

ALACHUA COUNTY LABOR COALITION

2024 Alachua County Labor Coalition City Commission Candidate Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS:

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire.

This questionnaire is divided into eight sections covering issues important to Alachua County Labor Coalition members and Alachua county's working class. Each section contains multiple questions (which are bulleted). Be sure to respond to each question, but please limit your responses in each section to 750 words (or less).

We will be hosting a public candidate forum to provide coalition members and the general public an opportunity to follow up on your responses. Separate forums will be held for commission and mayoral candidates.

The forum is scheduled for Thursday, August 1st at 6:00 PM (location TBD).

Candidates must return a completed questionnaire by Monday, July 22nd at 11:59 PM in order to receive an invitation to the forum.

Completed questionnaires should be returned to Coordinator@LaborCoalition.org.

NOTE: The Labor Coalition does not endorse any candidates, and the inclusion of these questionnaire responses to our website should not be taken as an endorsement.

Labor and Wages

- Federal and state laws give most workers the right to form and join unions. Do you support or oppose the right of all private and public sector workers to organize a union?
 - Being mindful that all significant workplace improvements (hours per day/per week; wages, safety regulations, etc.) were all accomplished through the work of unions, I wholeheartedly support the right of workers to unionize.
- Would you publicly support workers in our community who are seeking workplace rights, including a living wage and the right to union representation?
 - Yes, I publicly support workers who are seeking workplace rights.
- The questions in this part relate to living wages, benefits, and economic inequality.

BACKGROUND: The Gainesville City Commission made [significant progress on providing living wages for municipal workers, including part-time, temporary, seasonal](#), and [contracted workers](#). This year, the state legislature passed, and the governor enacted [HB 433](#), which prohibits city and county governments requiring their contractors to pay workers a wage above the state's minimum wage after September 30th, 2026. Additionally, HB 433 prohibits local governments from requiring employers provide heat protections to their workers.

- How do you define a living wage?
 - A living wage allows for income to meet or exceed the combination of housing, childcare, healthcare, food and other essentials.
- What do you think the City can do to decrease the gap between wages and the cost of living in Gainesville?
 - The most impactful work that the city can engage in to close wages-cost of living gap is to work toward increasing the availability of affordable housing.
- What do you envision as the role of other large local employers in Gainesville in hold on helping to improve wages, worker benefits, workplace safety, and reduce inequalities?
 - The trend for decades has been for workers to gain experience locally, and then take their acquired knowledge and experience elsewhere seeking higher wages and incentives. I envision the local employers learning from this experience, and raising their standards to hold on to their experienced workers.
 - **preemption of local governments requiring contractors to pay their employees a living wage?**

- Unfortunately, our governor has removed the right of local governments to require contractors to pay a living wage with the passing of HB 433

Housing

- How can the City and/or its partners build significant new housing for our workforce?
 - The city can build new housing for our workforce with careful consideration of its comprehensive plan, the impact on our tree canopy, and the impact on our environment.
 - What partners do you envision the City working with on such an initiative?
 - I envision the city working with builders, environmental groups, and employers.
- How should the City balance the need for both workforce rental housing and workforce homeownership opportunities?
 - The City should balance the need for workforce housing and homeownership opportunities by engaging with employers, builders, and environmentalist to best address this concern.
- The questions in this part relate to local-level renters’ rights protections.

BACKGROUND: The City of Gainesville created the [Residential Rental Unit Permit Program](#) a comprehensive rental housing ordinance in 2020 that required: landlords or property managers to inform their tenants of their legal rights and responsibilities, universal health and safety inspections, and cost-saving energy and water efficiency standards. The City also passed a Fair Housing [ordinance—which prohibits landlords and property managers from discriminating against renters](#) on the basis of lawful source of income (e.g., Section 8 vouchers), citizenship status, domestic violence survivor status, gender identity, and more.

In 2023, the state legislature passed, and the Governor enacted [HB 1417](#), which preempts city and county governments from requiring many, but not all, of the protections in the Residential Rental Unit Program and Fair Housing ordinances. [View the legal analysis provided to the ACLC on options similar to those in the rental permit program still available to local governments here.](#)

- Do you support or oppose restoring protections formerly guaranteed by the City’s Residential Rental Unit Program, provided they are designed in a way that does not violate state law?
 - Yes, I support restoring protections formerly guaranteed by the City’s Residential Rental Unit Program.
- What options for protecting renters do you think are available to the City, **in light of HB 1417?**

- The option I recommend is to vote to change the political structure presently in our State House and Senate delegations.

