in your local schools? And are you being well served by your local government? We need to ask these questions of ourselves before we can fully understand what needs to be done, and then take action to address those needs.

I understand we have several agencies established to address many of the issues regarding how to address the challenges and opportunities of diversity to equitably serve all Anchorage residents. These include the Equal Rights Commission, the Office of Equal Opportunity, the Chief Equity Officer, the Anchorage Women's Commission, Houseless Lived Experience Advisory Board, Health and Human Services Board, and the Housing, Homeless, and Neighborhood Development Board. I will seek better coordination between these boards and the Mayor's office will always seek advice on key issues and challenges from these boards and commissions as appropriate. One of my first actions will be to assure all of these boards and Commissions are fully populated with vetted persons.

As Mayor I will be a strong advocate for our schools and universities to assure that our kids have the best possible education no matter which part of Anchorage they live in, and that every worker, young and old, will have the best possible opportunities for job training that increases their opportunities for a better quality of life for themselves and their families.

As Mayor I will seek every opportunity for our community to recognize and celebrate every distinct culture of our community. The diversity of Anchorage's many cultural threads are what make the fabric of our community so strong, beautiful, and vital.

Chris Tuck: As mayor, I will engage with community leaders within different cultural communities to get insights into the needs and concerns of their members so that together we can design and implement inclusive policies. This will help ensure city services, including education, healthcare, and law enforcement, are accessible and sensitive to the needs of diverse populations.

I want Anchorage to be known as the 'City of Cultures' by celebrating all our various cultures with festivals, parades, art exhibits, and other events in order to foster appreciation and understanding among diverse community members.

All this begins by modeling the behavior, by including those in my transition team who reflect our diverse community so we end up with diverse boards, commissions, and staff positions involved in our city government. This will ensure multiple perspectives are considered in the decision-making processes and that all community members feel included, respected, and represented.

Suzanne LaFrance: We need to make Anchorage a place where everyone feels welcome, no matter where you are born or who you love or what language you speak. It's not enough just to say those things. As mayor, I will make sure our local government better reflects our community, including in leadership positions, and that the Mayor's Office is open to diverse community groups. The Anchorage I want to see is one where everyone who lives here can feel pride in themselves and their community.

We must also recognize and address inequities in our community. We can see these inequities whether we are looking at rates of homelessness or health outcomes or financial stability. I believe it is the responsibility of the Municipality to provide better basic services for all residents, and to make sure we are addressing the root causes of issues that lead to unequal outcomes.

I also think we can fall into talking about the challenges of diversity rather than leaning into our opportunities. Anchorage's diversity is an incredible strength. We need to celebrate our history and uplift diverse voices. That includes being led by Alaska Native people, who have been stewarding the land we live on for thousands

of years. As mayor, I will be committed to listening to diverse perspectives – rather than assume what solutions look like, we need to listen and be open.

Jenny DiGrappa: I will make it a priority to have city services and facilities accessible to all residents, regardless of language, ability, or cultural background. I will champion affordable housing initiatives and policies that promote socio-economic diversity as well as involve residents from diverse backgrounds in the urban planning process. I will elevate diversity training for administrative staff and invite local businesses and organizations to increase these trainings for our broader community. I will encourage diversity and inclusion in the local business sector as well as in our education system. Last, I will collaborate with and support the nonprofit and civic organizations that serve marginalized communities.

If elected mayor, what ways would you seek to provide economically-disadvantaged residents with opportunities to learn, work and thrive in Anchorage?

Breck A. Craig: I will.

Bill Popp: The most serious challenge facing our economy is a lack of work force. Since 2013 our city has seen a loss of one out of ten working age adults. Today, there are two times as many jobs as available workers. Economically disadvantaged members of our community have great potential to help address this workforce challenge facing our city today.

