



Wellstone Progressive Democrats of Sacramento  
 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE  
 General Questionnaire: 2013-2014

All completed questionnaires will be accessible to Club members.

**I. CAMPAIGN PROFILE**

Name	Basim Elkarra
Office Sought	Twin Rivers Unified School District Trustee, Area 5
FPPC/FEC #	1375015
Campaign Address (Including City, State, and Zip)	1164 National Drive, Suite 40 Sacramento, CA 95834
Campaign Email	<a href="mailto:basim@elkarra4kids.com">basim@elkarra4kids.com</a>
Campaign Phone	(916) 538-3308
Campaign Web Site	<a href="http://www.elkarra4kids.com">www.elkarra4kids.com</a> (under construction)
Occupation	Non-Profit Executive Director
Employer	CAIR-Sacramento Valley chapter
Campaign Manager	Thomas Rusconi

Elected or Appointed offices currently/previously held:

- **7th Assembly District Executive Board Representative/Affirmative Action Committee Chair, California Democratic Party**
- **Member of the Sacramento Police Multicultural Advisory Committee**
- **Member of the Natomas Unified School District’s Multicultural Advisory Committee**

Optional – Affiliations, Clubs, Community Organizations (Local/Statewide)

- **Chair of Los Rios Community College Bond Oversight Committee**
- **Former Board Member of the ACLU’s Sacramento chapter**

Attach your latest biography, a list of current endorsements and any campaign literature, and social media information.

**See attachments.**

**II. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS**

Answer 'Yes' or 'No' or explain as requested

1. Have you ever been registered as anything other than Democratic, including decline to state? If so, explain.

**No.**

2. Do you agree with the Statement of Principles of the Progressive Caucus of the California Democratic Party in its entirety? ([See Statement of Principles here](#))

Yes (**X**) No ( ) If not, where do you disagree?

3. Briefly describe why you are running for this office, and what sets you apart from your opponents.

**As a father of two – with twins on the way – I want to make sure our children are getting the kind of education they need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That means improving the quality of education in the Twin Rivers Unified School District. We need to bolster early childhood education, reduce class sizes, provide more support to teachers and staff, increase mentoring and other programs targeting at-risk youth.**

**We also need to improve transparency and overall management of the district, and give parents and the community more oversight of the district's financial decisions and contracting.**

**In Area 5 specifically, we need to build our network of community schools – including another middle school and a high school (currently there are no high schools in Area 5) that will allow kids to attend schools close to where they live.**

4. Where would you place yourself on the political spectrum: libertarian, conservative, moderate, liberal, progressive, etc., and why do you identify yourself that way?

**I am proud to be a progressive Democrat. I have dedicated my life to progressive causes, including: fighting income inequality, protecting the middle class, advancing social justice, and advocating for peace.**

**III. ISSUE QUESTIONS**

Provide a brief & clear response.

5. What role should government play in our lives, and what limits should be placed on government, if any?

**The role of government is to protect rights of its citizens., ensure that everyone receives a fair shot at securing an economically viable life, and that everyone plays by the same rules (no special privileges). Government should promote the common welfare through investments in our education and infrastructure. Limits need to be placed on government' to ensure personal privacy.**

6. Do you believe in the separation of religious institutions/organizations and state? Specifically, do you believe it is acceptable to teach intelligent design in public schools or to put up religious monuments on public property? Is it okay for religious institutions/organizations that engage in political activity and/or engage in discriminatory practices to maintain a tax-exempt status?

**I am a strong supporter of 1st Amendment protections and the separation of church and state. I oppose the display of religious monuments on public property, the teaching of creationism or intelligent design in the classroom, and allowing tax-exempt organizations-or any other kind of business or non-profit entity-from being allowed to discriminate against employees because of their owners' 'personal beliefs'.**

7. Should U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and other countries continue, and if so, for how long? Do you believe that there is ever a justification for pre-emptive war? What do you believe should be the United States' foreign policy role in the world? Should defense spending be increased, reduced, or kept at current levels?

**I support the end of America's longest war and the redeployment of our military forces back home. Our military spending should be reduced to peacetime levels with the savings going towards nation-building here at home, especially to our underfunded schools , crumbling infrastructure, and to support our veterans. Our foreign policy should be one that respects international laws.**

8. What is your position on LGBTQ rights generally? Do you support marriage equality, and if so, what is your vision for LGBTQ rights beyond marriage equality?

