

Name	Nate Wollman	Alejandro Soto-Vigil	Leah Simon-Weisberg	Judy Hunt	Igor Tregub	Christina Murphy
Age	38	37	45	n/a	32	38
Job	Property manager	Legislative assistant, Berkeley City Council and Rent Stabilization Board Commissioner	Tenants rights attorney	Non-profit executive and consultant	Safety engineer, U.S. Department of Energy	Housing coordinator
What is the main reason you are running?	<p>I am a renter as well as a property manager, so my perspective is both unique and sympathetic to those who must find and sustain housing with the prices and demand here in the Bay Area.</p> <p>I am running for rent board because I have the passion to do the following!</p> <p>Advocate For All Berkeley Tenant's Rights! Advocate For Property Owners Rights! Bring years of real world experience to the Rent Stabilization Board! Help Families & Students Maintain Quality Housing In Berkeley ! Represent Tenants & Landlords With Fair Consideration For Both Parties! Establish Transparent Communication! Less Politics & More Real World Solutions!</p>	<p>Housing is a human right. I am proud to be selected by the 2016 Berkeley Tenants Convention, a diverse coalition of nearly 400 tenants, landlords, and homeowners committed to protecting rent control and tenants' rights.</p> <p>Berkeley is facing a housing emergency. Seniors, students, and working families confront rising rents and threatened evictions. Because of this, the Rent Board has seen 2,000 more people through its doors.</p> <p>As rents continue to skyrocket, we need to defend our Rent Stabilization Ordinance. Our Rent Program keeps rents stabilized. It's also a place where landlords and tenants resolve disputes without expensive attorneys.</p>	<p>I am running for Berkeley Rent Board Commissioner because I feel strongly that all rent boards must be accountable to the people — there is no better way than through an election. Berkeley and Santa Monica both have elected rent boards and I believe it is no surprise that they are the two most effective and well enforced rent control ordinances in the state. This, however, requires qualified people to volunteer to run.</p>	<p>I am running for re-election as a Commissioner. I won in 2012 as a small property owner, raising issues concerning older adult tenants and property owners. I also continue to address critical issues regarding people of color, who reside in West Berkeley and South Berkeley with long term rent controlled units. Issues related to the gentrification of West Berkeley and South Berkeley impact small property owners, whose units remain well below market rates. Tenants in those units are impacted as available housing for seniors, moderate and low income people are not readily available in communities they call home.</p>	<p>I first ran for the Berkeley Rent Board out of my deeply rooted experiences as an immigrant and a nearly life-long renter. A sense of place started for me with a roof over my head. At several times in my life, my family and I had to make hard choices about moving away from the community in which we were hoping to settle. At a time when we are facing an unprecedented housing crisis and eviction epidemic, many community members asked me to run again. Given my experience and passion to work towards a Berkeley we can all call home.</p>	<p>I am the housing coordinator at a South Berkeley non-profit which provides supportive services to chronically underserved, homeless and at risk individuals, many of whom have mental health challenges. I was asked by my community to be the voice for voiceless and I was selected to run for the Berkeley Rent Board by the Berkeley Tenants convention attended by almost 400 Berkeley tenants and homeowners.</p>
Why are you qualified for the position?	<p>I have years of experience as a property manager and housing provider. All the regulations that the rent board has set to protect tenants and to encourage sustainable housing are all items which I myself am familiar in my 9-5 job. I am a hard working individual and I believe that having an understanding of how the housing industry works is imperative to being a commissioner. I know this experience will make my position invaluable to the general public and on the rent board. I bring a practical real world experience that is hands on and well developed. I love Berkeley, my community and honor and value what makes this city such a wonderful place.</p>	<p>I've held the following positions: Rent Stabilization Board Commissioner; Vice-Chair; Budget and Personnel Committee; Resilience & Sustainability; Eviction / Section 8 / Foreclosure Committee; Ad Hoc Committee on Paperless Agendas; Safe and Sustainable Housing Committee; Housing Advisory Commission; HAC Vice-Chair; HAC Housing Trust Fund Subcommittee (Chair); HAC Community Development Block Grant Subcommittee; HAC Relocation Ordinance Subcommittee; City of Berkeley Alternate Commissioner to Planning Commission, Zoning Adjustments Board, Landmark Preservation Commission, Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Product Panel of Experts, Public Works Commission; AC Transit District Accessibility Advisory Committee; University of the District of Columbia Law School – Student Bar Association; Associated Students of Laney College – President</p>	<p>If elected I would bring 14 years of legal experience as a tenant attorney. I have practiced in almost every rent control jurisdiction in the state. Over the last two years, I have been a leader in the movement to pass rent control and just cause protections in new jurisdictions. I developed a rent control tool kit and have extensively studied rent control and just cause eviction protections in order to draft several ordinances and ballot measures to ensure that they reflected the best practices from around the state.