I will focus on several strategies as Mayor of Anchorage to engage the economically disadvantaged members of our community that include:

1. Training up our existing workforce to increase the skills and abilities of workers who reside in Anchorage so that our local citizens can have the best shot at getting higher paying jobs in the growing Anchorage economy. We should expand entrepreneurial training opportunities to this same workforce as an alternative path they can choose to pursue.
2. Offer better education opportunities to our youth so that they are career or college ready when they graduate from high school. This should help reduce the large number of our kids who leave Anchorage and never return.
3. Aggressively market Anchorage as a city out of state workers want to move to for better job opportunities and a better quality of life. This will help our economy grow by making sure we have an available workforce for any business or industry looking to make new investments in Anchorage and Alaska. This strategy helps to broaden job opportunities across the Anchorage economy.
4. Become a city that welcomes and encourages immigrant workers to come to our city to fill the many job vacancies we cannot fill from our local workforce

alone. We must support workers with skills training, quality affordable housing, safe neighborhoods, and access to entrepreneurial support services to help them fully engage in our community.

5. I will support full funding of our local schools and universities. I will encourage building new community infrastructure and amenities that improve our quality of life, such as entertainment districts, sports facilities, etc. We also need to invest in our existing neighborhoods to improve the quality of life for all citizens of Anchorage. A city that offers safe and clean streets and neighborhoods, great schools and universities, excellent worker training, and great city amenities accessible to all its citizens is a city that will grow and prosper.

Chris Tuck: It begins with Pre-K and making sure students can read proficiently in a language. When young people are given the opportunity to come to school ready to learn, they are given the opportunity to succeed. When students first learn to read in any language, they then can learn to read and learn another language including English. As one of the primary authors and deciding votes of the 'Alaska Reads Act', Anchorage can be proud that we now have pre-K as part of our foundation formula (Base Student Allocation). All this provides the necessary resources for better outcomes.

We also need to provide more Career and Technical Training (CTE) at each high school. Students shouldn't have to leave their home school for these opportunities. This also makes education more relevant and engaging. Meaningful CTE will lead to other opportunities and pathways to higher education and trades. From there, we need to have more adult training opportunities along with a vibrant university system.

All this is easier to achieve when we have a growing healthy economy so residents can comfortably provide for their families with lifelong careers.

Suzanne LaFrance: Affordability is a significant challenge here in Anchorage, and across much of the country. More than one-third of Anchorage families are cost burdened by their housing, meaning more than 30% of their household income is going to their rent or mortgage payment. Many families are paying more than 50%. When you add on other significant costs such as childcare and rising food costs in recent years, many residents are left with very little. I believe the Municipality has a role to play in making Anchorage a more affordable place to live. That includes bringing about more housing, including housing that's affordable for economically disadvantaged households. Cities like Minneapolis have demonstrated that bringing more housing units into the market through public-private partnership can reduce the cost of housing for residents. We can also address the cost of pre-K and childcare through the voter-approved dedication of the cannabis tax revenues. As mayor, I will be focused on making Anchorage a more affordable place to live.

At the same time as we think about affordability, we must be focused on making sure that every resident in Anchorage has access to strong schools and a good job. I grew up here in Alaska, and remember the sense of opportunity we had here growing up. I know we can bring that sense of opportunity back to Anchorage.

Every child in Anchorage deserves access to a safe, quality learning environment. As mayor, I will convene local partners and be a strong voice in Juneau advocating for school funding, including for the university. And after graduation, we must ensure that Anchorage residents have access to good-paying jobs. I support the statewide initiative to raise the minimum wage in Alaska. I will also be focused on making Municipal jobs more competitive, and hiring a diverse workforce, so that our local government is modeling what it looks like to provide good jobs and opportunity.

Jenny DiGrappa: The first and most important opportunity is to provide adequate, affordable, quality child care. The lack of access to affordable child care so keeping many residents, particularly those economically-disadvantaged, both out of educational opportunities and out of the workforce. I will champion affordable housing initiatives and policies that promote socio-economic diversity. I will work to encourage the University of Alaska to provide adequate need-based scholarships and I will lean into my relationships in the business and nonprofit sectors to inspire.

