2012 Candidate Questionnaire



Dear Mr. Solomon,

If you are interested in pursuing an endorsement from Progressive Democrats of America Sonoma County, please complete the questionnaire below and return to Alice Chan, nuthatch@sonic.net, and Anna Givens, anna@pdsonoma.org no later than August 3rd, 2011. You may type your responses into this document underneath each question.

Sincerely,	
Alice Chan and Anna Givens, PDSonoma Steering Committee	

Candidate and Campaign Information:

Candidate Name: Norman Solomon

Campaign Address: P.O. Box 1407, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956

E-mail Address: solomonprogressive@gmail.com

Office for which you are running: U.S. House of Representatives

Date of Election: June 5, 2012

Registered Political Party: Democratic

Campaign Manager: Dan Mullen (consultant)

Phone: (415) 250-5200 Fax: _____ Please limit your responses to 150 words per question.

Economic and Social Justice:

1) How would you differentiate between "free" trade and "fair" trade? What is your position on these differences?

"Free" trade is a term that is routinely a misnomer, used to refer to trade pacts that allow powerful economic entities like corporations to set the terms of international trade.

"Fair" trade ensures that trade agreements and practices are respectful of environmental protections, labor rights, democratic processes and human rights.

I am a supporter of "fair" trade. I oppose such misnamed pacts as the North American Free Trade Agreement as injurious to worker rights, the environment, democratic processes and human rights.

2) What is your broad-outline idea of a fair taxation policy for individuals and corporations in the United States? What is your opinion of a financial transaction tax on securities trades on Wall Street, to fund a job-creation/training program?

The tax burden has shifted away from large corporations and wealthy individuals during the past several decades; that trend should be reversed.

I support a transaction tax on Wall Street, such as the measures provided for in the 21st Century Full Employment and Training Act introduced in the House by Congressman John Conyers in 2011.

3) If elected, what legislation would you sponsor to improve the lives of working people, especially minorities, in the United States?

The Conyers bill that I referred to in the previous answer would provide millions of new jobs, particularly to the benefit of racial minorities and other social sectors with high unemployment.

I want to work in the U.S. Congress for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.

I would want to work with other members of the House to cosponsor legislation that provides for equal penalties for drug possession rather than unfair differentiation between rock and powder cocaine.

I want to work on legislation that could provide extensive remedial education and job training for people with limited schooling.

4) Working men and women are under attack by state legislatures over their rights to organize and collectively bargain. As a member of Congress, how will unions play a part in working with you to develop labor policy and legislation? What do you intend to do to protect the rights of working families in the jobs marketplace?

I am a union member (National Writers Union, UAW Local 1981). I have worked with many union activists and intend to do so intensively as a member of Congress.

As a supporter of the Employee Free Choice Act, I want to help make it easier for working people to establish unionization via democratic processes. I also wish to protect workers from all-too-customary harassment and interference from employers eager to prevent formation of unions.

5) Data from many sources indicate that success in gaining and maintaining full time jobs at decent wages is strongly biased toward levels of education and that levels of academic achievement are strongly biased toward available family income. Especially during the current unemployment siege, these disparities cut across all employment categories, both public and private sector. Yet, budget shortfalls at the national, state and local levels continue to be met by terribly erosive cuts in funding for public education, including jobs and per pupil spending, from pre-school through 16, as well as for post graduate training. Data also document that privatization "solutions", overall, have failed to deliver on improving academic achievement, even by methods currently used to assess achievement. If elected, what specific legislative acts would you co-sponsor, or oppose, to ensure access to quality public

education for all, independent of race, class, gender or family income?

I believe that public education is a civic right and governmental responsibility. I will oppose efforts to undermine public schools with privatization measures. I will work to gain a bigger financial role for the federal government in providing for nationwide stability in school funding, and to require that federal mandates (such as special education for children who need it) be accompanied by real and not just theoretical funding from the federal government to local school districts.

6) As with all communities, the Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender (LGBT) community has a range of complex issues that must be addressed to improve the present and future lives for LGBT people. What steps do you believe should be taken to address the challenges of the homeless problem facing LGBT youth and economic inequality and discrimination in housing and basic sustenance for LGBT people, as well as to educate LGBT youth on their culture and history and foster an appreciation for the LGBT contribution to our society within the larger regional and national community?

Homelessness is a national blight that occurs even more frequently among LGBT young people because of discrimination, bigotry and frequent conflicts in families of origin. Government should protect the civil rights of all people and should affirm the human rights and dignity of everyone regardless of sexual orientation. Non-discrimination laws and their enforcement are essential in order to move closer to a society that truly affirms the human rights of all.

7) What is your position on current immigration policy: Specifically, what works and what doesn't work? What would you do to address the root causes that drive millions of people to enter the US illegally? Explain your position on the issue of a program for legal residency and path to citizenship for the 13 plus million undocumented in the U.S.

