



Candidates for MCDP Leadership Questionnaire

2025-02-18

Central Indiana Chapter - Mary and Powers Hapgood Local
Democratic Socialists of America

- 1. What do you see as the reach of the party's "tent"? In 2024 the national Democratic party went out of its way to make it clear that Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and Uncommitted were not in the coalition, while the Cheneys were welcomed. Are socialists part of the Democratic party?**

The Democratic Party should be a big tent, but one that stands unapologetically for workers, healthcare, housing reform, and economic justice—not a party that dilutes its message to appease corporate interests. Socialists have always been the ones pushing these fights forward, forcing the mainstream to catch up and shifting the Overton window leftward. While I welcome moderates like the McCormicks and Cheneys if they want to join the fight against right-wing extremism, we should not contort ourselves to make them comfortable. They should come to us—knowing that this party fights for people, not profits, and for justice, not just power.

- 2. What is your position on the presence of socialists within the Marion County Democratic Party?**

Socialists, labor organizers, and progressives are already a vital part of the Marion County Democratic Party—whether leadership wants to admit it or not. They are the ones knocking doors, mobilizing voters, organizing workers, and pushing for policies that actually improve people's lives. The party should be empowering these voices, not sidelining them.

If we want a stronger, more effective Democratic Party, we need to embrace those who are doing the work—not gatekeep based on outdated power structures or fear of bold ideas. The future of the party depends on grassroots activists, not just political insiders. If we are serious about winning real change, socialists and progressives must be welcomed—not just tolerated but actively included in shaping the party's direction.

3. What is your position on the removal of District 13 Councilor, duly-elected Democrat, and DSA-endorsee Jesse Brown from the Democratic caucus of the Indianapolis City-County Council?

To the point: I support Jesse Brown 100%. I stood in the Committee on Committees to protest this injustice and believe he should be restored to his position on the council and given a seat on at least 6 committees.

4. Do you support the movement to create socialism within the United States and the abolition of capitalism?

My focus is on building an economy rooted in justice. That means stronger unions, universal healthcare, public investment in housing and education, and an economic system that prioritizes working people over billionaires—who should not exist. The rights of those struggling should always take precedence over protecting extreme wealth and corporate power.

5. Do you support the abolition, or at least significant defunding, of the police and prison-industrial complex?

Politicians have asked police to do too much. Their role should be stopping harm and protecting the most vulnerable—not policing the unhoused, criminalizing mental illness, or acting as social workers. We need a fully civilian response team of trained clinicians, like Denver's STAR or Oregon's CAHOOTS, to handle crises where armed officers aren't needed. During the 2023 Indianapolis mayoral primary, I was the only one who stood up and called for this. Real public safety means investing in the right responses for the right situations.

6. Do you support ending US arms sales and material support to the State of Israel and an end to Israeli apartheid against the Palestinian people? Do you support a free Palestine?

Pragmatically, this is a county seat—not a state or federal position. However, on principle, I do not believe the role of the United States should be selling arms to ANY nation. Our foreign policy should focus on diplomacy, human rights, and peace—not fueling conflicts for profit. To this point, the USA should not be aiding in the apartheid in Israel.

7. Do you support efforts to re-fund public schools and end charter and voucher programs? What is your timetable for reincorporating charter schools into the public school system?

I am an educator and have worked in public higher education for thirty years, half of that in Educational Psychology. I've seen firsthand how underfunding, privatization, and systemic inequities impact students. Public schools should be the only taxpayer-funded option. Every dollar funneled into charter schools and voucher programs is a dollar stolen from public education. We need to fully fund public schools, increase teacher pay, and reduce class sizes—but funding alone isn't enough. Schools must be accountable, equitable, and accessible to all students.

Many charter and private schools routinely violate ADA protections, refusing to admit children with ADHD or autism by falsely claiming "behavioral issues" when they are legally required to provide accommodations. At the same time, Black and Brown students are suspended and expelled at far higher rates than their white peers for the same infractions, further deepening educational inequities. We need strict enforcement of ADA laws, racial equity in discipline policies, and a long-term plan to phase out charter schools and reintegrate them into a stronger, well-funded public system that serves every student—not just the ones they choose to admit. Public education should be about students and teachers—not profit.

