

NEW ERA COLORADO

2023 Denver Municipal Runoff Candidate Questionnaire Responses *City Council, District 8: Shontel Lewis*

Reproductive Rights

Q: Will you support funding practical support for abortion such as lodging and traveling expenses? If yes, why and how would you fund it? If no, why not?

A: Yes. Abortion refugees are coming to Colorado in droves as other states enact draconian restrictions on abortion rights. These restrictions have larger effects on lower-income persons, and the need for additional funding supports are integral to providing the necessary reproductive care and mitigating the financial costs of seeking that care. Finding the funds can be tricky, but we have to figure it out, one way or another, to protect this fundamental human right.

Housing

Q: There is a housing crisis in Denver. Do you support the expansion of publicly funded affordable housing in the city? If yes, why? And if no, why not and how would you address housing affordability and accessibility?

A: Yes. I'm an advocate for a social housing program, where the city acts as a mixed-income public developer to provide housing for its working classes. We've neglected the public role as a provider of housing, and it's long past time for the city to take an assertive stance on behalf

Q: Will you repeal the camping ban? If yes, why? And if no, why not?

A: Yes. Two core reasons. First, poverty is not a crime, and the city shouldn't treat it that way. Second, the camping ban isn't working. Ten years of the law being in place hasn't slowed the rise in homelessness, while costing the city a lot of money in enforcement and litigation that could have gone toward providing housing and addressing the root causes of homelessness. We need to acknowledge the evidence that this approach isn't working, and open our imaginations toward policies that are proven to reduce homelessness.

Environmental Justice

Q: Will you hold corporate polluters, like Suncor, accountable to reducing harmful pollutants in our air, land, and water that disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, Latine/x, immigrant, and low income communities? If yes, how? And if no, why not?

A: Yes. Denver needs to utilize its status as an environmental plaintiff, and go after the big polluters when they cause material harm to the people of Denver. Litigation should seek more

than slaps on the wrist, but aim to force polluters to both clean up the harms and cover the costs of harms to the communities.

Economic Justice

Q: Would you tax cigarettes, alcohol or gas to help fund government programs in Denver?

A: Yes.

Q: Many advocates have argued that these sin taxes put the financial burden onto people who are in the lowest economic levels. How does this influence your previous response? If you answered no, how do you propose paying for public goods and services?

A: Sin taxes on alcohol and cigarettes are often a way to avoid taxing the wealthy, which is where government officials should be looking first to find new revenue for programs. Taxing gas is different, in the sense that we are in a climate emergency, and we should be considering all possible options, including carbon taxes, as ways to speed a just transition to a renewable economy. To ensure that transition is as just as possible, any gas taxes considered should be aimed at oil and gas profit margins, minimizing added burdens to working class expenses.