The root causes of pressures that drive many people to enter the U.S. illegally (particularly from Mexico and Central America) often include the effects of NAFTA and other trade agreements that have enabled multinational North-American-based corporations to dump agricultural goods in poor countries, with

the effect of undercutting family and small-scale agriculture in those countries. The results include urbanization, increased poverty and often migration to the United States. NAFTA is a failure in human and economic terms, and should be repealed. Here in the United States, I am a supporter of the DREAM Act.

8) In what ways would ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment enhance America's full economic recovery, peace-keeping efforts and global competitiveness in the future? If elected, what priority (Top, Medium, Low) would you give to urging Congress's removal of any deadline for ERA's ratification in the final three states needed? How would you publicize your commitment beginning now?

Unfortunately, passage of the ERA currently does not have much momentum in the United States. It is difficult to categorize the exact priority that I would give to removal of ratification deadline. I would want to develop strategies in collaboration with women's rights organizations to determine how high a priority is appropriate in comparison to other measures that are also need to bring us closer to meeting the essential goal of gender equality.

War and Peace:

1) Do you believe that the severity of the ongoing economic crisis has created budget shortfalls that require us to reexamine our national spending priorities in regard to the U.S. occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq? If so, what would you cut or reduce from the military budget, and how would you redirect those funds to domestic needs? Would you vote against further funding for these occupations?

Yes. I would end U.S. warfare in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan and other countries, thereby saving literally billions of dollars for the U.S. Treasury each week. The money should be spent on healthcare, education, housing, green jobs and other programs here in the United States. I would vote to end the U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

2) Many people believe that the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan attempts to legitimize a corrupt Karzai government, which is largely viewed as unrepresentative of and unresponsive

to the people of Afghanistan. They also believe that the U.S. military presence has not improved security, and, therefore, the poor economy continues to erode. Do you agree or disagree? Please explain your answer and give possible solutions.

I agree. Two years ago, I saw firsthand in Kabul a very poor country in desperate need of assistance. I believe the U.S. spending in Afghanistan should be redirected to proven avenues for humanitarian assistance. I met with representatives of effective NGOs in Afghanistan; they are in desperate need for long-term funding, which must be totally separate from any warwaging agenda.

3) Many people believe the main obstacle to a fair settlement in the Middle East has been U.S. policies in the region. Specifically, they point to aggressive policies favoring Israel and antagonistic attitudes towards the Arab population, advanced by a U.S. Congress greatly influenced by the Israeli lobby. Please explain your agreement or disagreement with this analysis. Also, have you accepted campaign donations from AIPAC and/or other Israeli lobbies?

I believe that a single standard of human rights is essential. I think there are many factors at play, and I am opposed to the killing of civilians by any sides in the conflicts. I believe in a two-state solution with security for those who live in a Palestinian state as well as in Israel. I have not taken any campaign donations from AIPAC or similar entities. (Please note: none have been offered.)

4) Given that U.S. military bases in foreign countries may be necessary for strategic and defense purposes, do you believe that we are currently spending too much or too little for military bases all over the world? Do you believe we should maintain bases in Iraq and Afghanistan? What do you think determines "too many" or "too few" bases?

The U.S. government is spending way too much on military bases around the world, as Chalmers Johnson and other authors have documented. I do not believe that U.S. military bases should be maintained in Iraq or Afghanistan. Legitimate defense needs should guide assessing whether there are "too many" or "too few" bases overseas. It is all too clear that "too many" applies in the case of U.S. bases around the world.

Corporate Rule:

1) What would you do to curb the undue influence of corporations on our political process and our society?

I support vigorous anti-trust legislation and endorsement.

The radio and TV airwaves, which in theory belong to the public, should be engaged in providing equal access for candidates without charge, to help level the playing field.

Campaign finance reform should include strict limits on corporate money in politics. The federal government should facilitate "clean money" processes that enable a wide range of citizens to run for office and fully participate in the electoral process.

2) Explain your position on limiting the rights of corporations to participate in our democracy and expanding affirmative rights for people, as well as your opinion of *Citizens United v. FEC*.

Right now, corporations enjoy the rights of people but few of the liabilities. Corporations should not be allowed to dominate our political process. Strict campaign finance laws should prevent corporations from purchasing enormous power with lobbying and often-anonymous-source advertising. The Citizens United decision was anti-democratic, making it even more difficult for the will of the people to prevail over the will of big money.

Healthcare:

1) Do you support a single-payer, Medicare-for-all solution for our health funding and health delivery crises? Why or why not? If not, what do you propose to do at the national level to eliminate the waste, fraud, and abuse of our current for-profit payment model, and to achieve guaranteed high-quality universal healthcare?

Yes. Single-payer, enhanced Medicare for all is necessary in order to turn the human right of healthcare into a reality.

