



Empower Oakland 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

Empower Oakland is a movement fueled by Oakland residents who recognize that “business as usual politics” will only further perpetuate Oakland’s downward spiral. We believe in empowering Oaklanders to amplify their collective voices for greater political impact and influence.

All submissions will be unedited for spelling, grammar, and format and published on empoweroakland.com to educate Oakland voters. Empower Oakland will also use candidate submissions to help inform their Candidate Endorsement process. Candidates may be asked to interview in-person with the Empower Oakland Endorsement Committee. Final endorsement decisions will be made by early September.

Please email the completed questionnaire as a .doc or .pdf document to info@empoweroakland.com. Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM.

Candidate Name: Valerie Lewis

Email: valdlewis@gmail.com

Phone Number: 925-872-6490

Office & District Sought: EBMUD Ward 6

Campaign Website: ValerieforEBMUD@gmail.com

Social Media Handles

- Twitter:
- Facebook:
- Instagram:
- LinkedIn:
- TikTok:

Expected total Fundraising Amount: \$30,000.00

Funds Raised To Date:

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland?

I am an attorney who has made a home with my husband, raised children, and served the Oakland community for many years. I have had the honor of working with many of our community organizations and leaders.

2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?

Oakland’s top challenges lie in addressing public safety deficits and budget shortfalls which present themselves in the form of significant taxation without providing the designated services. On the bright side, Oakland is a beautiful city with unparalleled



natural resources and an abundance of talent, creativity and drive in the form of a diverse community and “can do” citizens.

3. Why are you running for office and why are you uniquely qualified to fulfill the office you are running for at this time?

I am running to serve the citizens of the East Bay and represent Oaklanders in the protection of vital clean and affordable water delivery – even in the face of climate change and infrastructure development demands.

4. Prior to running for office, how were you involved in local government and/or your community? What were your biggest accomplishments?

I served as Chief of Staff to the Assemblyman Elihu Harris; on Oakland’s Environmental Affairs Commission; on the Boards of both Alta Bates Hospital and the Alameda Health System; and on the Board of the Girl Scouts of Northern California, to name a few. I have worked with the Oakland Public Schools and other community schools. I have worked with MISSEY, Elizabeth House, and Boy Scout Troop 409 (Allen Temple). I also served as President of the California Association of Black Lawyers. I have also served in leadership positions in several local and national organizations.

I was one of the founders and was the second Chair of the Safeway African American Leadership Network and also founded and chaired the Joint Boule’, Executive Leadership Council, The Links Reception in Washington DC for its first 10 years.

EBMUD

5. What is your vision for East Bay MUD in 10 years? What specific and measurable steps will you take to advance toward realizing that vision in the next 4 years? Please describe the experience(s) from your past that will give Alameda County residents confidence you can deliver on these goals?

My vision for EBMUD over the next 10 years includes continuing to provide clean water at affordable, transparent rates for all EBMUD customers. It also includes the prudent investment of financial resources to maintain and develop infrastructure and to meet state and federal regulatory requirements. I also look to engage with management and employees to deliver the best in service and education to EBMUD customers.

I bring regulatory and compliance experience to this position, as well as an understanding of the legislative process and good governance. I also bring substantive knowledge of and experience with water issues which may confront EBMUD over time.

6. What are the top needs of East Bay MUD? What specific and measurable accomplishments will you deliver to address those needs? In 2 years? In 4 years?



EBMUD will need to prioritize funding for infrastructure to ensure the delivery of clean water, which includes source delivery protection from climate impact, earthquake, and fire. EBMUD needs to address water nutrient issues and wastewater cleanup and release. It will need to hire and retain a knowledgeable workforce. The affordability of water and the rate structure will always be of paramount importance. I will engage with management and employees, as well as with the community to address issues. This includes collaborating with fellow directors.

7. Please describe how you plan to address **service quality** if elected (or re-elected). Summarize the problem(s) your agency faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable). Please discuss your perspectives on how EBMUD is currently managing:
 - a. Aging infrastructure repair/replacement
 - b. Drought resiliency
 - c. Maintaining affordable utility rates
 - d. Attracting and supporting the workforce of the future
8. What should be EBMUD's role in sustainability and climate resiliency? Are there any specific policy changes or investments you will champion as a board member to improve sustainability and resiliency across EBMUD's Territory?

EBMUD should be a leader in establishing a zero-carbon footprint and a model for similar operations. It should utilize technology to drive efficiency and affordability. EBMUD has a significant role to play in water use and conservation education. It must plan for future climate impacts, whether they be drought or excessive rain related. We cannot afford to simply respond to catastrophes.

9. How will you build and maintain relationships and ensure there is good communication with the SMT (Senior Management Team)?

I will work with the SMT to understand issues, including the challenges and opportunities available to meet challenges. I will ask questions and educate myself and seek diverse and informed thought. I would strive to help drive mutual, measurable goals and agree on accountability.