



Candidate Questionnaire

General Information

Candidate Name: Louis Abramson

Office Sought: State Assembly, District 50

Proposed Ballot Designation: Astrophysicist and Organizer
(Or Occupation Listing)



Campaign Team*

Provide the names and cell phone numbers for the following campaign team members:



Elected Office

Do you currently, or have you ever held public office? Yes

If yes, which public office(s) have you held and when did you do so? Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council: March, 2019 to present. CHNC represents 19,000 residents in Hollywood, roughly 1-in-30 of whom are homeless. I chair its Homelessness and Outreach Committees.

Personal and Political Background

Current Occupation: Full-time candidate. Until last August, I was a Fellow in astrophysics at The Carnegie Observatories in Pasadena, part of the Carnegie Institution for Science. I moved to LA to become a professor and have been in academia since 2009.

Are you a registered Democrat? Yes.

Have you ever been registered with another political party or selected “Decline to State” or “No Party Preference” for your voter registration party affiliation, and if so, for what period?

No.

In less than 250 words, briefly summarize your personal background (work experience, education, community involvement, etc.).

As a scientist, I taught and developed curricula for South Side Chicago high schoolers and won an award for undergraduate education. I authored 40 publications, earned research prizes, and spent a dozen years working with others to solve cosmic problems.

As an organizer, I’ve educated my neighbors on policy and written [formal statements](#) to shape city ordinances. I understand local forces and have built coalitions to direct them for good.

I founded the [SELAH Neighborhood Homeless Coalition](#)’s Hollywood Chapter to help unhoused Angelenos. I led the [first 2021 homeless count](#) when LAHSA canceled the official census. I enlisted hundreds of volunteers and every government from the neighborhood to the federal level to [call thousands of seniors and deliver tons of free food to them for 8 weeks](#) when COVID hit. I’ve helped found two nonprofits to fight [homelessness](#) and [food insecurity](#).

I’ve been an ad hoc case manager for honorably discharged trans veterans, homeless mothers with 3 month old babies, and seniors whose jaws were broken for weeks but hadn’t gotten help because no one was looking for them. These stories have no place in California, but they are true, and they are caused by systems bigger than any city. To do right by my neighbors, I have to try to fix them. That must happen in Sacramento.

I’m the only scientist and organizer in this race. When it comes to understanding how our systems have failed and what they should do when they work, those perspectives matter.

What endorsements have you received from organizations and prominent individuals? (You may either use the space below or attach a separate list.)

See attached list.

In the past five years, have you:

- **belonged to an organization that has taken action or formally expressed a viewpoint on Israel or related issues;**

No.

- **participated in an organized activity, including a forum, on Israel or related issues; or**

No.

- **while holding office, introduced or co-sponsored legislation (other than purely ceremonial, supportive measures) on Israel or related issues?**

No.

Policy Questions

Please describe your positions on the following issues. Please limit your responses to 250 words for each response. If you wish, one response may include up to 500 words.

- 1. Please describe your last trip to Israel and the Middle East, including the year of the trip and any group that arranged or sponsored the trip. If you have not yet been to Israel, when and to where do you plan on going in Israel, and the region generally, for your trip?**

I was last in Israel for two weeks in winter 2012/13 for a course at Hebrew University. It was arranged/sponsored by Hebrew University and took place in Jerusalem. After the course ended, I spent three days in Tel Aviv.

It was a life-changing trip for many reasons, but principally it was my first time in Israel as a real adult. (Before then, I had been once in 2000 with my synagogue for a post-Bar Mitzvah trip.)

As an American Jew, I arrived assuming that I would intuitively understand the country. As soon as I left the hotel—from the fact that the street signs were in Hebrew to the diversity of the people I saw on the street to the goat I saw hanging skinned at a stall in the Old City—I was disabused of that notion.

My overriding sensation was that it was a place that required understanding on its own terms; that simply being Jewish did not give me especially profound insight. Watching the sun set on a Friday from the Mount of Olives and hearing the prayers of Jews at the Kotel accompanied by the calls of muezzins *did* feel profound. I didn't and don't know what to do with that feeling except to feel it, and to work so that, one day, I can describe it as "peace."

My work in LA has brought me closer to the Lebanese community. I hope to visit Lebanon one day.

