

Khojasteh District Attorney

District Attorney Questionnaire

1. What is the District Attorney's job?

The District Attorney's Office is a law enforcement agency within the bureaucracy of our city and county government.

An ideal District Attorney's Office should 1)) hold people accountable for criminal conduct by enforcing the law through the filing of charges; 2) advocate for the rights of victims; 3) ensure the fair and impartial administration of justice for the District; 4) commit their staff to the highest ethical standards of prosecution; 5) build trust between community and law enforcement; and 6) advance public safety for the District through collaboration on best practices & policies with city partners, community partners, and all relevant stakeholders.

A current elected District Attorney who has endorsed me put it very powerfully: "The District Attorney's moral compass translates to everyday instructions for their staff."

As department head, the DA must also support their staff to the best of their ability in order to ensure effective, efficient and competent prosecution.

2. Why are you running for District Attorney?

I am a career prosecutor who is running for San Francisco District Attorney because I know there is a better way to achieve public safety. I am a former Assistant District Attorney in the San Francisco District Attorney's Office and am currently a Deputy District Attorney in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office.

I have worked in many different units within the criminal legal system, including: misdemeanors, juvenile delinquency, general felonies, collaborative courts, victim restitution, and parole & PRCS revocation. As a regular in the courtroom, I understand the system well and have been a successful trial attorney.

Right after law school, I gained valuable experience as a post-bar fellow and volunteer attorney with the San Francisco Public Defender's Office. This allowed me to have a holistic perspective of the criminal legal system and has prepared me to be a better skilled and more balanced prosecutor.

The current DA's administration has been playing politics with public safety – eroding faith in the integrity of the criminal justice system, failing to responsibly address the significant challenges facing our city, and creating such a hostile work environment that 100 public safety professionals have left the office.

I think I put in best, in my words, in this guest opinion in the [Bay Area Reporter](#) on why I am running for San Francisco District Attorney,

3. What is the District Attorney's role in assuring public safety? What programs can the District Attorney implement to assure public safety? Please be specific.

Every San Franciscan deserves safe neighborhoods, safe streets, and safe communities. This should not be a left or right issue. Unfortunately, public safety has become such a political battlefield and wedge issue to advance certain political ideology and divide ourselves... that it's come at the expense of actual public safety. We need to stop playing politics.

As a city of innovation, we should follow the science and implement evidence-based solutions to put people on the right track and prevent future crime. We should use our limited courtroom resources to vigorously pursue repeat offenders and those who commit acts of violence in our community. We should also be seriously collaborating with city and community partners to implement policies that will address the root causes of crime to make us safer.

I want to see a city where children succeed and have unlimited opportunities. I want to see a city where businesses (small & large) are thriving and add to the vibrancy of San Francisco. I want to see a city where our reputation isn't rotten across the globe. I want to see a city where people aren't dying on our streets and children aren't stepping over needles to get to school. I want to see a city where our elderly residents feel safe walking outside.

We have to do better. It's time for honest conversations about these issues, not finger-pointing and scapegoating. The buck has to stop somewhere. The current power structure of our city (Mayor, DA, Police Chief) has not been effective and refuse to take responsibility.

I envision a criminal legal system that responsibly balances accountability and rehabilitation so that we can be effective on crime.

For example, in the DA's office – we have the ability to save lives, not just destroy them. We don't have this balance under the current DA's administration. Collaborative court referrals have declined by over 70%. When we take away the ability to rehabilitate people, recidivism rates go up – making us less safe.

The District Attorney's Office must responsibly do the following to use sound prosecutorial judgment and maintain the fair & efficient administration of justice:

- 1) File charges against criminal defendants in a fair manner that can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt – not simply overcharge people
- 2) When appropriate, pursue referrals to Collaborative Courts to rehabilitate people
- 3) Bolster victim services in a culturally and linguistically competent way to minimize obstacles in seeking justice
- 4) Pursue evidence-based policies to deter future criminality and get people back on track, as opposed to cheap political rhetoric to appease a base which does nothing to make us safer

- 5) Protect the independence of the judiciary – not politicize it when the prosecution fails to present a compelling and persuasive argument.
4. What makes you the best candidate for San Francisco District Attorney, and what experience qualifies you for the role? Please include administrative experience, budget analysis and preparation, personnel decision making (e.g., hiring and firing) and large office oversight.

I am the only candidate in this race that has both secured acquittals and secured convictions in the criminal legal system.