</p>	<p>I am qualified to continue as a Commissioner for the following reasons:</p> <p>A. I am a small property owner whose property has been under rent control for over 20 years. I know the responsibilities of being a good landlord.</p> <p>B. I have been a tenant and I know the issues of tenants, their rights and responsibilities.</p> <p>C. As a non-profit executive, I have experience running large agencies with complex budgets, and I have prepared organizations for federal site visits. I know the key factors regarding executive management, talent recruitment, hiring, retention and staff equity, agency transparency and financial accountability for how monies are allocated and spent.</p> <p>D. I address critical concerns for a population that is overlooked without a voice or vote at the decision-making table.</p> <p>E. Having developed public policies regarding health, housing, children, youth and families and older adults, I am familiar with what and how public policies affect people in their daily lives.</p> <p>F. I bring a strong sense of fairness and social justice to the table. As the agency prepares for the eventual retirement of the current executive director, I bring clear knowledge of executive attributes that are needed for the next leader.</p>	<p>In my four years on the Rent Board, I successfully worked to pass a Relocation Ordinance with vastly improved tenant protections, expand the Board's education initiatives for tenants and property owners alike, and craft a mandatory seismic retrofitting requirement (while providing financial incentives to property owners). As Housing Advisory Commission Vice Chair, I successfully helped secure millions of dollars of affordable housing funding, increase impact fees on market-rate developers, and implement a Tenant Protection Ordinance. As Zoning Adjustments Board Vice Chair, I approved thousands of rental housing units – many of them reserved for lower-income families – while stopping the demolition of rent-controlled housing.</p> <p>Earlier this year, my efforts were instrumental in getting the City Council to double the percentage of inclusionary housing that is affordable to lower-households and increase the Affordable Housing Mitigation Fee to, at least, \$30,500 per unit at issuance of first construction document and \$34,000 per unit is paid at Certificate of Occupancy.</p> <p>I've effectively and successfully assisted dozens of tenants, property owners, and homeowners with the various housing, zoning, and land use challenges. I'll bring accessibility, accountability, and acceptance of differing points of view to the Board.</p>	<p>I have strong support in my community, South Berkeley. I work tirelessly and every day to help Berkeley residents find housing, I convince landlords to accept housing vouchers and work to keep tenants in their homes. I am determined to stay involved in processes that create affordable housing for everyone.</p>

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What sets you apart from other candidates?	<p>Many of the competing members of the CALI slate are career political candidates who are vetting for any positions they can get their hands on. They operate under the a broad range of emotionally charged ideals. They define themselves as "" progressive"" as a tactic to align themselves with endorsements.</p> <p>My opposing candidates lack a background in the housing industry and lack hands on experience managing the day to day needs of tenants in apartments. I bring my perspective as a renter and as a property manager to the table, I understand the issues that tenants face with habitability and increasing rents. I help run the maintenance department at my office as well as the leasing department. I have helped countless numbers of students and numerous families secure housing here in Berkeley. The CALI slate puts a wedge out there calling me pro landlord. I am pro transparency, I seek to represent the interests of both tenants and landlords. It's not us versus them, it's about who serves the public the best. I propose the definition of progressive should be a rent board commissioner who can understand the challenges both housing providers and renters endure and serve both equally.</p>	<p>Over the last four years I have been a leader on the Rent Board, pushing to increase staff based on an unprecedented demand for services. I successfully led the effort to increase allocations for the Eviction Defense Center and East Bay Community Law Center because of the increased number of evictions in Berkeley, both illegally and constructive. Our eviction defense partners, working on a shoestring budget, have a proven track record of protecting vulnerable tenants. I am committed to increasing resources for the Rent Board to our eviction defense partners. I want Berkeley voters to know that when they vote for me, I will continue pushing to help our most vulnerable residents by preventing homeless and fighting illegal rent increases, unlawful evictions, and constructive eviction.