2. Who do you speak with to develop your positions and views on Israel and the Middle East, including people overseas and local leaders in Southern California?

I speak with my parents and friends I made in Israel. When crises erupt, I try to listen to sermons from local rabbis.

3. Please describe your relationship, if any, with the Israeli-American and Jewish community in Los Angeles.

My relationship to the Jewish community is through members of the congregations at Temple Israel of Hollywood and Ikar. Both synagogues have strong social justice initiatives that intersect directly with my work in homelessness and housing advocacy. I have been endorsed by leading lay-people in both communities, including Jennifer Levin (TIOH) and Tony Gittelsohn (Ikar).

4. If elected, what committees and organizations would you try to be active in, and what policy areas would you try to affect that are relevant to Israel and the Middle East?

I'm running for a seat in the CA State Assembly. As such, I will not have substantive control over foreign policy matters. However, California and Israel work closely together on agricultural and water related issues. That partnership is invaluable and I would work to strengthen it.

My background suits me to serving on the Housing & Community Development, Local Government, or Utilities & Energy committees. As a Jew, I would also seek membership in the Jewish Caucus where I would educate myself on domestic policy intersections with the Middle East and its stances on them.

5. Over the past decade, there has been a small but growing movement around the country to divest from Israel. These groups often use anti-Semitic language in their efforts, some target Jewish students on campuses and instead of discussing how to engage the democratic-process to challenge Israeli policies that may be objectionable, they try to delegitimize Israel or question its right to exist. In short, these are frequently attempts to influence state and local governments and their universities and pension boards not to invest in Israeli companies or companies that do business anywhere in Israel.

What is your view on the Israel boycott and divestment movement and what will you do about it?

I do not view the BDS movement as productive and I do not support it. I am aware of the rise in anti-Semitic speech and acts—including in my district—and think we must do everything we can to combat it through education and, when appropriate, law enforcement.

- 6. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report for 2014 showed that there were more than 609 anti-Jewish hate crimes in the United States that year and even today, Jews were the most persecuted and targeted religious group in the country.**

What steps would you take (for example, in the education and law enforcement arenas) to help prevent current and future anti-Jewish hatred and anti-Semitic activity in your jurisdiction?

I would promote all interfaith educational efforts, including hosting and moderating meetings of in-district faith leaders, dedicated to addressing these topics. I would further like to personally lead activities with their congregants to promote joint civic activism—e.g., homeless outreach, food delivery, political activism. I would oppose efforts to reduce and support efforts to expand K-12 education about the Holocaust and other injustices Jews have faced and are still facing today.

I support enhanced hate crime laws across the board, including for anti-Semitic acts. I believe the rise of social media and Trump's election are causing the lines between speech and action to blur. I do not have all the answers as to what enhanced penalties might look like, but I support Bloom's AB 1126 and believe it will produce valuable guidance.

I would solicit legislative proposals from Jewish community leaders as to what additional efforts were necessary on both fronts.

- 7. As a Democrat, what steps can we take to help fight anti-Semitism on both the left and the right?**

On the left, I want us to redouble our efforts to bring Jews together with other minoritized groups to form a united front against injustice everywhere. In LA, I believe this means supporting—and leading when appropriate—the charge for housing production, homelessness services, police reforms, and well-funded public schools (90% of LAUSD's students are people of color). I see it as our duty as Jews to stand with everyone facing oppression. If we are a chosen people, I believe this is

what we've been chosen for. I lament the fracturing of Jews and any other groups in any of the above domains. I do not blame us for those breaches, but—as part of Tikkun Olam—we must commit to repairing them.

On the right, electorally, we should use our resources, time, and energy to support Democratic candidates fighting to flip GOP seats at all levels and in all places. I entered politics through one such effort in 2018 (Katie Hill's run for CA-25). Ossoff's and Warnock's wins in GA highlight the potential of this work, but we need to spread it to more and more rural communities from NC to AK.

Beyond elections, I think much anti-Semitic sentiment comes from ignorance. Simply being in more places—e.g., for philanthropic work to fight poverty or relieve hunger—would help. I am in favor of exploring universal civic service to encourage this, and more mixing of more people of all kinds.

