



DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST VOTING GUIDE FALL 2019

DSA is the largest socialist organization in the U.S. We're fighting for a socialist feminist and anti-racist society. We are socialists because we believe that work and our economy should be organized for the benefit of the many, not to make profits for a few.

Find the full version of this guide at dsaneworleans.org/2019-voter-guide



NEW ORLEANS
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GOVERNOR

Incumbent **Governor John Bel Edwards (D)** has presided over a Republican-controlled state legislature. Apart from disagreements over the state budget, Edwards has mostly governed as though he were a Republican. While Edwards did expand Medicaid, he also supports the Bayou Bridge pipeline, gave millions in tax breaks to the petrochemical industry, banned state companies from contracting with any business participating in the pro-Palestine “Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions” movement and signed the 6-week abortion ban (which is not in effect pending federal court ruling).

Ralph Abraham (R) is the third term representative from Louisiana’s 5th District. A rich industrial farmer, Abraham has pushed for work requirements for SNAP recipients, and made money off the opioid crisis. He is the closest thing to an establishment Republican in the race.

Eddie Rispone (R), a multimillionaire Baton Rouge industrialist, is one of Louisiana’s greatest profiteers from the pollution of our state’s water and air. Has given generously to support charter schools and school vouchers and has released campaign ads saying he stands with Trump.

SECRETARY OF STATE

The third highest ranking state official, the Secretary of State oversees a number of tasks, including state archives and the registration of businesses. Most importantly, the Secretary of State runs all elections and voter registration.

Incumbent **Kyle Ardoin (R)** came into the office after his former supervisor stepped down amid allegations of sexual assault. Ardoin has opposed providing free public transit on election day. 36,000 people with felony convictions had their voting rights officially restored this year, but only 581 have registered under Ardoin.

Gwen Collins-Greenup (D) did well last election cycle despite being significantly out-fundraised. She agrees with conservatives who want to require photo IDs for elections, but has also combated fear-mongering about undocumented people voting. Collins-Greenup is an advocate for increasing Louisiana voter participation through “voter education, community outreach, and social media.”

TREASURER

Decisions that shape the state budget are made by the legislature and governor. The treasurer basically just signs the checks. Ironically, it's the lack of importance that makes this an attractive office to ambitious Louisiana politicians. The responsibilities are few, so accountability is low.

Incumbent **John Schroder (R)**, a Northshore real estate developer, is campaigning on “Louisiana has a spending problem, not a revenue problem,” even though we give away billions of dollars in tax cuts to corporations and are near dead last in national quality of life rankings.

Teresa Kenny (No Party) is new to Louisiana politics. She has an accounting firm in New Orleans that works with small businesses and nonprofits. Kenny has expressed support for the Green New Deal and has co-hosted campaign events with our endorsed candidate, Marguerite Green. Her campaign is almost entirely self-financed.

Derrick Edwards (D), the lone Democrat, has racked up additional endorsements from faith groups, the AFL-CIO, and the Alliance for Good Government. In his day job, he’s a motivational speaker who talks about living as a quadriplegic.

COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY



Marguerite Green (D) is the first candidate New Orleans DSA has ever endorsed. Green is a native Louisiana farmer, educator, and organizer. Green seeks to uplift small & mid-sized farmers and increase access to affordable, quality local food. She wants a more efficient Louisiana that grows a greater variety of crops and can feed its own people.

Green is the only candidate in this race seriously talking about climate change, and as commissioner would form a task force to address causes and effects. Green supports legalization of adult access to cannabis and wants to do right by the communities most affected by our cannabis laws. She aims to pair legalization with expungement of non-violent cannabis offenses and make sure farmers from communities most harmed by the War on Drugs — not corporations — enjoy the prosperity this new crop would bring.

In addition to DSA chapters in New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Southwest Louisiana, Green is endorsed by the Louisiana Democratic Party, the

state AFL-CIO, and the Democratic Parish Executive Committees in Tangipahoa, St. Tammany and Jefferson.

Incumbent **Mike Strain (R)** has been our Commissioner of Agriculture for the last twelve years and has put profits for agribusiness and the logging industry first. Strain has focused on the large-scale production of commodity crops for international export and pared down the size of his department. He has voiced support for President Trump's tariffs on trade with China, despite their negative effect on Louisiana's agricultural industry.

Charlie Greer (D) is a retired longtime employee of the Department of Agriculture. Greer unsuccessfully ran a revenge campaign against Strain last election cycle after Strain laid him off. He has criticized Strain's handling of medical cannabis, but still supports only growing cannabis at the two current grow sites.

Peter Williams (D) owns a large-scale tree nursery and has previously run unsuccessfully for several offices, including State Representative for the 6th district and U.S. Congress. His platform is mostly unclear, but he has said he wants to develop the statewide hemp industry and establish satellite Department of Agriculture offices.

COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE

Incumbent **Jim Donelon (R)** and challenger **Tim Temple (R)** are duking it out to see who can be the most business friendly. Which flavor of Republican do you prefer: the old establishment type benefiting from our broken system (Donelon) or the newer breed of political performer flush with industry cash (Temple)?

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Constitutional Amendment #1 - Tax Exemptions for Outer Continental Shelf

This amendment would extend property tax loopholes to heavy equipment headed for the Gulf of Mexico. A yes vote would provide more tax breaks for the oil and gas industry, which already receives massive tax breaks that both destroy our coast and starve our communities of resources. **Vote NO**

Constitutional Amendment #2 - Amend Education Excellence Fund

The Education Excellence Fund (EEF) is a public trust that directs funds to various educational initiatives. It is part of a larger fund that also provides money to TOPS. A yes vote will earmark money from this

fund for three entities, including the Louisiana Educational Television Authority, which produces documentaries for Louisiana Public Television. This amendment would also add Thrive Academy — a state-funded charter school in Baton Rouge — to the list of schools already receiving funds from the EEF. It would also provide grant funding for any laboratory school, a type of school that works with the university system to test new methods of education. Ideally, the state would be funding public schools in a democratic way, not funding some via the constitution and some via the state budget. **No recommendation**

Constitutional Amendment #3 - Remedy for Unconstitutional Tax Paid

This would give the Board of Tax Appeals new power to decide constitutional tax questions, essentially making it like its own supreme court. Typically this power is reserved for the judicial branch, not executive bodies. Could this amendment give the wealthy a special pathway to contest their taxes? **Vote NO**

Constitutional Amendment #4 - Allow New Orleans Property Tax Exemptions

A yes vote would allow the city of New Orleans to grant property tax exemptions for residential properties that provide affordable housing. The city needs more affordable housing, but there is limited public understanding of how these exemptions would work in practice. One concern is the potential to freeze taxes for existing rental properties without freezing rent in those same buildings. The worst case scenario is that this could freeze property taxes for wealthy people while not relieving costs for renters. **Vote YES** on 4, but be prepared to fight like hell to make sure it actually benefits low income folks and renters in particular.

BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION (BESE) DISTRICT 1

North Shore, Jefferson Parish, parts of Orleans Parish

Incumbent **Jim Garvey (R)** is bankrolled by the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry. He sits on the board of Teach for America, a union-busting program widely hated by educators and parents.

Marion Bonura (I) spent fifty years as a coach and teacher in Jefferson Parish. He's an old-school union guy, which got him the AFL-CIO endorsement. Bonura was formerly a Republican, but has had a long running feud with conservative factions of the GOP.

Lee Price-Barrios (R) She wants local control (the right of cities & towns to pass local reforms), a freeze on new charter schools, and to get rid of neoliberal State Superintendent John White. She received the endorsement from our community partner, Step Up Louisiana.

BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION (BESE) DISTRICT 2

Parts of Orleans, Jefferson, St. Charles, St. John, St. James, Ascension and Assumption Parishes

Incumbent **Kira Orange Jones (D)** is a Teach For America (TFA) executive who came to New Orleans shortly after Katrina to oversee TFA recruits brought in to replace more than 7,000 union teachers. Jones often misses board meetings, has obvious ethical conflicts of interest and is committed to our state's failing charter school experiment. Jones is backed by corporate interests and establishment politicians including former Senator Mary Landrieu, U.S. Rep Cedric Richmond, and City Councilmembers Jason Williams and Jared Brosset.

Ashonta Wyatt (D) is a career teacher and school administrator in New Orleans public and charter schools who also serves as Executive Director of a local nonprofit focused on reducing gun violence. Her platform is centered on strengthening unions and repealing Act 91, the law that lets charter school operators act independent of the Orleans Parish school board as educators and as employers.

Shawon Bernard (D) is a family law attorney from New Orleans who also boasts 25 years experience as a teacher and public school administrator. Bernard is a member of the United Teachers of New Orleans and the Independent Women's Organization. The IWO and the Greater New Orleans AFL-CIO have issued dual endorsements of both Wyatt and Bernard.

STATE SENATE DISTRICT 3

New Orleans East and the West Bank

John Bagneris (D) is connected to the Charbonnet political and funeral home dynasty. Bagneris has not refused to take donations from charter school champion Leslie Jacobs. He has been taking in big money from a wide range of donors such as Republican donor Lane

Grisby and PACs representing student financial aid administrators, river boat captains, and lobbying firms.

“Doc” Joe Bouie (D) currently represents District 97 in the House. He has a long list of endorsements from the likes of Cedric Richmond, organized labor, and Step Up Louisiana. He reliably introduces progressive legislation, such as equal pay for women and mandatory air pollution monitors for chemical facilities.