8. What will you do to defend LGBTQ+ people and rights, especially trans people, and in particular, related to young people?

When I ran for mayor, I was asked at a forum how I would protect the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals. While other candidates gave tepid, cautious responses, I was the only one who explicitly stated that my administration would actively protect their rights—even in the face of threats from the statehouse. Our current mayor made it clear that while he supports these rights in theory, he is not interested in doing anything beyond lip service. The same goes for a sitting Democratic representative on our side.

This is not the time for symbolic support or empty statements—we need action. That means protecting trans youth from attacks on their healthcare and education, ensuring LGBTQ+ people are safe in public spaces, and actively resisting state policies that seek to erase their rights. It also means funding and supporting LGBTQ+ community organizations, enforcing non-discrimination policies, and refusing to back down when right-wing extremists try to legislate hate. Democrats must be willing to fight for these rights—not just talk about them. I will ensure the Marion County Democratic Party does just that.

9. Do you support Medicare for All, or other universal healthcare platforms? (Note: universal “access” to healthcare is not universal healthcare.)

Healthcare should be a human right, not a privilege tied to profit-driven insurance companies. I know this firsthand. I was born with an autoimmune condition that makes daily life difficult even on my best days. Last year, my insurance stopped covering the drug that keeps me alive, all in the name of boosting profits and CEO bonuses at Anthem.

For six months, I suffered through ineffective alternatives, repeated infections, and pain so severe I could barely walk. After a long fight, I got my medication reinstated—but with a \$5,000 per month copay. If not for a manufacturer program covering the cost, I wouldn't have been able to afford it. No one should have to go through what I did.

I fully support universal, single-payer healthcare—because no one should be forced to beg, fight, or go bankrupt just to stay alive. The current system is built to maximize corporate profits, not provide care. Whether it's Medicare for All or another universal model, the goal is clear: free, comprehensive, and accessible healthcare for all—without loopholes, corporate greed, or life-threatening delays.

10. Do you support the abolition of ICE and the ending of deportations, even of so-called “illegal” immigrants?

Yes. ICE is an unaccountable, inhumane agency that operates with little oversight and no regard for justice. My brother-in-law has been a legal resident for 20 years, yet because of a decades-old mistake that was already adjudicated, he was thrown into an ICE prison for a year before he even saw a judge. When he finally did, his case for deportation was dismissed with prejudice in just 15 minutes—a clear sign that it should never have happened in the first place.

But that didn't stop ICE. Now, despite the dismissal, they've reopened the case and are forcing him to go through this nightmare again in April. This isn't about public safety or justice—it's about a system built to dehumanize and punish immigrants, no matter how long they've lived here or what they've contributed.

I fully support abolishing ICE and replacing it with an immigration system that prioritizes fairness, dignity, and actual due process. We need real pathways to citizenship, not a revolving door of cruelty where people live in fear of having their lives torn apart. No one should go through what my family has endured.

11. What will you do to empower unions and expand unionization efforts in non-union workplaces and sectors?

Unions built the middle class, and I come from a family that understands what that fight looks like. My father was a union leader at ALCOA in both Indiana and Arkansas, and we moved multiple times to support his work in organizing and defending workers' rights. We went on strike more than once, putting our family's livelihood at risk for the greater good of others. I know firsthand that solidarity isn't just a slogan—it's a sacrifice.

Now, as someone working in public higher education, bringing unionization to our workplace has failed except for maintenance and blue-collar workers. Those efforts have largely failed—not because workers don't want unions but because the system is rigged against them. All workers deserve the right to union protection, from faculty and staff in higher education to gig workers, service employees, and those in emerging industries. As Secretary, I will push the Democratic Party to be a true partner to labor, support worker-led organizing, and ensure that Democrats stand with unions—not just when they need endorsements, but every single day. A stronger labor movement means a stronger community, and I will fight to make sure workers have the power they deserve.

12. What will be your strategy for fundraising? What types of donors will you appeal to? Are there any groups or individuals that the party, under your leadership, would not accept donations from?

The Marion County Democratic Party should be funded by the people it serves, not controlled by a handful of wealthy donors or backroom deals. My focus will be on building a broad base of grassroots donors, engaging working-class communities, union members, and small businesses who want to invest in a party that actually represents them.

