

Indivisible CA-14 Candidate Questionnaire

Responses from 4 Candidates

1. Campaign website

Matt Ortega: <https://mattortega.com>

Aisha Wahab: www.AishaWahab.com

Melissa Hernandez: www.MelissaHernandez2026.com

Carin Elam: www.carinforcongress.com

2. How many years have you lived in your congressional district?

Matt Ortega: I grew up in the current CA-14 until I was 12. Organized with Defenders of Wildlife Action Fund in 2006 in the current eastern part of the district. I was in Swalwell's district until redistricting and now live about 5 residential streets north-northwest of the boundary.

Aisha Wahab: 35

Melissa Hernandez: Almost 30

Carin Elam: 15

3. Why are you running for congress?

Matt Ortega: We are in a national emergency. This administration is dismantling that which required decades to build domestically and internationally. As a student of history, I feel the weight of the future my sons and their generation stand to inherit. I tired of shouting from the sidelines and pleading for our leaders to stand up and fight. Our system is broken. The administration's knee is on our neck as the wealthy and powerful pick our pockets. My wife and I both hold good-paying jobs and grew up in homes our parents owned but homeownership is out of reach for us. To be close to family in the Bay Area, we rent. We have two sons but because child care is so expensive, we could only ever afford to send one of them three days a week. (Something many working families must navigate without the luxury of working from home like we are able to do.) Our health care premiums nearly doubled this year and that makes us one of the lucky ones. I believe we get better government when we elect people who share in the same struggles as the rest of us. In the richest nation on earth, life should be easier than this. I am fighting for an affordable future and the freedom to live it. One critical reason why I decided to get into this race is because I am the only candidate with national political experience. Donald Trump's Washington is a considerably different beast from supermajorities in the state legislature and city councils. I have fought in the trenches of national political fights for my entire adult life. I've drawn the ire of Republicans who attacked me in racialized terms when I was 22, or distributed my personal information from serving on the Clinton campaign in 2016, or attacked me on air in the first Trump administration as our current secretary of defense did in 2018. This moment demands more of us. We need someone who will not shrink from the fights ahead. I never have.

Aisha Wahab: I'm running for Congress to lower everyday costs, protect public safety, raise wages, expand housing, and make sure government works for people.

Melissa Hernandez: I want to make life more affordable for our community, and be a strong voice against this administration.

Carin Elam: Right now, division and courtier-like loyalty are dominating Capitol Hill, destroying the promise of a functioning government. We cannot continue to fight against each other for pure partisan gain - one does not repair a fence if they're pissed at their neighbor. We need to forge working relationships in Washington and work across the aisle. PERIOD. I'm running because you deserve representation that works as hard as you do. I plan to bring transparency and compromise to Congress, so that healthcare premiums are more affordable, immigration raids stop, our children have job opportunities when they graduate high school or college, and our vote counts.

4. Why do you believe you're the best candidate?

Matt Ortega: I am the only candidate in this race with national political experience. As a campaign hand and digital consultant in D.C. for over a decade, I worked alongside labor unions for better pay, better health care, and better working conditions. I fought with environmental groups for cleaner air and water, a clean energy future, and an inhabitable planet for our children. I pushed for comprehensive immigration reform, DACA/DAPA, and resisted the deportation machine under Obama with immigration activists. I believe our nation is currently mired in a perpetual state of emergency given the actions of this administration. As a student of history with two young sons, I felt its weight and concluded protest marches and arguing on social media were insufficient to the task at hand. I have a vision of what Democrats need to do over the next two years and beyond. Hold the line against this administration's attacks on U.S. citizens and immigrants alike. To use every leverage of power to hold this administration accountable while never losing sight of the long-term project necessary to mend the cracks and fissures of our democracy that predate Trump and will persist long after he's gone if we do not seize this moment.

Aisha Wahab: I have a proven track record of taking on the big fights and getting results, from capping insulin, to increasing the renter's tax credit, to funding a down-payment assistance program, to tackling organized retail theft, and fighting for our issues. I am the Democratic Party's endorsed candidate while also having local electeds, nurses, teachers, police officers, firefighters, and more support our campaign to serve the people. I have protected the most vulnerable and will continue to fight for the most vulnerable in our nation.

Melissa Hernandez: I have the leadership, experience, and knowledge to get results for our district. This is why I have the support of all of the County Supervisors in the district, as well as most of the Mayors.

Carin Elam: We need leaders who fully believe in the Democratic platform but those who will bring creative solutions. When Democrats retake the House in 2026, much time and attention will be directed toward correcting the many wrongs inflicted by the current Administration, but effort and energy must also be spent on common sense solutions to our greatest challenges, such as the rising cost of healthcare premiums. I'm the only candidate on the ballot who has worked in both hospitals and with health insurance companies. I will be laser focused on reducing escalating healthcare costs. For my graduate thesis, I studied discriminatory voting practices. I'll prioritize safe and easy voting. Lastly, I strongly believe that education offers independence and jobs offer control over one's life. I've worked to create jobs and career paths.