</p>	<p>For the last 14 years, I have fought to safeguard existing rent control and just cause eviction protections. I have provided critical legal support to five Bay Area campaigns to pass new rent control laws; including writing comprehensive rent control measures that qualified for the Richmond and Alameda ballots this November.</p> <p>I also have extensive experience with supervision and the running of an organization. This provides me with the skills necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the rent board and provide leadership in the impending process of hiring a new executive director when the present director retires.</p> <p>Along with the other members of the CALI progressive, pro-tenant Rent Board slate, I have extensive community support. After being elected out of a field of more than ten candidates to run on the progressive slate at the Berkeley Tenant Convention, I have received an extensive range of endorsements such as the Sierra Club, the Alameda County Democratic Party and the Alameda Labor Council, AFL-CIO.</p>	<p>I bring experience as: a tenant, small property owner, non-profit executive, board member and public policy maker. I bring a consensus building style of interaction by listening to my commissioner colleagues with a willingness to collaborate and resolve problems without rancor.</p> <p>I bring to life real anecdotal testimonies to the table to illustrate the point that cookie cutter public policies do not resolve issues without careful thought to the consequences of quick policy decisions. I know Berkeley as a community with an historical reference point of Berkeley being a restricted community years ago when people of color could not be in the city after 5:00 pm. I also remember Byron Rumford, the South Berkeley pharmacist who ran a thriving pharmacy on Sacramento Street, who started the Fair Housing Movement that eventually became law in the 1960's. His work with then Governor Edmund G. Brown, laid the foundation for rent control in Berkeley. When my commissioner colleagues and current candidates for office speak with sound bites, they often miss the salient nuances of how rent control affects older adults and people of color in Berkeley. I speak with specific instances within ah historical context.</p>	<p>The approach I take to governance is very similar to the one I take to my everyday job duties around safety oversight and nonproliferation. I spend at least 10 hours per week going through agenda packets, researching issues, and consulting with stakeholders prior to each meeting. While I have a lot of respect for the professional judgment of staff, I am independent in my conclusions; If I feel that there is a better solution, I try to develop an alternative.</p> <p>I have a collaborative working style and believe that the best decisions can only come from community input. While I may not agree 100% of the time with my colleagues, I have amassed a respect among them for doing my due diligence in researching each issue – earning me the Vice-Chairmanship of two commissions.</p> <p>As a Berkeley community servant-leader, I've distinguished myself as being extremely accessible to members of the public and other elected and appointed officials throughout the region. I spend a great deal of time researching best practices from across the nation. For example, as former California delegation chair of the Young Elected Officials Network, I worked to develop a database of such best practices on various policy matters.</p>	<p>I am unique among the candidates for the Berkeley Rent Board because I live in a rent controlled unit and have experienced the stresses of housing in Berkeley. I am a survivor of gentrification, I am an African American long time native Berkeley community member.</p>
How did you end up in Berkeley?	<p>I grew up here in Berkeley, at 1622 Belvedere St. to be exact. I have family in town to this day. I hope to continue the tradition for the next generation!</p>	<p>As an East Bay native I've been able to enjoy and experience its great culture of Berkeley. I graduated from UC Berkeley in 2004. When I finished law school in Washington DC, my wife and I decided to move to Berkeley so that we could raise our children. Our kids currently attend Malcolm X Elementary school and have flourished as a result of the remarkable school culture in our public school system.</p>	<p>I moved with my husband and daughter to Berkeley in 2009 after more than a decade working in Los Angeles. I represented tenants in eviction cases and ran a non-profit law firm called the Eviction Defense Network. We returned to the Bay Area to be closer to friends and family. We chose Berkeley because we wanted to live in a community that prioritized quality, integrated and inclusive schools, the outdoors, the arts and rent control. My daughter attended the JCC East Bay preschool and now is a second grader at Malcolm X Elementary.</p>	<p>A Bay Area native, I was born in Alameda and raised in Berkeley and Albany. I started school at Franklin Elementary School that is now the Adult Education campus. After attending graduate school in Ohio and working in New York and New Jersey in international and local public health, I returned to my childhood neighborhood.