**I was one of the founding members of the Satendar Singh Justice Coalition. We formed the coalition after Satendar Singh, an LGBTQ member of the Sikh community, died after being assaulted in a hate crime.**

**My wife and I were by his bedside when his uncle asked me to do a prayer before they took him off life support. It was a moment that we will never forget. His death gave me an increased resolve to advocate against hate. In addition, I am a regular speaker at high schools addressing hate crimes and bullying.**

**I support marriage equality and laws protecting LGBTQ individuals from discrimination in the workplace, hiring, housing, and other areas, as well as the strict enforcement of our hate crimes laws.**

9. Would you support mandatory diversity and sensitivity training for private as well as public employees?

**Yes.**

10. What will you do to ensure that women have equal pay, equal access to jobs, and full control over their bodies?

**I support a woman's right to choose. I will work to ensure that all employees of TRUSD receive equal pay and equal access to jobs, especially at the upper levels of management.**

11. Do you support seniority rights for workers? Do you support project labor agreements? Do you have any relationships to organized labor?

**I support seniority rights for workers and project labor agreements. I have been working with organized labor for over a decade on immigration reform, workers rights and opposing Proposition 32. Organized labor has also supported me in defending civil liberties and promoting tolerance in the region.**

12. Are you supportive of a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants already living in the U.S., if so, what would that pathway to citizenship entail? Are you supportive of the DREAM Act on the state and federal levels?

**I am a staunch supporter of comprehensive immigration reform, including a pathway to citizenship, for undocumented immigrants. I've been lobbying annually for several years on Capitol Hill advocating for immigration reform and the Dream Act.**

13. What are your views on civil liberties as they relate to: 1) the effects of gang injunctions; 2) the right to protest under the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment purposes; 3) the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment and the right to bear arms, and 4) the right to privacy and surveillance by law enforcement?

- 1) **Many studies show that gang injunctions have a very limited effect on decreasing crime. Gang injunctions also take away resources that could instead be used for social programs to steer youth away from gangs.**
- 2) **I oppose any restrictions.**
- 3) **I support back ground checks.**
- 4) **I strongly support our fundamental right to privacy, which includes the right to be free of warrantless government surveillance.**

14. Suppose an employee over which you had responsibly become a whistleblower, going to the media with damaging information that, they allege, was not properly dealt with via normal channels. What actions would you take? Would you support civil or criminal penalties for this person?

**As a Trustee, I would make sure to review existing policies covering employee complaints and their protections, to ensure that any subordinate who wants to report a problem can do so in a protected manner, with no risk of retaliation.**

15. What is your view on the current administration's use of indefinite detention to hold people deemed to be threats to national security, and use of extrajudicial assassination to kill people deemed to be "unlawful combatants" (e.g., drone strikes)? What is your view on the use of so-called "enhanced interrogation" techniques?

**I oppose indefinite detention, extrajudicial assassinations and the use of torture.**

16. What reforms, if any, do you believe should be made to the current campaign finance system? Would you support support the ratification of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution ending corporate personhood, regulation of corporate campaign contributions, or public financing of campaigns?

**I support a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*, end the concept of 'corporate personhood', and restore over 100 years of well-established federal and state campaign finance regulations. I support public financing of elections.**

17. What reforms of the criminal justice system would you like to see? Do you support capital punishment, LWOP (life without parole) for adults or juveniles, three strikes, or solitary confinement?

**I oppose capital punishment, LWOP for juvenile offenders, solitary confinement and our state's three strikes laws. I support reforming**

**sentencing laws and ending punitive drug policies, which puts unprecedented numbers of people behind bars for minor infractions.**

18. What practices or policies would you support to promote a well-rounded quality public education for students and attract and retain quality educators in our schools? What is your view on the creation of charter schools?

**We need to build more neighborhood schools to resolve the problem of over crowding. We also need to support after-school programs, pay teachers a living wage, and increase the role of innovative technology in the learning environment, to better prepare our students for 21st Century jobs. I believe that the creation of charter schools should not come at the expense of our public schools.**

19. Do you believe that man-made climate change is occurring, and if so, what action would you take to address it? How would you balance environmental sustainability, energy policy, and social justice?