5. Which of the following will you accept donations from? (Check all that apply)

Options: corporate PACs, SuperPACs, AIPAC and associated PACs, None of these, Other

Matt Ortega: None of these

Aisha Wahab: pacs - union, employee pacs

Melissa Hernandez: People, Corporate PACs

Carin Elam: None of these

6. [this space was previously used for a duplicated question]

7. Are there any donors, whether entities or individuals, you have committed to not accepting donations from? If so, please list them. If you've made public statements, please link to them.

Matt Ortega: I will not accept corporate PAC money, money from Palantir, AIPAC money, crypto, and other harmful interests or groups whose values do not align with mine.

Aisha Wahab: (No response)

Melissa Hernandez: Big tobacco, gun manufacturers

Carin Elam: We're so grassroots, we haven't been approached by any organization for which we need to denounce.

8. Have you signed the No Fossil Fuel Money pledge?

Matt Ortega: Yes

Aisha Wahab: Yes

Melissa Hernandez: No

Carin Elam: Yes

9. If you have made public pledges or commitments to base your funding on small dollar donors, please paste the link(s) here.

Matt Ortega: Green New Deal champion <https://gndchampions.com/congressional-champions/>
End Citizens United Unrig Washington <https://www.endcitizensunited.org/unrig-washington>
Purge Palantir: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVw89WSjyKw/> No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge:
<https://bsky.app/profile/mattortega.com/post/3mehomeuoqb2h> and in the process of taking the Progressive Victory pledge

Aisha Wahab: (No response)

Melissa Hernandez: (No response)

Carin Elam: In print, on candidate collateral; on social; and on website

10. If elected, what will you personally do to hold back the MAGA agenda, even if the Democrats don't have a majority?

Matt Ortega: A Member of Congress wields a lot of power in the era of the attention economy. When they talk, reporters listen. I would use the power of my office to challenge this administration's policies and corruption in the national and local press. One aspect of politics in Washington is theater. Republicans understand this better than Democrats. It also requires an understanding of the online conversation and the zeitgeist which will capture the broader public's attention. It means traveling to where the latest fight can be found. Showing up for workers,

standing with vulnerable communities—and to do it without evincing any fear. A Member of Congress is halfway there as one of only a few hundred national figures. The ideal situation would be to coordinate a strategic communications plan among Members who understand this almost innately. Leaders like AOC who can speak from a place of authenticity and directly to people. This plan should focus attention on the criminal acts of this administration but also what this administration costs us. Every news story about how much Pete Hegseth spent on crab tail or the U.S. military spent fighting an illegal war in Iran should be met with a coordinated push on what the money **could** have provided for the American people. Use these two years to lay the groundwork for when we (hopefully, knock on wood) regain a majority in the House, or a trifecta in 2029, and carry out an agenda for which we have collectively built support for over my first term.

Aisha Wahab: With or without a Democratic majority, I will use every vote, every hearing, every coalition, and every public platform to block the MAGA agenda and hold it accountable. I will vote against extremist bills, fight attacks on abortion rights, civil liberties, immigrants, workers, and public education, and push for real oversight when power is abused. I will not normalize cruelty, corruption, or authoritarianism. And I will work with grassroots groups, labor, and local communities to build pressure inside and outside Congress—because stopping MAGA takes courage, strategy, and consistency. I will not be silent, and I will not back down. From a budget or policy perspective, I will fight for the everyday person.

Melissa Hernandez: I would focus my efforts on raising campaign funds to beat MAGA members of Congress who enable this administration.

Carin Elam: Call for the impeachment of many within President Trump's Cabinet, including Secretary of "War" (Defense) Pete Hegseth for his sharing of classified materials and misleading the public about the war in Iran; FCC Chair Brendan Carr for his threats against media outlets who seek to independently report the news; Attorney General Pam Bondi for her weaponization of the AG's office, acting as the President's personal attorney; FBI Director Kash Patel for his weaponization of the FBI against those deemed enemies of the President and for his abuse of departmental funds. As a Freshman in the House, this sort of action will be criticized. And, it contradicts my sincere interest in focusing on common sense solutions for those within the district but I believe to look past the blatant abuse of power will only lead to future harm. These leaders demonstrated a complete disregard for the rule of law, enabled the authoritarian tendencies of the President and need to be held accountable.

