

Coastside Democrats Candidate Survey

An email address is required to ensure integrity. Please note this form in its entirety will be posted for Public Review.

Email *

tokofsky4cusd@gmail.com

Thank you for your interest in applying for the endorsement of the Coastside Democrats. Please complete this submission by **Friday, September 4, 2026**. All Club members will vote on candidate endorsements.



Cabrillo Unified School District (CUSD) Governing Board Member

The role of the CUSD school board is to provide leadership and oversight of the district. The Board ensures that the district is responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of the community. The school district has approximately 2,600 students attending one of the district's seven schools.

CUSD holds district-based elections for its five Board Members to staggered four-year terms. There are three districts that are up for election in 2026: Districts A (Daniels), C (Cortez), and E (Alexander).

1. Candidate Name *

Peter Tokofsky

2. As a Club under the California Democratic Party, we only endorse fellow Democrats. Please state how long you have been registered to vote as a Democrat: *

- ☒ Always been a registered Democrat
- ☐ Have been a registered Democrat for the last ten years
- ☐ Have been a registered Democrat for the last five years
- ☐ Just registered as a Democrat this election cycle.

3. I certify the information provided on this application and in any subsequent interview or written submission is true and correct. *

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Statement Questionnaire

4. Why are you running for this office? *

As a parent and reporter, I watched CUSD flounder with a revolving door of administrators, mistreatment of teachers, and ill-advised spending on wasteful programs -- all without significant educational results. I am confident that with the right leadership CUSD can serve its students and families better with more innovative and effective schools.

5. What will be your top priorities if elected? *

Fiscal responsibility: focus spending on the classroom, strict oversight of budgets and bond funds, stop wasteful purchases.

Keep teachers on the Coastside: the two-year battle (2022-24) trying to get a raise for teachers and staff that would keep up with inflation (the District offered 0%) cost us some of our best teachers who left for other districts. We must prioritize keeping good teachers in CUSD - innovation, community, and respect can help offset economic limitations.

Innovation: the Coastside offers opportunities for innovative education programs such as agricultural technology, science of climate change, project-based learning; the district has not sustained these efforts. Our students need an education that will equip them for a world with many new challenges.

Consolidation: the County Office of Education has had preliminary discussions on how to reduce duplication among the 23(!) districts in the county. That's 23 high-paid superintendents and many more ass't. superintendents often duplicating each other's work. Four separate districts serve the area from Pacifica to Pescadero (fewer than 7,500 students), but there has not been any public effort to create efficient synergies or partnerships among them.

6. Please explain how your background and experience have prepared you for this office. *

I have been a student and teacher at all levels of CA public schools (TK through post-graduate). I have been involved in education policy for decades - as an advisor and consultant in Los Angeles, a journalist covering education, and a parent. Through these experiences I have learned the importance of keeping the focus on the classroom.

7. What do you see as the major issues on the Coastside? *

Not all of the major issues on the Coastside (such as housing, affordability, protecting immigrants, traffic, public safety/emergency preparedness) can be solved by a school district, but CUSD can and should be an important partner in efforts to improve the quality of life on the Coastside. The most important role for CUSD is to provide access to high quality education for all Coastside residents. When government is effective, a school district works in partnership with city and county agencies rather than passing the buck.

8. Is there anything in your background which, if you receive the Club's endorsement, could cause embarrassment to the club? If so, please provide the details. *

I don't think so.

9. Who is supporting your campaign at this stage (e.g., endorsements, donors), and are there any potential conflicts of interest we should know about? *

I have not yet solicited endorsements, but have received the support of Sen. Josh Becker and numerous teachers and parents. I will publish a full list of endorsements on my campaign website soon.

Specific Questions

10. For which district are you running? *

- ☐ District A
- ☒ District C
- ☐ District E

11. California schools face chronic, critical inequities and other challenges in funding. *
Describe this challenge for CUSD and how you would work to address it.

As background, it's worth noting that the current state funding formula was created to address inequities. It provides additional support to some of the lowest-income districts in the state. Over time, Prop. 13 and other budget factors have eroded the positive impact of the funding formula. As a result, districts such as CUSD on the low-end of community-funded (or "basic aid") schools have chronic budget challenges. CUSD's budget levels prevent the district from offering salaries comparable to many other districts in the county, but the generosity of voters has provided a wealth of bond funding that must be used judiciously.

While districts such as CUSD must continue to have a voice in discussions about reforming the funding mechanism, we should be under no illusion that funding will change substantially in the next few years, particularly in light of threats to federal programs. Continually complaining about the funding formula will not help our students now.

With the support of the Coastside community, however, CUSD, has opportunities to improve its funding situation. Strategic partnerships with nonprofits, effective cost-sharing with other jurisdictions, cutting waste, and engaging community members can stretch existing resources. The district must become more diligent and effective in pursuit of grants and in developing innovative programs. Other small districts in California facing budget challenges have used innovation and engagement to overcome financial limitations.

12. School boards must often make decisions incorporating input and perspectives from a wide variety of stakeholders. How do you plan to engage with groups who don't typically participate in education-related meetings, including non-English-speaking families? *

Hold office hours (with interpreters as needed), attend school and community events to make myself more familiar and approachable.

13. What is your approach to school safety, including your views on topics like campus security, immigration enforcement on campus, and emergency preparedness? *

ICE: District and County policies do not (and should not) allow enforcement in schools. Any enforcement activity that lacks a proper warrant should be turned away. A greater threat to our students is to their families off-campus. The District should continue to partner with immigrant advocacy groups to share training and information in support of immigrant students and families.

Stronger partnership with the Sheriff's Office is needed to stop speeding on the HS campus (a particular concern of mine after seeing the lunch hour there), and more generally for safety and emergency preparedness. The mushroom farm shootings should have been a wake-up call for preparedness - some progress has been made after the finger-pointing subsided, but there is still work to do. During the tsunami alert last year, people showed up at the HS as a county-designated evacuation point, but the district had no plans in place. We should use the transition in the Sheriff's Office and the County's new emphasis on disaster preparedness to support improved planning at the District and ensure that everyone feels safe on campus.

14. What do you see as the key opportunities for improvement in our local public schools? What do you believe is going well? *

People are the Coastside's greatest resource. I would like to see us engage our community members more effectively to enhance the educational experience. We should also engage our best, most experienced teachers as mentors to new teachers to help develop a culture of excellence in our schools.

In the aftermath of the near-strike two years ago, and with some new faces and stability in the District office, the mood of the District has improved significantly. This is helping the District, but should also be an occasion to focus more on educational outcomes.

15. What is the plan for the school district property in El Granada? What do you think the district should do with it? *

Last I heard, the County intended to include the property in its housing element document as a possible site for housing development, but the county (like many jurisdictions) basically said, "don't worry, we don't really plan on doing that." Other than that, I am not aware of any specific, current plans.

The District needs to develop a plan for its unused property, taking into account demographics (there will be no need for new schools), community concerns, financial and educational goals. In the past, the District has not always engaged in these conversations (for example, when community members bid to utilize property near Hatch Elementary). I do not have enough information now to lay out a specific proposal, but maintaining unused property is not in the interest of the CUSD's educational mission.

16. As a school board member, do you think it is important to visit district schools on a regular basis? Please explain why or why not. *

Yes! How can a board member make decisions without knowing what is happening in the schools?

Submit When Finished

Click Back to return to a previous question. Click Submit when you are done.

Feel free to contact demclubcoastside@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Final results will be posted on <https://coastsidedems.org>

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