One plan I strongly support is a sliding-scale dues system for Precinct Committee members, Vice Precinct Committee members, and elected officials. Most PCs and VPCs would contribute \$10 per month, ensuring a consistent and member-driven funding base. However, we recognize that some organizers, especially those struggling financially, may not be able to afford this amount, which is why we would offer a lower contribution option for those in need. To balance this, elected officials—who are paid for their public service—should contribute a portion of their salary to help fund the party.

I will reject donations from groups that actively work against our values—including anti-labor organizations, corporate PACs funding right-wing politicians, and entities profiting from environmental destruction, mass incarceration, or privatization of public services. If we rely on the same corporate money as Republicans, we shouldn't be surprised when our party starts acting like them.

13. How will you use the party in primaries? The national Democratic party has openly operated a blacklist, while routinely selecting and pushing through their own candidates. Will the party weigh in or attempt to influence local contested primary elections?

The Marion County Democratic Party should not be in the business of rigging primaries—but right now, we protect those who have committed sexual assault, allow abusers back into leadership, and gatekeep anyone who doesn't fit into outdated "respectability politics." Meanwhile, the people we push out are the ones actually fighting for the values we claim to uphold.

We need to build a party that looks forward, not one that recycles the same people who have failed us time and time again. Too many in leadership insist that if we just let them keep failing for another 20 years, it might finally start working. That's not strategy—that's stagnation.

Slating was a tool of control and exclusion, not democracy. Any attempt to bring it back is a rejection of grassroots power and an admission that some in leadership don't trust voters to make their own decisions. I will not stand for a party that blacklists the boldest fighters while rolling out the red carpet for bad actors.

The party's role should be to create an open, transparent process where every Democrat has a fair shot—not to protect insiders at the expense of real progress. When the primary is over, we focus on winning in November. But until then, we must stop prioritizing power over principle and start building a party that actually serves the people.

14. Who would you appoint to the Indiana Democratic Party's district level committee for District 7?

I would appoint a diverse group of individuals who are committed to grassroots organizing, transparency, and building real political power—not just the

same insiders who have spent decades failing and insisting we let them keep failing. District 7 deserves representatives who understand that our party should be led by the people, not just those who have historically held power.

That means bringing in union leaders, community organizers, young activists, and experienced strategists who are willing to challenge the status quo. It means appointing leaders who prioritize working people, not corporate donors. It also means making sure that those representing District 7 are actually engaged in year-round voter outreach and party-building, not just showing up when an election is near. If we want a stronger, more accountable Democratic Party, we need leadership that is willing to fight for it.

15. What is the role of the party in enforcing discipline among the elected officials, both for breaking with the party platform and personal misconduct?

The party cannot protect those who abuse power while punishing those who push for progress. Personal misconduct—especially sexual harassment, abuse, or corruption—must have real consequences. Too often, bad actors are shielded because they hold office or bring in money. That must end.

At the same time, policy discipline should not mean punishing progressives for fighting for labor rights, healthcare, or economic justice. If we enforce accountability, it should be because officials have betrayed the public, not because they've upset donors. The party must decide: does it stand for the people or just protect those in power?

16. The party chair has the power to appoint people to precinct committees. Approximately 40% of these positions are vacant. What is your plan to fill these roles? If Central Indiana DSA provided eligible and willing Democratic voters to fill vacant precinct positions, would you appoint them?

Leaving nearly half of our precinct committee (PC) seats vacant is a massive failure of leadership. These roles are critical for voter outreach, party-building, and community organizing—yet the party has allowed them to sit empty instead of actively recruiting new voices. We should be seeking out engaged, passionate individuals who want to do the work, not just saving these spots for political insiders. If we want to build real power, we need boots on the ground, not empty titles.

That includes DSA members and other progressives who are already knocking doors, organizing workers, and mobilizing young voters. These are the exact people we should be welcoming into leadership, not pushing away. If someone believes in labor rights, economic justice, and a party that actually fights for working people, why wouldn't we want them involved? Yes, I would absolutely appoint eligible and willing DSA members to PC positions. The Democratic Party needs fresh energy, bold leadership, and grassroots organizers—not gatekeeping and backroom deals.