



Earthjustice Action Los Angeles Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Nithya Raman

Overview

Angelenos have a right to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment. Earthjustice Action, a 501(c)(4) organization, works to protect public health, unleash affordable clean energy, and ditch toxic fossil fuels by defending and shaping environmental laws and policies. The leaders responsible for setting, implementing, and enforcing those policies play a critical role in people's everyday lives.

That's where the next Mayor of Los Angeles comes in.

As the chief executive of the second-most populous city in the United States and the most populous in California, the Los Angeles mayor's policies – enacted through legislation, executive orders, appointments and negotiation with county and state governments – affect the health and well-being of millions of people and have the potential to set a standard for California and the rest of the nation.

This questionnaire will cover a wide variety of public health concerns and environmental issues the next Mayor of Los Angeles will need to confront to help inform Los Angeles residents of the next Mayor's priorities and leadership style. It will be provided to all eligible mayoral candidates on the November 2026 ballot. Completed questionnaires will be posted on Earthjustice Action's website and distributed to our supporters in Los Angeles County and interested parties. We will not endorse, oppose, or support any candidates in this election.



A. Air Quality and Bus Emissions

Fossil fuel-powered trucks and buses are often the dirtiest vehicles on our roads. With nearly 2,100 buses, LA Metro is the second largest transit agency in the United States. The emissions from large vehicles pollute the air and create negative health outcomes including asthma, heart problems, cancer and premature death, disproportionately affecting low-income communities in Los Angeles. To quantify the health impact, the public health benefit from eliminating transit bus emissions by transitioning to nonpolluting buses would be approximately \$223 million between 2025 and 2050.[\[SOURCE\]](#) The LA Metro's 13-member voting Metro Board of Directors includes the mayor and three of their appointees.

About a third of Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) school buses run on diesel. [\[SOURCE\]](#) Research shows that diesel school buses not only pollute the air in the neighborhoods they drive through, but they also leave kids in the back of the bus breathing toxic diesel exhaust. This is a particularly dangerous kind of air pollution that elevates levels of asthma, heart problems, and cancer for people nearby. Children face special risks from air pollution because their lungs are still developing, they breathe about twice as fast as adults, and they have larger lungs relative to their size.

1) Would you set additional goals for improving air quality vis-à-vis LA Metro buses? If yes, what would they be? If not, why not?

Yes, even with the rollback of state zero emission fleet rules due to the Trump administration, I would not let Metro backslide from its own commitments. As Mayor, I would hold one Metro Board seat and appoint three more, and I intend to use all four to move Metro's bus fleet to zero emissions as quickly as possible, prioritizing the first deployments on the high-ridership corridors that serve transit-dependent communities. My platform commits to transitioning city vehicles, including city transit buses, to zero-emission technology and to using the City's and Metro's purchasing power to drive that transition. I would also ensure that LADWP facilitates and prioritizes Metro charging infrastructure in support of these goals. Cleaner buses also need to be faster and more frequent buses so that more people choose them. On the Council, I worked with Metro to make the Sepulveda bus lanes 24/7, and I will push the same approach citywide.

2) Do you believe there are actions the mayor can take to protect children from school bus emissions? Why or why not? What plans do you have, if any, as mayor to help school systems like LAUSD achieve its objectives of getting kids to school on buses that do not pollute their lungs? [\[SOURCE\]](#)

The City can help provide several things LAUSD needs to electrify its fleet: LADWP, which has to deliver power to bus yards; the City's representative on the South Coast AQMD



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board, which funds clean fleet incentives; and a Mayor's office that can coordinate joint applications for state and federal fleet funding. My transportation electrification agenda names school fleets as one of five priority areas. I have already built a working partnership with LAUSD through the Community School Parks program, which opened ten campuses to the public, and I would use that same relationship to help deliver charging infrastructure at bus depots and prioritize routes serving neighborhoods with the highest asthma rates. As you point out, about a third of LAUSD buses still run on diesel, and the children riding them are breathing the exhaust both inside and outside the bus. That is reason enough for the city to show up as a partner.



B. Emissions from the Port of Los Angeles

In Los Angeles County, the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach “are the region’s largest single sources of air pollution: Every day, their equipment, trucks, rail yards and ships emit 23 tons of smog-forming nitrogen oxides, half a ton of fine particles and nearly a ton of sulfur into the air... Fine particles are known to trigger asthma and heart attacks, while nitrogen oxides bake in the sun with other pollutants to form a gas in smog that also causes respiratory problems.” [\[SOURCE\]](#)

According to South Coast air quality district officials, the two ports are responsible for about a fifth of the Los Angeles region’s nitrogen oxides—more than the daily emissions from all six million cars in the region. [\[SOURCE\]](#)

The Mayor of Los Angeles has an incredible amount of influence over the Port of Los Angeles. For example, the five-person Los Angeles Harbor Commission, which oversees the management and operation of the Port of Los Angeles, is appointed by the mayor.

3) Regarding the port’s goal of 100% zero-emission on-road drayage trucks by 2035, do you support or oppose that goal? Why or why not? [\[SOURCE\]](#) Please address whether you believe that goal to be necessary or unnecessary, and realistic/unrealistic, and why. If you oppose, please explain whether you have an alternative. If you support, what would the implementation timeline be?

I support the goal and believe it's both necessary and achievable. Port-related goods movement is the region's single largest source of air pollution, and the communities along freight corridors have carried that burden for generations. My platform commits to accelerating heavy-duty truck charging infrastructure near the Port of Los Angeles and expanding the Zero-Emission Truck Purchasing Incentive Project so that more battery-electric trucks are on the road sooner. I will hold my Harbor Commission appointees accountable for advancing this goal through interim targets and public reporting, and there will be consequences for missing them. The Port is one of the largest emitters under city control and will be held to the city's emissions targets through the performance reviews of its General Manager in addition to the commissioners I appoint.