Brandon Gregoire (D) is a retired Marine officer who has been endorsed by Democrats for Education Reform, a pro-charter group. Most of his modest fundraising has come from out-of-state donors.

STATE SENATE DISTRICT 5

Uptown, 7th Ward, Mid-City, CBD

Incumbent **Karen Carter Peterson (D)** was an early proponent of expanding Medicaid via the Affordable Care Act (aka “Obamacare”). She supports criminal punishment reform including easing marijuana restrictions, raising the minimum wage, automatic voter registration, and most of the Democratic Party line. She is also quite cozy with charter schools. For the 2019 campaign, Peterson is promoting a larger investment in mental health services.

Allen Borne Jr. (D) nearly disqualified due to a paperwork error, a common tactic by the establishment to keep outsiders out of races. His campaign is promoting a larger investment in infrastructure (fixing roads and drainage in particular). It would be great to vote for a candidate who is not in bed with the charter school industry, but Borne's positions do not seem to be more progressive than Peterson's.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 91

Irish Channel to Central City to Carrollton

Carling Dinkler IV (D) is endorsed by the oil and gas industry and previously donated to arch-conservative David Vitter's 2015 gubernatorial campaign.

Pepper Bowen Roussel (D) is the only candidate outside of Marguerite Green who asked DSA if she could address our chapter. She is a lawyer involved in environmental and food justice and cultural preservation at a time when both are badly needed. She is endorsed by the Erase the Board coalition, an educational advocacy group fighting charter schools in Louisiana. She is in favor of marijuana

legalization but wants to make sure black and brown people who have suffered from the War on Drugs are the first to benefit. Roussel wants to work to increase voter turnout and supports letting cities and towns set their own minimum wage (aka "local control.")

Robert McKnight (D) is a passionate advocate for criminal punishment reform. McKnight responded to our candidate survey saying he supports the right of all Louisianans to vote regardless of a criminal conviction, the elimination of money bail for the entire state, and a "ban the box" policy that would stop employers from asking about prior convictions on job applications. McKnight has the backing of Step Up Louisiana and U.S. Rep Cedric Richmond.

Mandie Landry (D) is an attorney who is framing her campaign around women's rights. She has been unsure about the possibility of passing a \$15 minimum wage though she does agree that the minimum wage needs to be raised. She has not fully committed to repealing Act 91, the law that empowers the charter school experiment in New Orleans. Landry is endorsed by the Greater New Orleans AFL-CIO.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 94

Lakeview, City Park, Bucktown, Causeway Boulevard

Incumbent **Stephanie Hilferty (R)** has a 100% anti-abortion record and many of her donations have come from real estate, housing construction, and the oil and gas industry.

Tammy Savoie (D) has been talking about climate change, infrastructure, and protecting reproductive rights and bodily autonomy. She's also talked about forming an independent commission to address gerrymandering in Louisiana by creating more fair state and federal legislative districts. Savoie has also picked up on some of the Step Up Louisiana demands for economic justice, although her language is a little more watered down.

Kirk Williamson (R) has gotten plenty of money from real estate and developers. He's also running on a platform of school choice and charter schools. He's one of the few candidates on to explicitly campaign against the Medicaid expansion.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 97

Gentilly, Pontchartrain Park, parts of Mid-City

Ethan Ashley (D) is part of the pro-charter movement that currently runs things at the Orleans Parish School Board. He has publicly opposed repealing Act 91, the charter-school-enabling legislation that limits the board's role. Among his largest campaign donors this year are pro-charter profiteers Leslie Jacobs and Stephen Rosenthal.

Eugene Green (D) has been in and around local government and politics for decades. His agenda includes increased infrastructure funding and a proposed cap on property tax assessments. He also says the Orleans Parish School Board should be required to operate schools "that have for many years failed," which is not the full commitment to abolishing charter schools we would prefer to see. The bulk of his donations have come from small donors and a handful of churches and local banks. He has been endorsed by AFL-CIO.

Matthew Willard (D) hails from a well known political family. Willard's platform is relatively social justice forward but moderate. He proposes to end money bail, but only for nonviolent offenses. He wants the state to set a minimum "living wage," but not until 2025 in order to "allow small businesses adequate time to prepare." A living wage in Orleans Parish is \$19/hr now, so this timeline is too long to help in the near term. City residents can't wait another six years for a raise. Willard says on his website he wants to see "more police walking and biking through neighborhoods." Willard has been endorsed by Step Up Louisiana and AFL-CIO.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 98

Uptown/Riverbend

Aimee Adatto Freeman (D) is an independent business consultant who is associated with the usual circle of upper crust New Orleans charitable nonprofits and political clubs. Freeman's campaign website calls for "Coordinated, effective, and efficient use of the latest technology in criminal investigation." She married into the Coca-Cola bottling fortune. She has received donations from real estate developer Sean Cummings and charter school activist Leslie Jacobs. Among her public supporters is former New Orleans City Councilperson Stacy Head.