</p>	<p>I came here to attend college, graduating from UC Berkeley with degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Political Science. Upon graduation, I was fortunate enough to accept a position with the Department of Energy, allowing me to stay in Berkeley and serve our local community at the same time as I am serving our nation. Berkeley's amazing neighbors welcomed me and my partner – the current Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women – with open arms. We will fight for a Berkeley that people like us can afford and in which we can all raise our children and grandchildren.</p>	<p>I was born in North Berkeley and have lived here my whole life except for a brief time in 2010 when I was forced to out of Berkeley because I couldn't afford the rent. Last year I was able to move back into a rent controlled unit in South Berkeley.</p>

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<p>What are the three biggest challenges Berkeley faces in the near future?</p>	<p>Berkeley is the small town that has become the biggest little city in the bay area. Lack of Housing is the big issue, lack of affordability is a big issue. The biggest challenge Berkeley faces is the fact that there's so much red tape and obstacles in getting things done in this town. But that's not news is it?</p> <p>There's a lot of hopeless debate on what's the best way to get items done, how to make buildings green, how to help the homeless, how to create more housing how to create more jobs, better pay and higher minimum wages. We have politicians who say they want to develop Berkeley's infrastructure and at the same time are pointing fingers at those who want to build here. We are just now getting more housing built, where was this effort 10-15 years ago? We waited to build and now apartments are in demand and supply is down. The population is going to increase, that means we need to focus on infrastructure. That costs money and that takes time! Spending time on the political nature of implementing these goals puts the projects we need done today down the road 5-10-15 years.</p>	<p>High Rents force many new renters to pay an exorbitant amount of their income toward rent. Low-income workers in Berkeley, as a result, are forced to commute long hours, which diminishes workers standard of living. As a Commissioner, I will make sure to protect our precious Rent Controlled units.</p> <p>Evictions, whether legal, illegal or constructive have caused numerous low-income tenants to be displaced, and in some cases homeless. I will continue to link tenants under threat and/or actual eviction to the Rent Board and our eviction defense law partners.</p> <p>Harassment and Habitability has increased dramatically since rents have skyrocketed. I have in the past and will continue to visit rental units that cause health problems for tenants or units that are substandard. I will continue to find services for tenants living in these conditions.</p>	<p>1. Lack of housing that working families and students can afford and resulting displacement of long term families of color.</p> <p>2. Loss of teachers due to lack of housing affordability.</p> <p>3. The Costa- Hawkins Act which allows landlords to charge any price for housing regardless of the detrimental impact on the community.</p>	<p>The three biggest challenges Berkeley faces in the near future are:</p> <p>1. Leadership. We need people in city government who are critical thinkers with skill sets and cultural competencies with exposure to a range of people with diverse experiences. Public policies should not be based on who can "fire up" a political base to score points and win. We need people who have the needed skills with an evidence based and best practice experience model, along with humility to work with others with whom they disagree. No one political mindset is the "right mindset". People in leadership need to think of our community as ever evolving not stuck on one formula to fit various needs of our citizens.</p> <p>2. Deciding what kind of city we will become – a city that is open to utilizing the expertise and resources of UC Berkeley to assist the city with its complex and often competing priorities. There tends to be some resentment of the University as "elitist" yet a schizoid yearning to live near the campus to reflect one's intellectual acuity. The reality is the University needs to become a community partner in resolving some of the city's issues. Will Berkeley become a city divided – one with luxury living and the other struggling to live?</p> <p>3. Health and Housing for All. Berkeley is facing a critical dilemma: how to create and maintain housing for all income levels within a limited geographic space? Even with rent control, there is still homelessness in Berkeley, a lack of housing that is safe, habitable and affordable for all. Rent control is limited to 21,000 units. Luxury units created in the downtown area are exempt from rent control. Legislating an aging rental stock with aging owners does not solve the problem of a lack of supply of rental units.