11. In your opinion, what should Democratic congressional leaders be doing right now do to hold back the MAGA agenda?

Matt Ortega: Democrats should use every measure of leverage available to them to slow down this administration. Republicans should be required to fight for every inch gained while they still cling to power. The party is viewed so negatively, in part, because we are seen as weak and unwilling to fight. Part of the solution to that problem requires moving on from certain Democrats who maintain a belief that it is still 1993. The other part requires authentically channeling the anger and frustration of the American people. If performative, people will see through it and dismiss it as insincere. I am constantly disappointed that Democratic senators do not use procedure to slow the Trump administration's efforts. Far too often, they allow business to continue in the chamber through unanimous consent and even vote to confirm judges and officials to his administration. It's patently absurd at a time like this. Hakeem Jeffries publicly maintains more cohesion over the Democratic caucus in the House, however, Chuck Schumer merely pretends to not have control over his caucus in the Senate when in reality he is orchestrating

votes. (Take for example, the continuing resolution last year. All of the Democratic senators who voted for it were not up in 2026 or retiring. That doesn't happen by accident.)

Aisha Wahab: Democratic congressional leaders should be doing three things right now: unify, confront, and simplify. First, they should be fully united against the parts of the MAGA agenda that are most dangerous: attacks on voting rights, reproductive freedom, immigrants, public education, civil liberties, and basic democratic norms. That means no mixed signals, no hedging, and no treating extremism like a normal policy disagreement. Republicans are currently pushing measures like the SAVE America Act, which would add strict proof-of-citizenship requirements and other voting restrictions, and Democrats have been the core bloc opposing it. Second, they should use every available lever of opposition—floor votes, hearings, oversight, procedural delays, public messaging, and coalition-building—to make MAGA overreach costly. Even in the minority, leaders can force public scrutiny, frame the debate, and keep attention on abuses of power, especially as fights over voting rules and war powers continue in Congress. Third, they need to keep the message simple and grounded in people's lives: lower costs, protect freedoms, defend democracy, and stop the chaos. Voters do not respond to process talk; they respond when leaders clearly explain who is being hurt, who is benefiting, and what Democrats will do differently. Reuters has also reported that Republicans are trying to use the current moment to lock in structural advantages before the midterms, which makes disciplined Democratic opposition even more important.

Melissa Hernandez: They should be raising money and focusing on winning elections to take back the majority.

Carin Elam: House Democrats need to 1.) leverage their power of the purse and block funding for military operations and DHS, 2.) pass a new War Powers Resolution to force the withdrawal of U.S. troops within 30 days, 3.) use committee oversight to demand a clear exit strategy, 4.) use a discharge petition to bypass Speaker Johnson and bring to the floor for legislative action to stop unauthorized military force.

12. If the Democrats have a House majority after the Midterms, what should Democratic congressional leaders do to hold back the MAGA agenda?

Matt Ortega: With a Democratic majority in the House, the Oversight and Government Reform Committee becomes the focal point of Democratic resistance to Trump's criminality and corruption. It also becomes Democrats' main driver to set the terms of the debate for 2028 while the primaries play out, particularly with Trump administration officials like JD Vance and Marco Rubio likely vying for the GOP nomination. If elected to serve in Congress, serving on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee would be my top choice for a committee in which to serve. With subpoena power, House Democrats will be able to investigate and publicize this administration crimes, such as DOGE's activities within the federal government. A story published today said a whistleblower came forward to reveal a DOGE employee absconded with all of our Social Security data and took it with them to their new job in the private sector. Republicans have not called for a hearing on this matter. Other areas of investigation include Donald Trump's self-enrichment, corrupt pardons, and abuse of regulatory agencies to help friends and donors. House Democrats must put this administration on a constant defensive. Far too often, Democrats are reactive and not proactive, allowing Republicans to set the terms of the debate. Zohran Mamdani demonstrated how a Democratic leader can force Republicans to fight on our turf and on our terms.

Aisha Wahab: If Democrats win the House, they should govern like the firewall. That means: do not bring MAGA bills to the floor, use committees aggressively, and use the power of the purse to block extremism from becoming policy. The House majority controls committee chairs and what

business moves through committees, the Rules Committee controls what reaches the floor and under what terms, and the Appropriations Committee writes the spending bills that fund government. So Democratic leaders should do a few things: First, stop the agenda cold. No votes on national abortion bans, voter suppression, attacks on immigrants, cuts to Social Security and Medicare, or efforts to undermine public education and civil rights. Second, investigate relentlessly. Use oversight hearings, subpoenas, and public reports to expose corruption, abuses of power, political retaliation, and any effort to weaponize government. Committee chairs can call meetings and hearings, and committees can compel testimony and records. Third, use funding power strategically. House Democrats should write appropriations bills that protect democracy, healthcare, education, reproductive freedom, and public safety—and block taxpayer money from being used to carry out extremist abuses. The House's appropriations process is one of the clearest tools for setting federal priorities and limiting executive action. Fourth, pass a clear people-first agenda: lower costs, protect freedoms, defend voting rights, expand housing, protect unions, strengthen public schools, and restore trust in government. Even when the Senate or White House blocks parts of it, the House majority should force the contrast every day.

