

Seeking union endorsement

# California Democratic Senate candidates advance same right-wing, pro-war policies at union forum

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The three leading Democrats running to become California's next US senator, Representatives Adam Schiff, Katie Porter and Barbara Lee, appeared at a National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) Leadership Conference forum on Sunday, October 8, in Los Angeles. In the two-hour forum, the candidates answered pre-selected questions submitted in advance by members and screened by the union.

At the conclusion of the forum, the NUHW, which claims to represent 17,000 California healthcare workers, announced that its members will have the opportunity to cast a ballot for the union's endorsement.

On Wednesday the union announced that their members had voted to endorse Porter by 48 percent, followed by Lee with 27 percent and Schiff with 21 percent. Five percent selected "no endorsement."

It is unclear exactly how many of the 17,000 healthcare workers actually voted or even watched the event, as the union did not release any actual vote totals.

This Senate seat had been held since 1992 by Dianne Feinstein, a right-wing multimillionaire warhawk who died last month. In the aftermath of Feinstein's death, California Governor Gavin Newsom, fulfilling an earlier promise to appoint a "black woman" to the seat, named Laphonza Butler to serve the remainder of Feinstein's term, through 2024.

Butler, the former president of EMILY's List, is a longtime Democratic operative and union official, as well as a senior adviser to Vice President Kamala Harris. As president of EMILY's List, Butler oversaw the pumping of \$10 million from the organization into Harris's 2020 presidential

campaign.

Joining virtually all Democratic and Republican senators and representatives, over the weekend Butler posted on Twitter/X her all-out support for the Israeli government's near-genocidal campaign against the Palestinians.

"The United States must stand strongly with Israel as it defends itself against this act of aggression, and I will work in the US Senate with my colleagues to ensure support for the Jewish State of Israel," Butler wrote on October 7.

At Sunday's forum, all three candidates attempted to assert their "progressive" credentials along with their unstinting support for US imperialism abroad and austerity "at home." Notably, none of the questions permitted by the NUHW were centered on the Democratic Party's leading role in prosecuting the war in Ukraine or on the Biden administration's resumption of constructing Trump's barbaric southern border wall.

Adam Schiff, the most right-wing of the three candidates, argued that his over 20 years of "experience" in Washington, which includes supporting wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine and now Israel, made him the best candidate to be able to actually "get things done."

Katie Porter, the youngest and least tenured candidate, presented herself as an "outsider" who has never taken money from corporations or lobbyists. Porter does accept thousands of dollars from Democratic-affiliated political action committees, such as EMILY's List and Digidems.

Barbara Lee touted her over 25 years of "experience" in Congress and leaned on her identity as a screen for her pro-

capitalist politics. Lee described discrimination she has faced as a black woman, which she claimed helped her to better understand the problems that impact US society.

Whatever veneer of progressivism the candidates attempted to conjure faded as soon as the conversation shifted to the hostilities in Israel. All three condemned Hamas's incursion and stated their unequivocal support for the fascistic Israeli government's alleged "right" to "self-defense."

Schiff described that his support was unequivocal: "Right now Israel is being brutally attacked. It is a victim of terrorist attacks. The only sentiment I want to express right now, when Israel is going through its own 9/11, is unequivocal support for the security and the right of Israel to defend itself. ... The only message I have for Israel right now is that I stand shoulder to shoulder with the Israeli people."

In an equally warmongering statement, Porter declared that she stood "with Israel at this time" and blamed the Biden administration for allowing "terrorism to flourish."

"The US has allowed terrorism to flourish and has refused to take a strong enough stand against Iran, who is backing Hamas and Hezbollah," Porter claimed.

Lee, like Schiff, reiterated her support for Israel. "I have always stood for Israel not having to deal with terrorist attacks and have condemned over and over against terrorist attacks against Israel." She then offered her worthless "thoughts and prayers" for all those killed and called for a ceasefire.

The Democratic representatives' unwavering support for the Israeli government is a warning to workers in the US and internationally. Any politician supporting the mass killing of Palestinians is willing to support the same criminal policies in Europe, Asia, Africa or within the United States itself.

Other topics raised at the forum included healthcare, housing, homelessness and the trade unions, with every candidate proposing surface-level "solutions" that would not encroach on capitalist property relations or Wall Street profits.

Each of the candidates expressed similar positions, with all them paying lip service to nominally "progressive" demands, such as lower medical costs, "Medicare for All"(which President Joe Biden has promised to veto), more federal support for affordable housing and increasing the minimum wage, something a Democratic-controlled Congress and Biden administration failed to accomplish

during 2021 and 2022 due to the supposedly awesome power of the Senate parliamentarian, who excluded the minimum wage from several "reconciliation" bills.

The bourgeois politicians studiously avoided any critique of the capitalist system, obscuring the source of poverty, war, inequality and fascism. Instead, each candidate reduced the historic crisis to simply "greedy" corporations and CEOs who made "excessive" profits.

Given the forum, it was unsurprising that every Democrat expressed his or her devotion to the trade union bureaucracy, keenly aware of the immense role the trade union apparatus plays in suffocating and isolating the growing movement of the working class against the entire capitalist system.

All the candidates bragged about showing their "solidarity" with striking workers by pointing to photo-ops they participated in at picket lines. None of the candidates were asked to square their alleged "solidarity" with striking workers with their "yes" votes on House Joint Resolution 100, which banned railroad workers from striking last year.

Notably, all three candidates boasted about their support for the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, or PRO Act. While Democrats and the pseudo-left, for years, have hawked this legislation as a panacea for inequality and even climate change, in reality, its aim is to trap workers within the discredited AFL-CIO bureaucracy in order to kneecap the development of an independent movement of the working class outside of the pro-capitalist and nationalist trade unions.



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