4) Do you think there is a role for the mayor to play in reducing air and climate pollution from port related equipment beyond port drayage trucks? Why or why not? If yes, are there actions you might take as Mayor to further reduce emissions from ships, cargo handling equipment, locomotives, and/or commercial harbor craft?

The Mayor appoints every member of the Harbor Commission and sets expectations for the Port’s leadership. I will appoint commissioners and executives that are committed to cutting pollution from the full range of port operations, including cargo handling equipment, locomotives, harbor craft, and ships at berth. My platform holds the Port, along



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with the airports and LADWP, to the City's emissions targets, with interim milestones, public dashboards, and climate progress written into General Manager performance reviews. Where the City cannot regulate directly, as with ships and rail, I will use the City's SCAQMD representative and the regional climate coordinator I will place in the Mayor's office to press CARB and the air district for stronger standards and to secure funding for equipment turnover. The transition will also create installation and maintenance jobs, and we will prioritize hiring from the harbor-area neighborhoods most affected by the pollution.

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C. Safe Home Appliances

Space and water heating impact Los Angeles's air quality in a serious way. They account for roughly 10% of all greenhouse gas emissions and 5% of nitrogen oxide emissions in California (exposures to nitrogen oxide may contribute to the development of asthma, among other negative health outcomes). [SOURCE] These appliances represent the single largest source of criteria pollutant emissions under the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

5) Is this an issue you would tackle in your term? Why or why not? If yes, what are your plans regarding appliances in homes related to the safety of air quality? If not, is this a matter that should be addressed by someone else or later in the future? Why or why not?

In 2022 I led the Council to pass an ordinance making new buildings all-electric, because burning gas indoors is a major cause of asthma and other respiratory disease, and that pollution lands hardest in older, poorly ventilated housing in communities of color. Federal courts struck the ordinance down. The state has since developed building standards designed to survive that legal challenge, and I will direct Building and Safety to adopt them without further delay. All-electric new construction is also cheaper to build. For existing buildings, I will refocus the City's energy and water reporting program into a performance standard for buildings over 20,000 square feet that ratchets down emissions over time. For smaller buildings and homes, I will work with community organizations and housing advocates to protect renters from displacement and rent impacts, while directing LADWP to create a program that fully funds gas appliance replacement for very low-income customers and provides incentives for everyone else, using the same model LADWP has used for refrigerators and SCAQMD has used for lawn equipment.



D. Industrial Electrification and Manufacturing Leadership

California is the third-largest industrial energy consumer in the U.S., thanks in part to its manufacturing sector. Manufacturing requires heat —usually generated through natural gas steam boilers. In the U.S., approximately 90% of that heat comes from fossil fuel combustion. Using industrial heat pumps instead can reduce energy consumption, lower emissions, and potentially lower energy costs.[\[SOURCE\]](#) Los Angeles currently lags other cities in the world in the deployment of this technology.

6) Do you have any plans as mayor regarding industrial equipment. Why or why not? If yes, what concrete actions will you take? If not, is this a matter that should be addressed by someone else or later in the future? Why or why not?

Industrial processes, outside of committing to shutting neighborhood drill sites, are not a central focus of my platform at this time. What I can commit to is this: the existing-building performance standard I will create for buildings over 20,000 square feet will cover building energy use at industrial and manufacturing facilities in that size range. I also know that we do need to address process emissions and the use of toxic chemicals at oil and gas facilities and industrial warehouses as the Lineage fire clearly demonstrated the dangers in our neighborhoods from these types of land uses. I fully understand that for a long time industrial emissions were considered too hard so the focus has been on transportation and energy. However, I believe that it is time we got serious about addressing this sector and I am committed to doing so. And the clean energy workforce partnerships in my platform apply as much to retrofitting a manufacturing plant as to a residential building. Where the City lacks the tools, this is a natural place for the City to work with CARB, the CEC, and the air district, whose incentive programs already reach industrial users.



E. Cooperation with California Agencies

The Mayor of Los Angeles plays an important role in coordinating with many agencies on clean air and climate work. For example, the City of Los Angeles appoints one of 13 members to the South Coast Air Quality Management District Governing Board. In addition, the city routinely engages with agencies like the California Air Resources Board and California Energy Commission.

7) What is your philosophy for engaging with agencies where the City and Mayor have appointing authority, like the South Coast Air Quality Management District?

My philosophy is to appoint people who share the City's climate and clean air goals, give them clear expectations, and hold them accountable for results. At the South Coast AQMD, the City's single seat carries the voice of the largest city in the basin, and I will use it to push for stronger rules and to direct incentive dollars toward Los Angeles neighborhoods with the worst air. The same applies to the boards of LADWP, the Port, the airports, Metro, SCAG, and the Metropolitan Water District. I will establish interim targets and public dashboards for each, include progress toward climate goals in the performance reviews of General Managers, and require a corrective plan whenever a target is missed. I will also create a formal Climate and Environmental Justice Advisory Board so the organizations that know these issues best are at the table before decisions are made rather than after.

8) What is your philosophy for engaging with agencies where the City has no appointing authority, like the California Air Resources Board and California Energy Commission?

My approach is to be a demanding advocate and a reliable partner at the same time. I will designate a senior staff member in the Mayor's office responsible for regional and state climate coordination so that the City speaks with one voice and shows up consistently. Where the state has created pathways, as it did on all-electric building codes after the courts struck down our ordinance, the City should adopt them immediately instead of leaving them unused. Where the state has funding, for school buses, drayage trucks, orphan well cleanup, or recycled water, the City should be first in line with shovel-ready projects. And where state standards are not strong enough for a city that has never met federal air quality standards, I will say so publicly and push for more.