

JP Progressives Endorsement Results

Rachel Rollins for Suffolk County DA

The JP Progressives endorse Rachael Rollins for Suffolk County District Attorney. It is Rachael's progressive policy positions, her strength as a communicator, her impressive management experience, and most importantly her broad appeal among distinct progressive groups, that make her the candidate best positioned to beat conservative candidate Greg Henning.

The Importance of a DA

After finally passing a comprehensive criminal justice reform bill this past Spring, the next step in the fight against mass incarceration is to ensure these reforms are implemented. Equally important is achieving a wholesale cultural shift within our law enforcement institutions and a more enlightened, trauma informed approach to public safety and justice.

From the excessive use of cash bail to overcharging for crimes to lobbying against our recent criminal justice bill, District Attorneys across the state - including in Suffolk County - have played a leading role in maintaining a broken system. But now we are paying attention, getting educated, and we have the opportunity to make a difference with this election. And we are faced with a large field of candidates that represent starkly different paths.

The Wrong Candidates

On the one hand we have Greg Henning, an Assistant District Attorney who worked under Dan Conley as head of the Gang Unit, who will continue the backwards policies and practices of his predecessor. While he is certainly a qualified prosecutor, on important questions his positions contrast sharply with the three candidates representing the progressive approach we so desperately need. He is opposed to committing to using a special prosecutor for cases of police misconduct, he doesn't support the Mass Sentencing Commission's recommendation to abolish mandatory minimums for all crimes except murder, he supports continuing the use of asset forfeiture prior to conviction, and the list of wrongheaded policies goes on.

Linda Champion, despite her passion for the eliminating the conditions that lead to crime, shares many of the same positions as Henning. Most alarming is her rejection of established neuroscience research that argues for a different approach to offenders between the ages 18-24.

The Progressive Candidates

For this reason, we only seriously considered the remaining three candidates: State Representative Evandro Carvalho, ROCA Director Shannon McAuliffe, Former Chief Legal Counsel at Massport Rachael Rollins.

There are few differences among these candidates in their policy positions around criminal justice reform, so our focus shifted to the questions of experience, representation, and most importantly, the ability to beat Greg Henning whose candidacy is bolstered by a significant fundraising advantage including over \$60,000 from law enforcement and others with a stake in maintaining the status quo.

The Biggest Threat - Splitting the Progressive Vote

Sadly, despite being blessed with three compelling progressive candidates, we are actually faced with a very real threat - that progressive voters end up split between the progressive candidates, leaving worst-case candidate Greg Henning as the winner. Henning is the favorite among those who wish to continue on the wrong path. If Massachusetts had Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV), the instant-runoff process would ensure that all progressive votes ended up with a progressive candidate, but unfortunately we progressives are in serious danger of spoiling this election for one other.

For this reason, it is not only important to vote for the best candidate, it is also absolutely critical that all progressives unite behind a single progressive candidate, even if that candidate was the second choice for some.

Due Diligence and Coalition Building

In determining which candidate to recommend, we have engaged in extensive due diligence. We hosted a forum in April which attracted over 400 participants, we solicited written answers to the most popular questions submitted by our community (which can be found [here](#)), we attended subsequent forums hosted by the ACLU and the NFL Players Coalition. And most recently, we have been working with progressive allies who have formed the nascent Justice for Massachusetts coalition, which aims to mobilize support for candidates and, just as importantly, hold them accountable once in office.

Members of the Justice for Mass Coalition include: Progressive Mass, the Right to the City Vote Coalition (30+ members), the Chinese Progressive Association, Mass Alliance, Progressive Democrats of MA, SEIU 32BJ, SEIU 509 and several other allies who advised on the process.

After inviting all candidates to participate, members of the Justice for Massachusetts coalition interviewed the three who responded to their questionnaire or showed up to the interview: Rachael Rollins, Evandro Carvalho, and Shannon McAuliffe. In fact, there was even a second round of questions with two of these candidates. Following the interviews there was a robust discussion among coalition members, after which it was clear to the group that Rachael Rollins

was the strongest candidate. She was the top favorite among the most participants, and was consistently the second favorite among the others.

Community Discussion

On June 18th, the JP Progressives Steering Committee brought this feedback to its voting members in a community discussion. The community had advocates for all three progressive candidates and the discussion centered primarily on experience, leadership and electability.

In the end, most agreed that the momentum gathering around Rachel's candidacy and her broad appeal among different groups make her the candidate to unite behind. Coalescing quickly is essential to ensure we do not split the vote and get the least progressive candidate.

Steering Committee Recommendation

The JP Progressives Steering Committee thus recommended endorsing Rachael Rollins so we can join our voice and grassroots power behind the Justice for Massachusetts Coalition. Ultimately, the decision was made by the voting members of JP Progressives.

JPP Voting members agreed, supporting Rachael Rollins for the following reasons:

- **Lens Matters:** African Americans represent approximately 24% of the population in Suffolk county, but 57% of those incarcerated and 75% of those serving mandatory minimums. This reality is contrasted by the Suffolk County DA's office which has 131 white lawyers, 10 black lawyers, 6 Asian lawyers, and 4 hispanic lawyers. Not only will Rachael bring her lived experience as someone whose family has been directly impacted by the criminal justice system but also an intense commitment to ensuring the lawyers in the DA's office reflect the communities they serve.
- **Management matters:** The DA's office has approximately 300 staff, including 151 lawyers and manages over 34,000 cases a year. This job requires a manager and as the first female general counsel for the MBTA and the first person of color to serve as general counsel of MassDOT, she gained management experience critical to managing the reform process that will be needed in the Suffolk County DA's Office.
- **Unity matters:** As we said, we believe Rachael has solid progressive credentials. Her positions align with ours on all the critical issues: eliminating cash bail, charging and sentencing reform, pre-trial diversion, alternatives to incarceration, transparency and accountability, and more. It is our hope that by providing our endorsement and ultimately our clipboards to support the growing momentum around Rachael's candidacy, we can make her election a reality.

We thank our voting members for participating in the process, and we invite you, the community, to join us in supporting Rachel Rollins for DA. This means not only voting on September 4th, but also, to the extent possible, canvassing JP, and donating to her campaign. This election is critical to criminal justice reform in Suffolk County and Massachusetts.