</p>	<p>– An affordability crisis of unprecedented proportions</p> <p>– A huge increase in the number of actual and attempted evictions</p> <p>– Concerns around seismic safety, habitability, and reductions in habitable space</p> <p>The Board has numerous tools available at its disposal to support its mission. The most important powers in its possession are its quasi-judicial authority to make determinations in landlord-tenant disputes, the power to provide influence on housing policy to the City Council and other entities in the City of Berkeley, and to educate and outreach to tenants and property owners on their rights and responsibilities.</p> <p>Aside from their authority around regulation of rents, enforcement of the minimum warranty of habitability, promulgation of just-cause eviction protections, and resolution of hearing appeals, Rent Board commissioners have a second power and charge.</p> <p>When we negotiate with due diligence and an understanding of the other stakeholders, we, the Rent Board Commissioners, can have a great deal of influence in areas where the Berkeley City Council is the final decision-making body, such as around seismic retrofitting and the Soft-Story Ordinance, recycling and composting in multi-family units, expanding energy efficiency and water conservation measures, and strengthening the Relocation and Demolition Ordinances.</p> <p>If elected, intend to continue my work to advance the production and financing of new and rehabilitated affordable housing, preserving rent control, and ensuring that the units in which Berkeley's tenants reside in are both habitable and seismically safe.</p> <p>I also have championed, along with Councilmember Jesse Arreguin and several Rent Board commissioners, an effort to pass a Tenant Protection Ordinance, which is patterned after San Francisco and other municipalities. It would ensure additional protection from unlawful evictions for long-term tenants (who are often on a limited income).</p>	<p>I believe the most urgent issues are those of gentrification and displacement, housing affordability, availability and habitability. We need permanent funding for the 80 social service agencies in Berkeley which provide supportive services around housing.</p>

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What are your ideas to solve them?	<p>We need to take a hand on approach to making Berkeley a city that can accommodate the population increase. We can do this in a tactful way that respects green building policies, energy efficient buildings and to allow home owners to put in in law units and expand properties to include good quality additional housing units. Berkeley is historically a very hard place to get things done in, trust this opinion from someone who grew up here. We have a lot of so called progressives that harp on the ideals of making this city more inclusive, more affordable, more accessible to students and low income renters and then go an protest at zoning board meetings about proposed developments. This is not a way to mend this over populated city. It sounds cliché but working together in creative ways is the answer. I can't give you a nice packaged politically correct answer about solving Berkeley's problems other than to say that we have to spend less time considering solutions and more time making them happen!</p>	<p>Answers incorporated in above question.</p>	<p>There are several factors that have created the perfect storm for a housing crisis in Berkeley. One factor is the over dependence on profit-driven development instead of development that reflects the needs of the community.</p> <p>Another factor was the passage of the Costa-Hawkins Act which prevents local governments from regulating new rents even when vacancy rates are as low as 1.5%. When there is absolutely no supply and extreme demand for a necessary commodity such as health care, education, food or housing, regulations are required to protect the consumer and the economy from speculation.</p> <p>I also believe that corporate investors have created a business model that puts many tenants at risk. Properties are transferred from good long-term landlords to speculator landlords who only intend to hold the property long enough to empty the property of long-term tenants and tenants of color. In addition to strong enforcement and eviction defense, we need to find ways to prevent this type of speculative investment. I will work with the rent board, the city council and the community to encourage owners to sell rental units to community land trusts, instead of to corporate landlords who have no interest in maintaining a long term rental business.</p> <p>I will also use my regional ties with tenant advocates around the bay area and across the state to bring together all of the rent control jurisdictions including the 5 communities that will be voting on rent control on November 8th to address the needed changes at the state level.</p> <p>I would also like to work with BUSD to increate more affordable housing opportunities for our teachers. Malcolm X Elementary lost 6 teachers last year. Many because they chose to move to other communities where they could afford the housing costs on a teacher's salary.