Melissa Hernandez: We should focus on creating legislation that can move our country past this period.

Carin Elam: Much of this was addressed above. Democrats also need to tackle online misinformation.

13. Under what circumstances, if any, would you publicly criticize or act against the wishes of Democratic House leadership?

Matt Ortega: Upon my election, I would seek to meet with leadership. My vote for Jeffries for speaker is not a given and, frankly, may not matter to them depending on how 2026 plays out for Democrats in the House. That said, in any given situation, I would aim to first privately register any disagreements with leadership but always leave my options open on making those disagreements public. I intend to operate based on my own conscience and in adherence to deeply held values. I do not seek any leadership position within the Democratic caucus. If it means midnight subcommittee hearings on who knows because leadership seeks to punish me then so be it.

Aisha Wahab: Holding your own party accountable and to a high standard is the hard part. It shouldn't be move along to get along. I would do so when leadership's position conflicts with my core duty to protect constituents, defend democratic rights, or stand up for basic justice. If Democratic leadership asked members to stay quiet, soften opposition to extremism, or support a strategy that would harm working families, immigrants, civil rights, reproductive freedom, or the integrity of our democracy, I would speak up. I believe in teamwork, but not blind loyalty. Leadership matters, but it cannot come before the people we were sent to serve. My approach would be principled and disciplined: work internally first, be honest about the stakes, and if necessary be public when silence would make me complicit.

Melissa Hernandez: It really depends on the circumstances and specifics of the issue. However, I am willing to stand up against something that is wrong.

Carin Elam: I will act against Democratic Leadership if they don't support the joint resolution which proposes an amendment to the Constitution, limiting the number of terms that a member of Congress may serve.

14. Which of the following opposition tactics would you use, acting on your own if necessary? Check all that apply.

Options: Breaking quorum; Repeatedly calling a point of order; Using other parliamentary procedures to stall or stop progress; None of these; Other

Matt Ortega: Breaking quorum, Repeatedly calling a point of order, Using other parliamentary procedures to stall or stop progress, Offer up several amendments to legislation; use maximum amount of time to speak on the floor; vote against "closed" rules; force messaging votes; lobby leadership to use "Magic Minute" on critical issues; coordinate with Senate minority

Aisha Wahab: Breaking quorum, Repeatedly calling a point of order, Using other parliamentary procedures to stall or stop progress, Transparency is key to all discussions.

Melissa Hernandez: None of these, House rules prohibit these activities.

Carin Elam: secure bipartisan support

15. [unused question]

16. Do you support the continued leadership of Hakeem Jeffries in the House? Why or why not?

Matt Ortega: I have reservations, particularly on some of his strategic decisions, reports that he warned House Democrats not to draw attention during the State of the Union, some of his rhetorical choices, and his closeness to AIPAC. Upon my election, I would seek to meet with leadership. My vote for Jeffries for speaker is not a given and, frankly, may not matter to them depending on how 2026 plays out for Democrats in the House.

Aisha Wahab: Right now, Democratic leadership is not meeting the moment strongly enough. We need to strengthen it and push it to do better. I have served as the Senate Democratic Assistant Majority Leader for two different Pro Tempore in my years in the Senate. As a part of the Senate Leadership structure, there is a lot of issues that deserve attention and to unify a caucus, it takes a lot of patience and tact. It has shown me a great deal of the internal dynamics and thought process when governing such a diverse and broad caucus. I also believe that once I am in Congress, I will have a clearer understanding of the internal dynamics—something my experience in the Senate has taught me the media does not always capture accurately. I will support leadership that can unify the caucus, listen to where the party needs to go, and lead as a party of and for the people. If Hakeem Jeffries is that leader, then that is where my vote will go.

Melissa Hernandez: I am waiting to see how effective he is during these midterms.

Carin Elam: Yes, I support Congressman Hakeem Jeffries. He's a fighter that connects with the progressive wing of the party. I'm a left of center, common sense Democrat but appreciate Congressman Jeffries plans for leading the party.

17. Which of the following statements are you willing to publicly state and endorse?

Options: Abolish ICE and prosecute leadership; Abolish ICE; Reform ICE; Hold hearings about ICE abuses; Other

Matt Ortega: Abolish ICE and prosecute leadership; Abolish ICE; Reform ICE; Hold hearings about ICE abuses; Other

Aisha Wahab: Abolish ICE and prosecute leadership; Hold hearings about ICE abuses; Other

Melissa Hernandez: Abolish ICE

Carin Elam: Hold hearings about ICE abuses

18. Which of the following best describes your position?

[this was a multiple choice question]

Matt Ortega: I believe that the Democratic Party must oppose MAGA consistently, without compromise or apology.

Aisha Wahab: I abhor the anti-democratic actions of MAGA and largely oppose it, but will compromise with it selectively.

