

Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee  
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE  
November 7, 2006 General Election  
NAME: Mike Rotkin                      Race: Santa Cruz City Council

1. Why do you identify yourself as a Democrat?

I am a lifelong Democrat because I consider the Democrats the party of working people. Today, more than ever—since the Republicans have become such a dangerous and reactionary party, clearly committed to serving the interests of the super wealthy and multi-national corporations—the Democratic Party offers the only serious alternative to their attempts to destroy our Constitution, our values, and our needs as a nation.

2. Why should the Democratic Central Committee endorse your candidacy and what would you do to support Democrats in Santa Cruz County if elected?

In almost 22 years in elected office, I have demonstrated my commitment to Democratic Party candidates, Democratic Party-supported initiatives and legislation, and Democratic Party registration and GOTV efforts. I have carried Democratic Party literature in precinct walks and worked with our state and national officials to maintain the strong Democratic edge in local registrations and in support of their initiatives on numerous issues.

3. What are your qualifications for this office?

I have served five terms on the Santa Cruz City Council and have been Mayor four times. I am a labor activist, and I serve as the President of my union local, AFT 2199, and as the statewide Vice President of the UC-AFT for Organizing. I have been an active environmentalist who played a key role in stopping oil drilling off our coast, helped create a greenbelt around our city, and helped ban pesticides in City Parks by working to create an integrated pest management system. I have provided leadership in recycling, solar power and alternative energy, and public transit development. I have played a positive leadership role in making the City workforce more diverse and reflective of our local population in gender and racial terms, and I have been an active and effective supporter of affordable housing and civil rights for all. I was a founder and leader of the Westside Neighbors.

I played and continue to play a leadership role in the creation and support of human care services for our community and have served on the Board of several non-profits in the past, including the Santa Cruz Community Credit Union, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Central Labor Council, the Community Action Board, and Food and Nutrition, Inc. (currently Community Bridges). I am currently serving my third term as Chair of the Santa Cruz Metro Transit Board. I have served for almost 22 years on the Santa Cruz City/County Library Board. In all of my work as a public official, I have been accessible to all members of the community and responsive in working with members of the community to solve a very wide range of community problems.

4. What are your priorities/goals for your term in office?

I want to work with the community to find a way to increase our local tax base so we can provide City employees with the compensation they deserve and so the City can support social services, recreation, and public safety. We need to find a way to do this that does not destroy the environment or human scale of our community, both of which are part of what make this such a wonderful place to live and work. I also want to continue our strong local efforts to address global warming through a continued focus on alternative energy and

improvements to our public transit system. Finally, I want to find a way to work with the University so it will become a more responsible member of the local community and take more responsibility for mitigating the negative impacts it has on our neighborhoods and the City budget.

5. What is the most pressing challenge facing the office you are seeking and how do you plan to address that challenge?

I began to address this in question number 4. above. I think that our biggest challenge is clearly finding a way to increase the City's revenue base. I think that the way to approach this question is by creating a broad-based community discussion of our priorities and a consensus plan for moving forward. I have a great deal of experience in doing this kind of work, which involves a combination of grassroots initiatives to draw our residents into a dialogue about how we do and do not want our city to develop. Our solutions have to be both visionary and pragmatic at the same time. I believe that I have demonstrated my ability to work with diverse groups of individuals and organizations to make this process successful. It will not be easy, but it simply needs to happen.

6. How would you support bringing good paying jobs to your local community?

We need to play to our strengths as a community and welcome employers who will appreciate our highly educated community and our wonderful natural environment. Our initiative to create a high-tech industrial area on the Westside of Santa Cruz is a start in this direction, but we still have a long way to go with that initiative. We also need to help establish an eco-tourist industry based on our National Marine Sanctuary, our greenbelt, and our attractive local environment. Green industries, based on our local green building ordinance, are also an important part of this mix. Developing these possibilities depends upon creating the community consensus I wrote about above in questions 4 and 5.

7. How would you balance the need for affordable housing with environmental concerns?

There is really no need for a conflict between these two values. We need to continue to expand our accessory dwelling unit program in single-family neighborhoods, but to direct most of our new affordable housing to downtown, south of Laurel Street, and along major transportation corridors. We can preserve our greenbelt, and the quality of life in our single-family and multi-family neighborhoods, while dramatically increasing the density in the areas I have mentioned above. The key to doing this successfully is good design. I have enough experience in public life to know that a well-designed affordable housing project will win over many initial opponents, and density can be developed in a way that does not destroy the quality of life of neighboring residents. It is critical that we continue to press affordable housing developers to work with nearby neighbors to involve them in the planning of new developments and win their support for outcomes that increase the City's stock of affordable housing.

8. How do you plan on increasing revenue for your city?

See all of my above answers, which develop a response to this question. In the short term, I support the 1/2-cent sales tax measure on the ballot in November, but in the long-term, we need to develop our tax base and we need to do it in a way that has the support of our citizens. We cannot impose a solution on them, so the only serious option is engaging them in the process of making our community more attractive to the kinds of employers we want

to attract. We also need to make the University more responsible for carrying its share of the costs that its existence and potential growth impose on our community.