I am the only candidate in this race that has had a documented history of government leadership before seeking this role – as a six-year member of the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission. I was unanimously appointed three times by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to the Immigrant Rights Commission (2016, 2018, 2020). As a Commissioner, I worked closely to provide strategic oversight, language access compliance, and set policy priorities for the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs, one of the most respected and well-run City departments in San Francisco.

I am the only candidate in this race that has experience in the rehabilitative side of the criminal legal system (juvenile justice & collaborative courts), in addition to the punitive side of the criminal legal system.

What sets me apart from the incumbent is that I never intended to seek this role. I did not mislead the people of San Francisco, taking millions from Republicans, to stage a coup against my boss because I could not otherwise win in an election against that person.

I stood up for juvenile justice reform in a respectful way, and I lost my job. Even after I was fired, I wished Brooke Jenkins well – understanding the city needed stability and an effective DA's office. Unfortunately, this is what we've had for the last two years. We have a political extension of the Mayor's Office, focused more on pointing fingers and engaging in bad faith politics than running a professional and prestigious legal office.

I was encouraged by the community, legal professionals, former colleagues, and democratic leaders to seek this job. I do so humbly, recognizing the importance of putting together a strong team of ethical prosecutors as management when I have the privilege of taking office.

Let's remember, when Jenkins took office, she had zero management experience and zero government leadership experience. There's a reason why she was accompanied to the job on her first day by the Mayor's deputy chief of staff.

5. What is the DA's relationship with the Mayor's office, the Board of Supervisors and the police department? How do you reconcile these relationships with the DA's duty "to do justice" when it conflicts with these relationships? Do these relationships interfere with the ability to investigate criminal activity within these entities?

The District Attorney is simply one department head of many within our city bureaucracy. I rely on the Mayor's Office for funding and resources. Therefore, I commit to having a respectful working relationship with whomever is elected our next Mayor.

I also plan on working in collaboration with the Board of Supervisors on any & all legislation that pertains to public safety. I believe that my Office should have a satellite policy office in City Hall, where we can work on meaningful legislation and advocate for it before committees and the full Board. I commit to championing investments into community – such affordable housing, meaningful programming, and residential treatment. I would like to be involved in budget advocacy, to make sure service providers have the resources and space they need to take care of our most vulnerable.

As a prosecutor, I believe I have developed a healthy working relationship with members of the San Francisco Police Department. I served as a community liaison to four station Captains – Northern, Southern, Richmond, and Tenderloin.

I have worked closely with police on the investigation of cases, on witness testimony, and in reviewing search warrants. I have even taken the extra step to train new officers on effective courtroom testimony and best practices for report writing. I care about the responsible development of new members of the police department.

I come into this role understanding the importance of having a strong working relationship with the San Francisco Police Department. I cannot do my job to prosecute crime and hold people accountable without their cooperation, hard work, and diligent preparation.

At the same time, nobody is above the law. Whether you are police officer or prosecutor or government official, if you commit a crime, you should be held accountable as well – just like everybody else.

6. What is your vision for prosecution of corporate crime?

Nobody is above the law. The District Attorney's Office has a responsibility to prosecute any and all criminal conduct – including from law enforcement officials, government leaders and corporations.

The Mayor's handpicked District Attorney has significantly reduced the special prosecutions division of the San Francisco District Attorney's Office, the division responsible for handling cases of public corruption, fraud, environmental crimes, major scale financial crimes and police violence. This is unacceptable. Ryan understands the importance of prosecuting corruption, misconduct and crimes against consumers and workers (like fraud and wage theft). We will restore the power of this unit so that we can hold everyone accountable in San Francisco.

7. Did you support or oppose the March 2024 Ballot Measures B, E and F, and why?

- No Position on B.

- NO on E & F.

- o I am always willing to consider public safety initiatives. Unfortunately, public safety has become such a political battlefield that measures are being championed to advance a certain political ideology, as opposed to evidence-based measures that will actually make us safer. I have serious concerns that these measures will do the opposite of their stated intention and will make us less safe in the long-run. For example, expanding criteria for vehicle pursuits will put pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists in harm's way. For example, taking cash assistance from our most marginalized will likely result in increased crime (especially retail theft).

8. How will you support the work of an Innocence Commission?

It is my understanding that the Innocence Commission has been delaying cases, halting justice in cases under the purview of the Commission. This is unacceptable. As District Attorney, I will stop playing politics with this job and work with our partners on the Commission to exonerate those who have been wrongfully convicted. This is an incredibly important function of the DA's Office, seeking justice for those who were denied their freedom in an unfair manner. We have a responsibility to redress prior mistakes.