Melissa Hernandez: I abhor the anti-democratic actions of MAGA and largely oppose it, but will compromise with it selectively.

Carin Elam: I believe that the Democratic Party must oppose MAGA consistently, without compromise or apology.

19. Which of the following best describes your position? (2)

[this was a multiple choice question]

Matt Ortega: Democrats should generally vote against Republican bills unless the bill contains major wins for the Democratic agenda

Aisha Wahab: Democrats should work with Republicans to keep the government working smoothly, and vote for normal, common-sense bills regardless of who proposes them

Melissa Hernandez: Democrats should work with Republicans to keep the government working smoothly, and vote for normal, common-sense bills regardless of who proposes them

Carin Elam: Democrats should work with Republicans to keep the government working smoothly, and vote for normal, common-sense bills regardless of who proposes them

20. Which of the following slogans best describes your view?

[this was a multiple choice question]

Matt Ortega: Tax the rich

Aisha Wahab: Billionaires are a policy failure

Melissa Hernandez: Everyone should have to pay taxes

Carin Elam: Strong floor no ceiling

21. What action would you support on anti-trust legislation?

[this was a multiple choice question]

Matt Ortega: Strengthen anti-trust laws and regulations and seek to break up existing corporate consolidation

Aisha Wahab: Strengthen anti-trust laws and regulations and seek to break up existing corporate consolidation

Melissa Hernandez: Strengthen anti-trust laws and regulations and seek to break up existing corporate consolidation

Carin Elam: Strongly enforce existing anti-trust measures and make full use of regulatory authority

22. Which of the following statements best describes your view on government bailouts and support for private enterprise?

[this was a multiple choice question]

Matt Ortega: The government should demand a public equity stake in any business for which it provides bailouts or intellectual property

Aisha Wahab: The government should sometimes receive public equity in businesses for which it provides bailouts or intellectual property, but it depends on the circumstances

Melissa Hernandez: The government shouldn't get public equity but should be able to put some guardrails, such as limiting executive pay and dividends for businesses that get a bailout

Carin Elam: The government should sometimes receive public equity in businesses for which it provides bailouts or intellectual property, but it depends on the circumstances

23. Do you believe that government should provide public alternatives to compete with market actors in situations (eg healthcare, grocery stores) that would improve health or economic outcomes?

[this was a multiple choice question]

Matt Ortega: Yes, in many situations

Aisha Wahab: Yes, in many situations

Melissa Hernandez: Yes, in very limited situations

Carin Elam: Yes, in very limited situations

24. Do you believe that the government should pass legislation to re-criminalize methods of financial extraction, such as stock buy-backs, that provide benefit to shareholders but not to society? Please explain your position.

Matt Ortega: Yes, these were largely prohibited until 1982 and steered corporate America towards quarterly gains over long-term investment. Buybacks contribute to wage stagnation and income inequality by directing capital towards shareholders and not workers, R&D, or increase productivity in any way. Far too many C-suite leaders' pay is tied to stock price which incentivizes such behavior.

Aisha Wahab: I support strongly restricting—and where appropriate re-criminalizing—financial extraction practices like stock buybacks when they enrich shareholders and executives without creating public value. Our economy should reward productive investment, workers, and long-term growth, not extraction.

Melissa Hernandez: There is more we can do with tax policy to ensure shareholders do not get a disproportionate amount of profits.

Carin Elam: If elected, I would support the Reward Work Act introduced by House Democrats in 2023. I agree with legislation that repeals the Reagan-era Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) loophole (Rule 10b-18) and bans stock buybacks. I agree that buybacks can artificially boost share prices and benefit executives whose pay is tied to earnings-per-share (EPS) targets and should be investigated as market manipulation.

25. Which of the following actions towards the Supreme Court would you vigorously fight for? Check all that apply .

Options: Expanding the court; Term limits for justices; A binding ethics code for justices; Studying possible changes to the Supreme Court; None of these; Other

Matt Ortega: Expanding the court, A binding ethics code for justices, Studying possible changes to the Supreme Court. I have laid out plan to expand the Court to 13 active seats to match the number of circuits. My plan also includes a concept of a rotation drawn from a larger pool of confirmed Supreme Court justices that changes every term. This would be to diffuse the power of any one individual justice over the long-term. I am opposed to term limits because it would incentivize the Clarence Thomases of the Court to rule in favor of interests which can ensure they maintain an opulent life post-retirement.

Aisha Wahab: A binding ethics code for justices, Term limits for justices, Studying possible changes to the Supreme Court

Melissa Hernandez: A binding ethics code for justices, Term limits for justices, Studying possible changes to the Supreme Court, Expanding the court

Carin Elam: Term limits for justices, A binding ethics code for justices

26. [unused question]

27. Do you support proportional representation (eg H.R. 4632, the Fair Representation Act)

Matt Ortega: Yes

Aisha Wahab: I support reforms like that because democracy works better when more voters can actually help elect someone who represents them, not just whichever candidate wins a narrow plurality in a heavily drawn district. Proportional systems can create fairer representation, more competition, and stronger incentives for coalition-building instead of extremism.