While HB 1417 does not preempt local prohibitions on Fair Housing ordinances generally, it does make it difficult to enforce the requirement that landlords and property managers only consider “the portion of the rent that the voucher holder is required to pay out-of-pocket (as determined by the local housing authority issuing the voucher) in any rent-to-income financial qualification calculation.”.

- What will you do to see that the City’s Fair Housing protections for Section 8 voucher holders are enforced, in light of HB 1417?
 - I will make every to change the political structure presently in our State House and Senate delegations.
- What will you do to see that the City’s Fair Housing protections for survivors of domestic abuse, immigrants, trans people, and others are enforced, in light of HB 1417?
 - I will make every to change the political structure presently in our State House and Senate delegations.

Transportation

- Do you support or oppose offering free RTS services for all Gainesville residents at the point of service? If so, how would you accomplish that?
 - Given the City’s current deficit, and the efforts the City has undertaken to balance the budget, offering free RTS services does not appear to be fiscally sound.
- How can the City of Gainesville improve public transportation for people who rely on it but aren’t affiliated with UF or Santa Fe?
 - I believe that the city is making every effort to ensure that workers can get to their place of employment. Greater efforts would require greater participation by employers.
- What concrete steps would you take to improve traffic safety in our community?
 - I will make every effort to increase lanes for bikers, as well as E-bikes, and other alternative modes of transportation.

Food

- What will you do about providing access to non-processed, real food options to neighborhoods that don’t have access to it (i.e., food deserts)?
 - I currently chair two committees within the Alachua County Branch of the NAACP. Through those committees, I have established a working relation with departments within

the city and county, as well as farmers, and the Executive Director of the ‘*Federation of Southern Cooperatives*’, to address the east Gainesville Food deserts

- What partners do you envision the City working with on such an initiative?
 - Alachua County Branch of the NAACP, departments within the city and county administration, farmers, the ‘*Federation of Southern Cooperatives*’, as well as other non-profit and for-profit organizations to address the east Gainesville Food deserts

Corporate responsibility

- What will you do to ensure UF is a better presence in Gainesville (e.g., union neutrality, living wages, payments in lieu of taxes, helping to ensure better access to quality housing, etc.)?
 - To ensure that UF is a better presence in addressing the needs of all the citizens, I will every effort to includes its representatives in these discussions.
- What levers does the City have to pressure UF into being a better presence?
 - I believe that media coverage of this issue will best ensure UF taking an active role.
- How do you plan to balance the needs/desires of constituents and business interests, and in which areas and do you think they are most in conflict right now?
 - The greatest area of conflict between the needs/desires of constituents and business interest is in addressing the issue of affordable housing. I believe that if all parties are brought to the table, we can work out the differences and accomplish the greater good for the City of Gainesville.

Criminal Justice

- Many residents are concerned about the usage of K9 dogs by the Gainesville Police Department, recent lawsuits have shown that racism has been a problem in that unit, and there have been numerous incidents of unnecessary bites, while police claim that the K9s are necessary for suspect apprehension and provide other useful skills to the police force.
 - What action would you take, if any, to alleviate public concerns about the K9 unit?
 - Recent incidents that have brought to bear the racial disparities in the use of the K9 unit make this a very difficult and delicate situation. I believe that a round table including the police, citizens, and representatives of victims, as well as the city and county commission representatives, will, in time, work through this issue.

General Governance

- What is your position on the *Local Public Utilities* referendum, which would abolish the GRU Authority and return oversight to the City Commission?
 - The basis of our Country being established is the fundamental rights of citizens have a voice in their governance. I fully support the ballot referendum that returns GRU Authority to the City of Gainesville.

- As Gainesville continues to grow in population size, what actions or policies do you think that the city should pursue to accommodate newcomers and long-time Gainesville residents alike?
 - I believe we should look to our comprehensive plan, even though it may require some tweaks, as our path toward accommodating growth. As we grow, we should do so with every effort to preserve the character of long-established neighborhoods.

- What reforms would you like to see to our local governance structures that would improve local government's effectiveness while maintaining transparency and accountability?
 - We need to establish rules and procedures to deal with elected officials who forego their responsibilities in not being present on the dais.
 - Just as citizens are limited to their input, we need policies and procedures to deal with the back and forth between members of the dais that cause meeting to extend well beyond what is necessary.

- What will you do to address the very high level of turnover in our City government?
 - I believe that the city is currently addressing that issue by adjusting salaries and benefits that are competitive with other parts of the country with similar economic living cost. I will support the city's effort to offer competitive salaries and benefits.