</p>	<p>The Rent Board needs to address the transitions in rental housing. Aging older adults are living longer in their own communities. Aging property owners at some point need assistance with their rental business. The Rent Board needs to develop and promote seminars for children/relatives who are transitioning in becoming responsible property owners. Seminars need to be held in evenings and weekends, as noon at the main library may be convenient for staff , but not property owners who work or cannot attend noon meetings for one hour in downtown Berkeley.</p> <p>We need to take a more comprehensive integrated approach to housing. Most of our work and planning are done in silos, without making key connections – how health, housing and socio-economics are inter-related. We need to engage UC Berkeley talent in our discussions around Berkeley in the 21st Century. Tiny houses and cooperative living are some creative ideas; however those ideas may not appeal to a large segment of the population.</p> <p>We need to address the social justice issues related to housing. If our city promotes luxury living downtown, how will those residents pay into the infrastructure to maintain their luxury lifestyle? Traditionally, whenever our city officials need revenue, tax measures are put before property owners. We need to have some critical conversations about luxury living versus struggling to live in Berkeley.</p>	<p>Active outreach and education to all Berkeley tenants and property owners. Historically, the Rent Board has been on the front lines of educating thousands of Berkeley tenants and property owners on their rights and responsibilities and providing legal advice or dispute mediation in the unfortunate events when this becomes necessary. Over the past eight years, I have worked collaboratively with Rent Board commissioners and staff to deploy a set of information tools that are more responsive than ever to the varying levels of familiarity with and interest in the ordinance. This will again be a focus for my work.</p> <p>Seismic safety. Many rent-controlled buildings in Berkeley are incapable of withstanding a magnitude 6.7 earthquake, predicted along Hayward Fault in the next 20 years. Soft-story buildings, many of which house students, pose an additional risk of total collapse in the event of seismic activity. I worked with the City Council to push for a strong ordinance that would begin to enforce Phase I (engineering study and tenant notification) and pass Phase II (mandatory seismic retrofitting) of the Soft-Story Ordinance. If elected, I will continue efforts to ensure that this and other seismic safety ordinances are being enforced, and that the vast majority of property owners who wish to do the right thing have sufficient financing options to comply with them.</p> <p>A Board that's Accountable to and Provides a Quality Service for All. When I chaired the Rent Board Budget and Personnel Committee, the registration fee only went up by \$24 in four years. The registration fee – the only means that finances the agency – must be periodically assessed to ensure that hardworking Rent Board staff have the tools to provide quality services to tenants and property owners, but is not out of reach for Berkeley's small landlords.</p>	<p>Rent control is the single most effective way to keep our community diverse in every way. Habitability of rent controlled units is the responsibility of the Rent Board. There are a number of ways Berkeley could expand affordable housing now – building on city owned or controlled properties, buying and retrofitting abandoned or uninhabited housing. I will continue to advocate for these community concerns as well as fighting to strengthen the Rent Board;. We need to develop strategies to make sure that low-income, disabled residents, senior citizens and students are not charged or evicted unfairly.</p>
What is your most inspired or unique idea for Berkeley?	<p>I think we should take a hint from Japan! Yes that's right, Japanese micro efficiency apartments are a really great idea. Berkeley would benefit from spaces that provide compact ultra modern and hopefully affordable units!</p>	<p>I am inspired to continue working hard so the Berkeley City Council will prioritize the development of affordable housing. I'm tired of certain council members stalling affordable housing projects while allowing the proliferation of new market rate rental housing projects that reduce community benefits. We must stop Laurie Capitelli.</p>	<p>The City of Berkeley should consider providing seed money for community land trusts. Community land trusts can play an important role in protecting tenants against speculative out of town corporate landlords.</p>	<p>We need to develop a strategic plan for the next decade. We need to begin with critical conversations with community residents in each district. We need to engage our business community, UC Berkeley community and housing professionals. Developers need to understand their social responsibility of "making good by doing good."</p>	<p>A cost-efficient way to help property owners retrofit their garages and drives with electric vehicle chargers. For those owners and tenants who don't own a vehicle, making it easier to convert unused garages (or other storage spaces) into accessory dwelling units to incentivize the generation of new housing opportunities.</p>	<p>My ideal Berkeley would have stable housing for every homeless and at risk resident in Berkeley. Housing for everyone — housing that we all can afford.</p>