Carlos Zervigon (D) descends from a different branch of the same Freeman family. His platform endorses many standard progressive

causes such as equal pay for equal work, a “living wage,” LGBTQ rights, and marijuana legalization. Among his financiers and backers are former mayor Moon Landrieu, Senator Mary Landrieu, and former City Councilperson Susan Guidry.

Kea Sherman (D) is a small business lawyer who, along with her husband, owns the trendy Freret Street craft cocktail bar, Cure. Sherman cares about early childhood education, tourism, equal pay, and “working across the aisle in order to get things accomplished.” She even talks about climate change stressing the need for “bi-partisan” solutions. She has talked about her desire for an “incremental small” increase in the minimum wage while supporting historic tax credits and other subsidies for real estate development.

Evan J. Bergeron (D), if elected, would become the first openly LGBTQ person elected to the Louisiana Legislature. Bergeron’s answers to our candidate survey showed support for single payer health care, a \$15 minimum wage, and the “Green New Deal” resolution. However, Bergeron disagrees with our push for publicly owned utilities and writes that, “the charter school system may be (somewhat) working for New Orleans.”

Marion “Penny” Freistadt (D) is focused almost entirely on the issues of climate change and other environmental concerns. Freistadt is a retired microbiologist and teacher, active in 350 New Orleans. She was one of the few candidates who filled out our questionnaire. Though we agree on much, Freistadt told us in response to our questionnaire she is opposed to providing free school lunch for all children.

Max Hayden Chiz (D) filled out our questionnaire, and we also heard from him in person at the Step Up forum. Chiz tells us he favors school vouchers, opposes a \$15/hr minimum wage for “strategic” purposes, opposes publicly owned utilities, and opposes measures that would make it easier for unions to organize.

Ravi Sangisetty (D) is a prominent Uptown civil litigation lawyer. He says environmental justice is a top concern, but he serves on the commission of Audubon Institute, a nonprofit funded by oil and gas and a property tax millage that converts that public investment into private profits. He’s an adviser for the redevelopment project aiming to turn Charity into a fancy retail space and short term rentals.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 99

Ninth Ward, Bywater, St. Roch, parts of East New Orleans

Jameel Shaheer (D) is a former firefighter, teacher, and current owner of Mr. Uniform, LLC and Lagniappe 7 Property Management. His expressed priorities are a \$15 minimum wage, funding TOPS, lower 9th ward infrastructure funding, jobs for youth, more police, and more early childhood education.

Candace Newell (D) is Councilmember Jay Banks' niece. In our candidate questionnaire both Shaheer and Newell got perfect scores. Although Shaheer unequivocally supports decriminalizing sex work and eliminating money bail, Newell didn't commit to either, telling us about sex work, "while I do not condone the work, it is not going away." She would also keep money bail in place for people accused of felonies and violent offenses.

Adonis C. Exposé (D) is the former King Zulu 2017. He is endorsed by the Louisiana Chemical Association, a lobbying group that spreads environmental racism as well as the myth that Cancer Alley isn't real. Almost all of Exposé's contributions have come from petrochemical industry groups. He is backed by U.S. Rep Cedric Richmond.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 100

New Orleans East

Anthony Jackson Jr. (D) is a 22-year-old Criminal Justice major at Southeastern Louisiana University and calls himself "the young man with the plan." Jackson's priorities are encouraging large employers to set up shop in the district and offering new vocational training and apprenticeship programs.

Jason Hughes (D) says his priorities are the state budget, education, economic development, healthcare, and criminal justice. Until recently, he was vice chairman of the City Planning Commission, where he voted to recommend stricter rules for short term rentals. Hughes has endorsements from the New Orleans Coalition and the AFL-CIO.



Visit the Louisiana Secretary of State's website, geauxvote.com, to locate your polling place, view a sample ballot, register to vote in the runoff, and find more information about voting.

For ease, it is recommended that you bring your state-issued ID to the polls, but it is NOT REQUIRED. If you do not have a photo ID, you may still cast your vote by signature on a voter affidavit.

IMPORTANT DATES

Early voting – Sept. 28 to Oct. 5 (except Sunday, Sept. 29)

Last day to get absentee ballot – Oct. 8

Deadline for mailed in ballots – Oct. 11

Election Day - Oct. 12

Last day to register for runoff election (in person) – Oct. 16

Last day to register for runoff election (online) – Oct. 26

Runoff Election Day – Nov. 16

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