Melissa Hernandez: Yes

Carin Elam: I believe that we should absolutely end gerrymandering, but handing off the drawing of lines to an independent redistricting commissions won't guarantee that lines are impartially drawn. My research has shown that "appointed commissions" are not impartial. In its current form, the rules for creating multi-member districts are too complicated for voters to understand how they will be represented; the bill needs to be more clear and simplified. I agree with ranked choice voting

28. Which of the following statements best expresses your view on the House chamber rules?

[This question was multiple choice with a free response option]

Matt Ortega: The power structure in the House Democratic caucus has become over centralized and should be reformed

Aisha Wahab: My view is that House chamber rules should strengthen democracy, improve transparency, protect minority rights, and make it harder for extremists or special interests to hijack the process. That means rules should encourage debate and accountability, not chaos; allow meaningful oversight; reduce backroom gamesmanship; and make sure legislation is actually read, publicly vetted, and open to scrutiny. I do not support rules that make Congress less functional, more theatrical, or easier for extremists to use as a weapon against governing.

Melissa Hernandez: The power structure within the House Democratic caucus needs improvement but is fundamentally sound

Carin Elam: The power structure within the House Democratic caucus needs improvement but is fundamentally sound

29. What action, if any, will you pledge to fight for regarding congressional stock trading?

Matt Ortega: I am committed to the ban of congressional stock trades, including immediate family members.

Aisha Wahab: yes

Melissa Hernandez: I would ban Congressional stock trading.

Carin Elam: I support and will vote for restrictions on direct congress stock trading.

30. Please describe your position on the regulation of AI & AI datacenters.

Matt Ortega: As a small business owner for digital creative services but also a consumer of news and social media, I am deeply concerned about the worsening media literacy of not just our country but people all around the world. I believe AI-produced imagery (photo, video, audio, etc.) must be regulated and require, at minimum, disclosure of AI generation. My fear is that the widespread dissemination of these tools is a Pandora's box that can never be closed. That said, in full disclosure, as a web developer, I have used AI tools to help me debug code or work with APIs in which I am not familiar. Using AI to comprehend complex data or reference guide material is a huge help. The use of AI as a substitute for learning, however, is problematic at best and studies show it actually hurts it. Nor should AI be used to provide authoritative narratives on largely subjective topics. It is in this area where, for instance, Grok users are subjected to the propaganda whims of a right-wing billionaire who openly shares white nationalist, white supremacist, and Nazi messages. I am deeply concerned with the boom of AI datacenters which use more electricity than small cities do in a month. Water is another issue, especially when companies try to build these datacenters in areas already suffering from water problems like the southwest. In my personal capacity, a potential vendor approached me about a graphic design and web development project related to the promotion of AI datacenters and I declined.

Aisha Wahab: AI should be regulated with the public interest—not just corporate speed or profit—in mind. I support clear rules around safety, transparency, privacy, labor impacts, bias, copyright, and accountability when AI systems cause harm. Companies developing or deploying high-impact AI should be required to meet testing, disclosure, and audit standards, especially

when these systems are used in healthcare, hiring, education, housing, law enforcement, or national security. I also believe AI datacenters must be regulated for their real-world impacts: energy use, water consumption, air quality, land use, grid reliability, worker standards, and community impacts. We cannot allow massive AI infrastructure to drive up utility costs, drain local resources, or burden working-class communities while a few firms capture the upside. Innovation matters, but it must be aligned with environmental responsibility, consumer protection, and democratic accountability.

Melissa Hernandez: We need to regulate AI to capture the benefits, while protecting workers, children, and ensuring safety guardrails such privacy rules and disclosures for generated content. Companies need to invest in their own datacenters rather than relying on taxpayers.

Carin Elam: It's been widely reported that AI has the potential to solve society's biggest problems, such as finding cures for rare diseases, improving medical screenings, and advancing accessible technology. Unfortunately, AI provides nefarious actors with the tools for more sophisticated fraud, misinformation, cybersecurity threats. To navigate the AI economy, I'll work with Congressional colleagues to draft legislation based on the guidelines outlined in Former President Biden's 2023 Executive Order, 'Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence, such as watermarking of curated AI content, on-going monitoring to detect bias and data security. Regarding data centers, I'll support any legislation that protects ratepayers from increases in their monthly bills due to grid or energy upgrades that solely benefit new data centers. I will also push legislation that utilizes a combination of regulatory requirements, financial incentives, and strategic planning to ensure investment in power-generating capacity includes clean base load power.