8. What other issues do you think are unique or important to the Jewish and pro-Israel community, and how do you propose to make a difference with these issues and keep in touch with the community?

I would personally like to learn more about:

- How we can ensure the continuation of peace talks in the middle east;
- The compound duties of Jews as citizens and the inheritors of an ancient and beautiful religion enriched in diaspora but birthed in a state recently remade;
- The cultural and political relations between Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and African Jews in and outside of Israel;
- Stories of **successful** collaboration between Muslims and Jews—particularly instances where Arabs and Jews have lived productively and peacefully together;
- Poverty in the Jewish community and its impact in Israel;
- The full national security picture for Israel and its interconnection to US security interests spanning the globe.

I am a scholar. I have spent my life in study, and I hope to spend much of my political life in study as well. I believe it is my duty to convene, to facilitate, to learn, and then to act in the best interests of my community. My community is complex—it is made of many people who are connected to many continents. But dealing with complexity is one of the gifts of Judaism, and so of Israel. I will nurture relationships with leaders here and abroad, listen to their wisdom, and combine it with the ethics and morals my tradition has given me to do justice.

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Alex Fisch - Culver City Councilmember
Elvina Beck – President, Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council
Mike Shear – Controller of the Miracle Mile Democratic Club
Ferris Wehbe – Vice President, Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council
Kerry Morrison – Founder and Project Director, Heart Forward LA, Former Director Hollywood Entertainment District (BID)
Daniel A. Perez – Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council Board Member
Trevor Reed – Board member - Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council
Michael Schneider – Vice Chair, Mid City West Neighborhood Council
Janet Kim — Co-Founder, SELAH Neighborhood Homeless Coalition; Board Member, Los Feliz Neighborhood Council
Cat Kim – Co-Founder, SELAH Neighborhood Homeless Coalition
Sherry Bonanno — Executive Director Hollywood Food Coalition
Arnali Ray – Chief of Strategy and Programs Officer, Saban Community Clinic
Rich Sarian – Place Enhancement Manager, The Hollywood Partnership | Chair, Hollywood Arts Council | Boardmember, Hollywood Police Activities League | Boardmember, Hollywood Harvest
Michael K Manville, PhD – Professor of Urban Planning, UCLA
Josh Simon, PhD – Astronomer
John Mulchaey, PhD – Director, Carnegie Observatories
Alan Dressler, PhD – Astronomer; member, National Academy of Sciences
Armond Bagdasarian – Small business owner
Tommy Rasera – Co-Executive Producer (Television) and Homelessness Activist
Asher Landau – Director of Development, Hollywood Food Coalition; Organizer SELAH Hollywood Chapter
Mike Batistick – Homelessness Activist
Rev Curtis Peek – Reverend
Daniel A Polansky – Writer and Homelessness Activist
Celeste Voce – Artist, Homeless Advocate
Daniel D. Kelson, PhD -- Astronomer
David E. Gordon -- Managing Partner, Partnership Strategies Limited
Emma Thorne-Christy – Community Activist
Larry Clarke – Community Member
Ilyse Pallenberg – Consultant
Tommaso Treu – UCLA Professor of Physics and Astronomy
Spencer Hillman – Co-founder, Hollywood Harvest; Community Activist
Allison Schallert – Co-founder, Stories from the Frontline
Dorit Dowler-Guerrero – Affordable Housing Provider
Jennifer Levin – Co-founder, Hang Out Do Good; Community Activist
Tony Gittelsohn – Co-author, Livable Communities Initiative
Lindsay Sturman – Co-author, Livable Communities Initiative
Jane Demian – Homelessness Services Activist
John Billingsley – President, Hollywood Food Coalition
Emily Kantrim – Former Exec. Dir, Safe Parking LA
Conner Ashworth – Renters’ Representative, Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council
Ani Kendjirian – Manager, 6233 Fountain Senior Living Centers
Colter Carlisle – Board Member, East Hollywood Neighborhood Council
Josh Kurpies - District Director, ASM Richard Bloom (outgoing incumbent)
Lindsey Chase - Co-chair, Mid City West Neighborhood Council and Racial Equity Committee
Francine Tansey - Silverlake Resident
Pete Buonocore - Hancock Park Resident
Stacy Sillins - Hollywood Hills Resident and Environmental Advocate

Titles are for identification purposes only