2) Given the reality of single-payer campaigns' making significant headway in numerous states, do you support enabling legislation that will allow states to innovate immediately, bypassing legal challenges emanating from ERISA, and/or states' capacity to capture Medicare, Medicaid, VA, CHIPS, and other federal dollars to finance state-based "Medicare for All"? Please explain.

Yes. Given the blockage of single-payer legislation in Washington, D.C., states must have the latitude to enact and implement single-payer healthcare. The federal government should facilitate this process.

3) Please explain how you intend to preserve Social Security for future generations.

Social Security is solvent, as the Center for Economic and Policy Research and many other research organizations have documented. We can preserve Social Security by protecting it from the so-called "reform" efforts that seek to fix (the wagon of) what is not broken.

4) Women's control over their own reproductive health and decisions continues to be threatened by paternalism masquerading as morality. What would you do to protect and strengthen women's access to reproductive health services, as well as to prevent the further erosion of a woman's right to choose?

As Roe v. Wade made clear, women have a right to make their own decisions in the areas of reproductive health and pregnancy. The variation of state laws has been used to restrict this right. The federal government should ensure that full reproductive rights are protected and enforced throughout the United States. The restrictions on government funding for health services that now curb those rights should be ended.

Energy and Environment

1) To many, climate disruption, more commonly and innocuously referred to as Global Warming, is often referenced as the greatest threat civilization has ever faced. Although many currently elected officials campaigned aggressively on this issue—promoting a green economy, alternative energy solutions, carbon emission reductions and carbon tax legislation—there has

been little to no action or legislation pushed forward. The earth continues to warm as CO2 concentrations continue to rise. Campaigns to create doubt around climate science are well funded, well organized, and effective. Please share your view on the science of climate disruption, your view on how it should be addressed, and where you would rank this as a personal priority.

Human-caused climate change is all too real. This is a planetary emergency. This matter should be a top priority in Washington, and it is a personal very high priority for me. We cannot allow poll-driven political calculus to continue to interfere with addressing this grave emergency for life on this planet.

2) Because fossil fuels are the cheapest form of energy, we are burning far more than the Earth's atmosphere and climate can assimilate. How would you change the economic incentives to discourage fossil fuel use and encourage renewables and efficiency? Does a revenue-neutral carbon tax used to fund cuts in payroll taxes make sense to you? Do you agree with the Defense Department's recent assessment that global warming poses substantial security threats? How do we get beyond climate science denial?

We must tax carbon at its real cost to our society, to the planet and to future generations. I believe that a carbon tax should be implemented as its own entity, along the lines of the Cantwell-Collins bill introduced in the Senate. There is no doubt that global warming involves profound "security threats." Elected officials and government agencies must be clear, direct and unequivocal about the well-documented scientific findings that have indentified the human-activity causes of drastic climate change.

3) In order to meet America's energy demands, a number of options are utilized. What's your view on hydro-fracking for natural gas, the development of tar sands and the associated pipeline, mountain-top mining, and building new nuclear power plants (Germany is phasing theirs out in light of the Fukushima disaster) and safely managing the spent fuel that's already been generated?

I am firmly opposed to fracking, the tar sands development and mountain-top removal. I am opposed to building new nuclear power plants, and I favor closing the existing nuclear power plants. Conservation of energy is crucial and should be the goal of massive

new funding. Nuclear spent fuel is a twofold problem: The existing spent fuel will require extensive funding to mitigate as much as possible the short-term and long-term dangers of the result of operating nuclear reactors. And the further accumulation of spent fuel must be prevented by ending the operation of nuclear reactors.

Fair and Transparent Elections

1) What are you willing to do to ensure that all registered voters are able to vote without undue obstruction, hardship and expense, and are able to witness and participate in all phases of the election--from voting procedure and protecting the chain of custody for secure transmission of their votes, to counting the votes and reporting the results transparently, accurately and securely?

Election integrity is a federal responsibility. The failure of many states to ensure the protection of voters' rights has been compounded by federal failures along the same lines. Government monitoring of all phases of the elections process is vitally necessary.

2) Explain your position on the use of taxpayer dollars to finance political campaigns directly and equitably, with some expenditures offset by taxing some of the massive profits derived by broadcast media from their free use of the frequency spectrum owned by the people.

As noted previously, I favor the provision of free air time to candidates on radio and TV airwaves that theoretically belong to the public. In addition, I support "clean money" laws, such as have been implemented in Maine and Arizona, that lower the barriers to entry in the political process and make it more feasible for people from a range of walks of life to participate in running for office. It is not clear that the funding for such programs need to come from broadcast companies.

3) Do you support efforts to end deceptive practices that deliberately mislead or intimidate traditionally disenfranchised communities to include minority voters, Seniors and young people through voter I.D. challenges and other forms of voter

intimidation to fraudulently prevent turnout in targeted communities.

Absolutely. The recurring episodes of efforts to intimidate some voters and dissuade them from casting ballots is shameful. Again, this should be a federal responsibility to ensure that the right to vote exists in practice as well as in theory.