31. Please describe your position on the regulation of surveillance technologies.

Matt Ortega: I am a signatory to the Purge Palantir pledge and refusing money from Palantir executives but also committed to ejecting the company (and similar surveillance companies) from the federal government. We read recently that a DOGE employee took our Social Security data with them to another job in the private sector. I suspect there is rampant abuse such as this with companies like Palantir and others.

Aisha Wahab: I support strong regulation of surveillance technologies because unchecked surveillance threatens civil liberties, privacy, free speech, labor organizing, and democratic participation. Facial recognition, predictive policing tools, automated license plate readers, data brokers, and other surveillance technologies should not be deployed without strict oversight, public transparency, clear limits on use, and enforceable penalties for abuse. Surveillance should never become a tool to target immigrants, protesters, Muslim communities, Black and brown communities, workers, or political dissent. I support requiring warrants where appropriate, banning especially dangerous forms of mass surveillance, and ensuring that any public use of these tools is subject to democratic control, independent audits, and more.

Melissa Hernandez: We need to ensure we are not overly surveilling citizens, and Congress needs to take the lead on oversight and prevention.

Carin Elam: I support any legislation that bans ICE and CPB from acquiring and using facial recognition technology (FRT) and other biometric identification systems.

32. Politics is sometimes described as having an "inside game" of legislative activity and an "outside game" of movement and community group organizing. To what extent do you work to build or encourage the latter? Please describe.

Matt Ortega: I started out with the "netroots" in the Bush years—online activists who were upset with the DLC-centric, Republican Lite brand of Democratic politics of the time and sought to push the party left. That spirit has never left me. When I served the DNC in the 2008 cycle. I was a junior staffer but made efforts to ensure bloggers of all stripes were engaged with, represented, and even promoted by the party. That same ethos carried with me while serving in a senior communications and digital role with the Clinton campaign in 2016. Throughout my career as a digital consultant—at my old firms and since I started my own firm in 2022—I have played a role as connector between the "inside" and "outside." If elected, I would view my role no differently.

Aisha Wahab: To a great extent. One of the things I've learned in the Senate is that the outside voice is influential. Speaking and building bridges moves policy, especially more people oriented policy versus industry policy. I'd be transparent as I have been, collaborate, explain, be challenged, and learn where ever I can.

Melissa Hernandez: In every position I've had in public service, I have encouraged public participation, and brought the community in to have a voice and a role. This is how I got started in public service, and something I take very seriously.

Carin Elam: As a life-long organizer, beginning in high school and continuing through my volunteer work as an adult, I'm more comfortable working the "outside game". I've been called a servant leader because there's no job that I would ask someone to do that I'm not willing to do myself. My super power is listening to understand then executing on a solution.

33. Please describe your vision for the future, what immediate problems reflecting it you will work to solve, and how you intend to bring power to bear to solve them.

Matt Ortega: For the sake of argument, I suspect Democrats take the majority in the House, but Republicans maintain control of the Senate with Trump in the White House. The next two years will be about holding the line to protect people from this administration while using the power of the House majority to hold it accountable and shape the debate for 2028. The breadth of a Democratic win in 2026 may force Republicans to the table for negotiations on enhanced ACA subsidies and other Democratic priorities. Otherwise the Democrats must stand firm and hold this administration accountable. Demonstrate that the Democratic Party can be trusted to protect, defend, and fight for the American people.

Aisha Wahab: My vision is a country where working people can afford to live with dignity, feel safe, have real freedom over their lives, and trust that government is on their side instead of captured by wealth and extremism. The immediate problems I want to solve are cost of living, housing affordability, healthcare access, attacks on civil rights and democracy, and the concentration of economic power that leaves ordinary people behind. I would use every tool available—legislation, oversight, coalition-building, public pressure, and direct engagement with communities—to fight for lower costs, stronger rights, greater accountability, and a government that delivers real results.

Melissa Hernandez: Housing affordability, healthcare affordability, and childcare affordability are all crises we must solve now to have a sustainable future. I have experience with all three of these, and will use my experience to create change in Congress.

Carin Elam: I see a future in which government works again because the blue and red teams wear a white pantsuit of coming together for the country to solve the country's problems. We need to work together. We cannot solve the gravest issues facing the country only when we're in charge. It leads unstable policy progress. And, to ensure we have elected leaders who are running for the right reasons, we need to end congressional stock trading, restrict lobbying after

retirement, end citizens united, and set term limits. Then, the promise of 'for the people and by the people' might be realized.