**I agree with the overwhelmingly scientific consensus that climate change is occurring and that human activities-the burning of fossil fuels specifically-are causing it. While national and international action are ultimately the key to reversing the increase of harmful greenhouse gases, local school district actions can still contribute to this goal through the renovating (green building codes) and weatherization of older buildings to improve energy efficiency, and projects to mitigate greenhouse gases, such as planting more trees on school lands.**

20. How do you feel about the privatization of public resources and services, e.g., water, water treatment, parks, schools, parking structures, libraries, law enforcement, fire emergency and emergency medical services, social security, military, roads, bridges, etc.?

**I oppose privatization of public resources and services.**

21. What is your stance on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act? With the ACA now a reality, what is your position on health care for all?

**The ACA is a first step in health care reform and should be followed by additional reforms leading towards a public option.**

22. What are your views on international trade policies, and free trade in particular?

**Any international free trade agreements must include protections for workers and for the environment. Free trade agreements have led to millions of Americans losing their jobs and is a major reason that the middle class is shrinking.**

What solution(s) would you propose to solve budget shortfalls and how would you prioritize the needs of your constituents? Would taxes be part of that solution?

**Budget shortfalls can best be managed by effective planning. We know that national economic downturns occur on average once every decade. By planning ahead for these occurrences, we can avoid the need for harmful budget cuts that directly impact our teachers and the resources going to the classroom. Breaking the cycle of boom and bust, and the subsequent cuts, will be one of my most important objectives as a Trustee. I will certainly consider new revenue streams as a part of reliable school funding.**

23. What is the most important issue affecting your constituents and what will you accomplish while in office to address that issue?

**The most important issue facing the parents of Trustee Area 5 is overcrowding and improving student performance. My goal is to make sure that every child who goes to school in TRUSD receives a quality education, graduates high school, is prepared for college and a future career.**

Signed: 

Dated: 2/25/2015

## **Basim Elkarra Biography**

Basim Elkarra is the Executive Director of the Sacramento office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-SV). Elkarra chairs the Los Rios Community College Bond Oversight Committee, is a member of the California Democratic Party's (CDP) Executive Board, representing the 7th Assembly District, and Chairs the CDP's Affirmative Action Committee.

Elkarra previously served on numerous boards including: the American Civil Liberties Union-Sacramento Board, New Leaders Council (Sacramento) Advisory Board, Sacramento Police Multicultural Advisory Committee, Sacramento State University Community Council, Sacramento Library Multicultural Advisory Committee, Natomas Unified School District Multicultural Advisory Committee and the Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association's (APAPA) Outreach Committee.

For over a decade, Elkarra has founded and run a youth leadership program at the California State Capitol. He also organizes an annual College and Career Fair out of California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). Due to the success of these programs, Elkarra was invited by the State Department to speak to youth and community leaders in London about his work in empowering and integrating marginalized youth.

Elkarra testifies in hearings at the State Capitol and appears in the media as a regular commentator on civil liberties issues. He has also consulted for the Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) and has trained law enforcement agencies throughout the Sacramento Valley. Recently, Elkarra was featured on the cover of Comstock magazine, as a young professional who is shaping the future of the Sacramento Valley.

Elkarra holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of California at Berkeley. He is a Senior Fellow with the American Leadership Forum (ALF) and the Nehemiah Emerging Leaders Program (NELP).

### **Awards:**

Elkarra's hard work and dedication to defending civil liberties and building bridges between communities has brought him an array of public recognition and awards, including:

- California State Legislature Resolution #52064
- Volunteer of the Year, Democratic Party of Sacramento County
- Unsung Hero Award, Harry Truman Democratic Club
- Daruma Civil Rights Award, Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)
- Distinguished Leadership Award, Organization of Chinese Americans
- MLK Outstanding Community Leadership Award, Senator Lois Wolk & Assemblymember Mariko Yamada
- Social Justice Award, Sol Collective



**Endorsement List:**

- Sacramento Mayor Pro Tem Angelique Ashby
- Sacramento Vice Mayor Allen Warren
- Supervisor Phil Serna
- Los Rios Community College Trustee Pamela Haynes
- Los Rios Community College Trustee Dustin Johnson
- Los Rios Community College Trustee and former State Senator Debra Ortiz
- Sacramento Unified School District Trustee Gustavo Arroyo
- Women Democrats of Sacramento County

**Website:** [www.elkarra4kids.com](http://www.elkarra4kids.com) (still in development)

**Social Media:**



@BasimElkarra



<http://tinyurl.com/basimelkarrafb>