Isaiah 58, Matthew 25, and the consistent guidance of scripture direct individuals and communities to care for the poor.

Effective policies to eliminate or reduce homelessness continue to challenge Anchorage leaders. If elected mayor, how would you reduce the number of people living unhoused? How would you help people at risk of losing their housing?

Breck A. Craig: Find long-term shelter for women, children, and the mentally ill as soon as possible. For those looking for a hand-up, we'll help however we can. For those looking for a hand-out, we'll direct them back to whence they came or arrest them next time they appear in public drunk, stoned, panhandling, lottery, shop lifting, going to the bathroom in public, etc. Enabling and downplaying the destruction and evil this last group of people are inflicting on the rest of the community OBVIOUSLY does not work. It's only getting worse and the City is spending \$\$\$millions upon millions of taxpayer and church donation money on them, with little if any impact.

I will also pray daily that the Lord watch and protect them all. That they find their way to him and his mercy.

Bill Popp: I completely agree with the principles of Scripture to prioritize care and concern of the less fortunate. I believe there has been a significant lack of alignment between the Municipality of Anchorage and other service providers to those enduring homelessness. This lack of cooperation and coordination has been a significant challenge in our community's efforts to address the needs of those who have become unhoused over the last several years. And the public trust in those efforts has decreased with each passing year, which I believe is undermining public support for those efforts.

It is my view that government by itself is not best suited to addressing the complex needs of those facing homelessness. Instead, I believe the role of our city government should be to convene all parties focused on addressing homelessness to create an alliance of all providers of services. This alliance should include the Mayor, Assembly, Homeless Coordinator, City, State and Federal Agencies, non-profit and for-profit providers, and the faith-based community. We would all need to work together towards key strategies to improve the homeless response.

These may include:

Defined specific efforts that are implemented under a set of agreed upon goals and objectives focusing each member of the Alliance on appropriate actionable areas that eliminate unnecessary duplication of efforts.

The members of the Alliance will coordinate advocacy efforts to engage needed funding of services under a comprehensive set of policy and budget goals at the community, state, and national levels to maximize success in generating critical available funding.

The alliance will develop actionable strategies focused on reducing the number of people who become homeless by first clearly identifying and understanding the root causes of homelessness. With this understanding, the Alliance would seek to deliver services and support to community members headed down the path to becoming homeless.

The alliance member organizations will establish key metrics to measure outcomes of all efforts of the alliance and report frequently to the public so that our community clearly understands the level of progress being accomplished by the alliance. We must ensure transparency in our efforts and deliver to the public clear and approachable measures of success on a frequent basis in order to maintain the trust of the public in our efforts.

We have much to do to properly address this critical issue for our community. Our fellow Alaskans who are unhoused need our assistance. We must do a better job of helping them to achieve a life that provides both dignity and security in their day to

day lives. I am committed to this effort and will be an advocate for those suffering from homelessness throughout my term as Mayor and beyond.

Chris Tuck: More resources need to be dedicated to prevent people from losing their homes. Prevention is always more effective and less expensive. Our community is lacking a robust resource system. I will build a more coordinated network of services and create an office that is a one stop place. Additionally, we need to make sure the 211 hotline has a plethora of resources available to those who have troubles. I will make sure the public is aware of these services so they can get help or help someone in need before they lose their home.

When someone does fall into a houseless situation, I will make sure there is immediate relief by expanding the number of emergency shelters and ensuring they are well-heated and equipped with essentials, especially during the harsh winter months.

I will create transitional housing where individuals can live while they receive training, essential services and resources (substance recovery, mental health, child care, employment,

training, and etc.) for those in need to help them succeed in society and eventually move into permanent housing.

I will also make sure we have the resources to continue with necessary services for those who need sustained help and support to optimize their success in each phase of their transition. We have great players who already participate with great success and I would work with them to: launch mobile medical units to provide basic healthcare services, mental health counseling, and substance abuse treatment and collaborate with local NGOs and churches to set up more centers for food distribution and basic necessities.