34. What's your view of the U.S. healthcare system? What changes to it, if any, would you work to implement?

Matt Ortega: Private health insurance is an absurd concept to me. It charges us exorbitant premiums and its sole purpose is to find ways to deny paying for our care. It's a middle man that prolongs suffering, stirs up frustration when patients should be recovering, and even responsible for avoidable deaths. I am on the record in support of Medicare for All. I approach this not just as an individual but also as a small business owner. Private health insurance premiums disadvantage small businesses in the pursuit of talent. Only 51 percent of small businesses offer at least partial premium coverage. That's down from 54 percent two years ago. I could increase revenues by bringing staff but most creative professionals are high wage earners (higher than the median income) and expect health insurance from their employers. (Nor should they accept anything less!) But there's no way I can afford to cover premiums even partially. I don't even get healthcare through my own business. I am on my wife's health insurance plan. Individuals do not fare much better in the private health care system. Many workers surrender higher wages to secure better health care. They may stay in a job with fewer professional advancement opportunities because of their employer health insurance. (Or fear they might lose coverage for a medical condition of theirs or that of a loved one.) If we lift the financial burden of health care from the shoulders of individuals, they will be free to pursue other professional opportunities without fear of losing coverage, seek higher wages, and live a life of freedom in which they were destined.

Aisha Wahab: The U.S. healthcare system is too expensive, too unequal, and too driven by profit instead of patient need. National health spending reached \$5.3 trillion in 2024, or \$15,474 per person, which underscores how unaffordable and unsustainable the system has become. I would work to lower costs, expand coverage, reduce prescription drug prices, protect reproductive healthcare, strengthen mental health care, and move us toward a system where healthcare is treated as a human need, not a privilege. I also believe we need stronger action against corporate consolidation in healthcare, because patients should come before profits.

Melissa Hernandez: As Director of Healthcare Services for Alameda County Supervisor District 1, I lead the effort to expand healthcare access and advocate for programs and services that improve Alameda County residents' health and safety. Our priorities are all wrong when it comes to healthcare. We should be increasing access. Instead, we are taking away healthcare for children and seniors. And millions of families are paying higher health premiums after Trump and Republicans took away the subsidies that keep ACA health insurance premiums. We can do better at driving down costs and improving health outcomes. The focus should be on patient health, not corporate profits. This includes lowering prescription drug costs, and holding big corporate healthcare providers accountable for lowering costs. There are also cost savings to be had by requiring national standards of care and creating national data sharing, making costs and care more transparent and standard, driving down costs.

Carin Elam: We have some of the best healthcare in the world but it's unaffordable and costs continue to rise. The rise in healthcare costs began under former President Ronald Reagan when he began promoting market competition, preferring private insurance and state-level management. Health insurance companies have had 50 years to demonstrate that market competition is not a benefit to the patient. It's only a benefit to the shareholder. I support a smart, slow, steady expansion of Medicare as a stop-gap for older adults leaving the workforce 5-7 years before they would traditionally qualify for Medicare.

35. Do you support continued military aid to Israel?

Matt Ortega: No

Aisha Wahab: As much as I support Israel's right to exist and for civilians to live in safety, I support the rights of Palestinians. I do not support a blank check for military aid without clear conditions, accountability, and full compliance with human rights and international law. U.S. policy should prioritize protecting civilians, preventing further mass suffering, securing the release of hostages, and pushing urgently for a just and lasting peace. Military aid should never be beyond scrutiny, especially when civilian lives and human rights are at stake.

Melissa Hernandez: Israel is a democracy and a longtime partner in the Mid-East region. However this does not mean I support every action by their government. Much like America under Trump, not everyone agrees with what the administration is doing. The same holds true for the people of Israel under Netanyahu.

Carin Elam: No

36. Is there anything else you would like us to know?

Matt Ortega: I am the only candidate running with national political experience in the trenches alongside labor unions, environmental groups, immigration activists, and veterans on some of the biggest issues of the past twenty years—health care, minimum wage, Fed chairmanship, climate and clean energy legislation, Keystone XL pipeline, comprehensive immigration reform, the defeated Sinclair-Tribune merger, and more. Through twenty years, I've worked to elect Democratic candidates up and down the ballot. Jerry McNerney in 2006. Barack Obama in 2008. Hillary Clinton in 2016. AOC, Beto O'Rourke, Rashida Tlaib, Cory Bush, Jamaal Bowman, John Fetterman (in 2022, before he turned), Ayanna Pressley, Robert Garcia. Barbara Lee in 2024. Donald Trump did not create the cracks and fissures in our democracy. They predate him but he exploited them. Our problems do not go away when he does. If we secure a trifecta in 2029, we have one shot to secure our democracy. If we fail, the task falls to them and becomes considerably more difficult. With the weight of history, I simply cannot allow that.

Aisha Wahab: I believe government should be judged by whether it improves people's lives. My politics are grounded in affordability, dignity, civil rights, democracy, and accountability. I am not interested in symbolic opposition alone—I believe in using power to lower costs, protect freedoms, challenge concentrated wealth and corporate abuse, and make government work for ordinary people.

Melissa Hernandez: My style of representation is to always keep the community engaged and involved. I look forward to working with the different Indivisible chapters when I am in Congress.

Carin Elam: I truly appreciate the invitation for endorsement consideration.