Simultaneously, I will work to create more affordable housing using a variety of tools in our tool box. The cheapest and fastest way is to convert existing properties through incentives and tax breaks or to reclaim the delapidated buildings that are vacant and convert them or tear them down and build new housing. Unlike new development, they already have utilities delivered to the properties. Additionally, I will accommodate new development by providing more permits, utility access, zoning changes, financing, tax breaks, incentives, and privatize more public lands.

Suzanne LaFrance: The current approach to homelessness has cost time and money. It has also cost lives, including more than 50 Anchorage residents who have died outside this year. This is a tremendous loss, and an unacceptable one. Anchorage is a winter city. We know it gets cold, and we simply must have enough shelter. We cannot have folks sleeping on our streets and trails. I am committed to bringing enough shelter so that everyone has a warm place to sleep. Shelter is part

of our emergency response to homelessness. To get out of crisis mode, we also need to make sure we have enough housing and enough supports so that people experiencing homelessness or at-risk have access to the resources they need. I will be a pro-housing mayor, focused on making sure the Municipality is making it easier for new units to be added. And I will focus on expanding access to treatment, including through use of the voter-approved alcohol tax.

At the end of the day, we can have all of the best ideas in the world, but if we can't work together, we won't be able to make them a reality. I am committed to building up a dedicated team at the Municipality and working with a wide range of stakeholders, including service providers, housing agencies, the faith community, the Assembly, and the private sector. Homelessness and housing insecurity are issues that will only be addressed by building a plan together and working together.

Jenny DiGrappa: In order to make a meaningful impact and reduce homelessness, we need to address the existing root causes of why so many in our community are unhoused. The recent decrease in housing availability has skyrocketed rents, forcing many families out of their existing housing and into homelessness. We need to continue to increase the number of available and affordable housing units with the help of organizations like the Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust. Equally important, we need to leverage public-private partnerships and seek grants to increase and expand mental health services and facilities to appropriately treat and support these community members. Finally, I will continually collaborate with existing programs and nonprofit organizations providing shelter and transitional housing to ensure we have an understanding of the needs, available resources, efficient processes, and gaps to continue to reduce homelessness long-term.

Recognizing that the mayor's team shapes the administration, how would you balance minimum qualifications and political alignment for appointees to your administration, boards and committees?

Breck A. Craig: I will only hire the most qualified candidates, the superstars in their field. Their integrity and dedication to the people trumps their political loyalties.

Bill Popp: Partisanship has become a serious problem within our local government. I am nonpartisan and have been for over two decades. As Mayor I will not be appointing anyone to an executive leadership position in city government based on how much they contributed to my campaign, a particular political dogma, or because they are a member of a political party. I will only appoint individuals to leadership positions with the Anchorage Municipal government because they have the best professional qualifications for the position.

I want to return our municipal government back to a professionally run model. Political appointees are only appropriate within the Mayor's office itself and should be limited to the chief of staff, communications team, and aides. The politization of our city administration has created a headwind to our city's future success. There has been no effort to hand off the baton from one Mayor to the next on critical initiatives that take more than six years to accomplish. We must break this short-sighted cycle. I will do my best to be the Mayor that sets up the next Administration for success by handing off a well run professionally based government focused on the long-term health of the City.

Chris Tuck: To start, I would draw from the community as I described in my first answer. Unlike other mayors, politics will not play a part in my administration. My workforce will reflect my community with the most qualified who are capable of doing the job. Further, I will ask the assembly to work with my administration to ensure my appointees reflect our community's diversity.

Suzanne LaFrance: Local government is about solving local problems. There is no room for partisanship and political favors in the hiring and appointing of people who are responsible for overseeing critical components of our local government.

With over 25 years of experience working in the private sector, I approach management in terms of qualification and dedication. I can remember a time living here when that's how we approached Municipal hiring and appointments. As mayor, I will be focused on hiring qualified and passionate people and creating a positive, ethical work environment that allows us to attract and retain people who care deeply about our community and have skills and expertise to offer.

I grew up playing team sports — building and leading teams is a big part of who I am. One of the things I'm looking forward to most is building a team of dedicated, passionate professionals of a variety of backgrounds who are ready to work together on behalf of Anchorage.

Jenny DiGrappa: I would utilize a method traditionally implemented by nonprofit organizations that defines a matrix of broad characteristics to identify and engage community members with a mix of expertise, education, lived experience, cultural identity, gender identity, and religious identity as well as any additional characteristics to consider for certain positions and departments.

How do you propose to give residents confidence in the integrity of our local elections?

Breck A. Craig: By rigorously enforcing our election laws and ensuring the dishonest and dishonorable campaign contribute violations of the previous election do not happen again.

Bill Popp: Local elections are the responsibility of the Anchorage Assembly through the professional efforts of the City Clerk's office. The mayor's role in assuring the integrity of the elections is arm's length at best. But I will lead by example.

I will be a strong advocate for getting out the vote, regardless of who you are voting for. Our city government is stronger when more citizens participate in the process. I am also a supporter of the vote by mail model the city currently uses and will always be a vigilant opponent of any efforts to disenfranchise voters.

Chris Tuck: I truly believe in election integrity. Part of the responsibility of the mayor is to educate people on how vote by mail and ballot tracking and curing works. This is so people understand and know they can take the time to vote from the comfort of their homes and that if they make a mistake, they have an opportunity to fix the mistake before their ballot is thrown away. I would also ensure that this information goes out to all the districts and especially low voter turnout districts that tend to be disadvantaged with high immigrant and minority populations, whose voices we need to hear.

Suzanne LaFrance: In the past few years, we have seen fighting and scandals and threats to the health of our local government. As mayor, I will bring respect, civility, and competence back to Anchorage. We need to get the basics right, and that means restoring basic trust in our local government.

Respect for our election systems and outcomes – whether an Assembly race or a presidential one – is fundamental to the health of our democracy. As a candidate, I will demonstrate full faith in our local elections and the dedicated professionals who run them. I believe it is the responsibility of candidates to model faith in fair electoral systems rather than calling them into question.

I also believe that part of increasing confidence in our elections and democracy is increasing participation in them. As mayor, I will make sure that everyone in our city has equal access to their rights and feels safe accessing those rights: from voting to practicing the individual rights we all have in a democracy.

Jenny DiGrappa: Many steps can be taken to provide confidence in our local elections. I believe we currently have a transparent election process that so described on the Municipality of Anchorage elections website. We live in a very diverse community and need to ensure that all residents have equal access to the voting process with translated materials, accessible polling places, and dissemination of election materials in all languages and distributed through outlets that reach these communities. We must also be able to track and maintain records, as well as provide independent election monitoring. Finally, the need to enforce election laws so an obvious but important step in upholding the integrity of our elections.

April 2, 2024 is a Vote at Home Election

Qualified registered voters will receive a ballot package in the mail about three weeks before Election Day



Vote at Home is as easy as 1-2-3!

1. *Vote your ballot, filling in the ovals completely in black or blue pen. Place your voted ballot into the enclosed secrecy sleeve and place the secrecy sleeve into the ballot return envelope.*



2. *Sign the voter declaration on the back of the ballot return envelope.*



3. *Save postage and place your ballot in a Secure Drop Box or return it to an Anchorage Vote Center (AVC).*



Or return your ballot with first class postage at the United States Postal Service. Ballot envelopes MUST be postmarked on or before Election Day.

View a map of Secure Drop Box and Anchorage Vote Center locations at: muni.org/elections/AVC



For More Information:

Web:
muni.org/elections

Call:
907-243-VOTE(8683)

Facebook:
@MunicipalClerksOffice

Twitter/X:
@ANCMuniClerk