

Jo Anne Simon - Congressional Candidate for NY-10

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My entire career has been about lifting the voices and fighting for the rights of those who have been historically marginalized. I grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Yonkers and was the first in my family to attend college. I am a disability civil rights lawyer, a former teacher of deaf students, a community activist, and progressive NY State Assemblymember. I fought and won a landmark case that went up to the Supreme Court and changed the national landscape for disability rights.

I have stood up to bullies and had significant legislative victories against big industries and entities - from the NRA to the health insurance industry to the Kings County Democratic Party machine. My legislative victories include my Red Flag law, the strongest gun violence prevention law in the country, the campaign finance reform bill to close the notorious LLC loophole, a gender equity bill, a supported decision-making bill to protect people with disabilities, education reforms, and more.

I also helped secure equal pay for equal work, voter and elections reforms, paid family leave, and sexual harassment protections. I helped codify Roe v. Wade into state law to protect the right to an abortion in New York and passed laws to ensure that NY is a safe haven for people from other states who need abortion care.

I'm asking for your endorsement because I have a proven track record of passing progressive laws and the policy chops to do this job and have deep roots in the congressional district, and I understand constituents' needs better than any other candidate in this race. Community work is how I found my way into public service, and it is where my heart is. I have been in auditoriums late at night working alongside community members, and I know the importance of centering the voices of my constituents in public service.

My top 3-5 issues:

My top issues are fighting climate change, protecting reproductive rights, ending gun violence, ensuring an equitable education for all, reviving our economy, and protecting our democracy and vulnerable people who are being marginalized right now.

Climate. Brooklyn and Manhattan share a tremendous need for the resiliency of their waterfronts. One concern is how to preserve green space while also preparing for climate change and local flooding – the City, has made it an either-or issue. On the East side, it chopped down gorgeous cherry trees in the name of flood prevention. Some environmentalists believe that that was unnecessary and that the resiliency measures are not sufficient for a long enough period of time. The loss of trees makes for heat islands when we have an even greater need for parks and trees. But we also need climate justice in developing our workforce in green jobs and business operations, and we need as a country to support those initiatives with real dollars.

I have a long track record advocating for environmental policy and environmental justice—first as a community activist and then as an Assemblymember. I was an early supporter of designating the toxic Gowanus Canal as a Superfund site. I **successfully pushed for New York City's first traffic-calming study**, which has been added to and implemented over the past 20 years. I have also stood up against irresponsible development projects that harm the

environment. I led the Gowanus Expressway Stakeholder Group and litigated against the state and federal governments to plan for an environmentally just tunnel to replace the aging elevated Gowanus Expressway, which has divided and polluted predominantly poor communities of color along the western Brooklyn corridor for decades and will continue that advocacy as a member of Congress.

We must meet the climate crisis head-on by moving our economy to 100% renewable energy. I have been a strong supporter and co-sponsor of New York's Build Public Renewables Act to move to public power and the All-Electric Buildings Act. Moving to clean electricity is becoming more popular in state houses. It can gain momentum in Congress because it is necessary to protect our climate and has an enormous economic opportunity if we tie it to good-paying union jobs; the expansion of federal tax incentives will help. New York, like many states, has been under the thumb of privately-owned corporate utilities. I've been a vocal advocate calling out ConEd and National Grid for providing shoddy service and hiking up their rates while their CEOs get richer - we need to transition to publicly-owned, democratically-accountable renewable energy sources. We came very close to passing the build renewables bill in New York this year, and we need both state and federal efforts.

Congress is currently examining legislative reforms to oil and gas leasing and production, and the President has issued a pause on new oil and gas leasing; I would strongly support efforts to end taxpayer subsidies for fossil fuel companies and reforms to our outdated policies governing oil and gas development.

In the Assembly, I have actively worked to support a variety of initiatives that would prevent climate change. I helped pass New York's green new deal (the CLCPA), and I support the vision for a federal Green New Deal. I've fought to divest our state and city pension funds from fossil fuels and for a moratorium on proof-of-work crypto-mining that relies on fossil-fuel power plants. I cosponsored the 30x30 bill to protect at least 30% of our land and water to reduce the mass extinction of critical species, which just passed the state legislature (there is also a national effort to do the same 30x30 initiative, which I can bring my state experience to). I presented our 30x30 bill to a national audience through the National Council of Environmental Legislators (NCEL). I also carry a bill to limit the importation of species that can lead to zoonotic transmission of viruses, which has been increasing due to deforestation and loss of habitat.

Gun Violence Prevention. Gun Violence is a public health crisis that is shaking our nation to its core. I have passed significant gun violence prevention laws in the state legislature, so I know there are so many initiatives we could implement in Congress to reduce gun violence right now. First, we have to treat gun violence like the public health crisis that it is. It is shameful and beyond comprehension that we are the only country that so devalues human life, repeatedly allowing gun violence to occur.

We need to ban assault weapons, strengthen background checks, raise the age for purchasing weapons, reduce the amount of ammunition someone can hoard, conduct microstamping, expand concealed carry laws to other states, and make significant federal investment in local community violence interruption programs. We also must implement a national "red flag law" or Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) like the kind I passed here in New York - which is the strongest of its kind in the nation. Americans are still collectively mourning, horrified by yet another massacre of young schoolchildren and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas, and the murder of 10 Black people in Buffalo by a white supremacist who literally went hunting for them. We need bold action and serious research.

When the news came out on Thursday that SCOTUS had ruled against a 1913 New York state law, I responded immediately. I have already introduced legislation that ensures our communities stay safe. New Yorkers voted for safer communities, and this Court decided their thoughts and prayers were stronger than what New Yorkers know will actually keep people safe. As a civil rights lawyer, I'm not afraid of challenging the Supreme Court. Progress sometimes happens before the Supreme Court is ready to catch up. This is one of those times. We can't wait for them to realize that this is not about gun rights but life and death.

Education for All. Opportunity, progress, equality, it all comes back to education. As a lifelong educator and advocate for children, I will fight to improve our educational system and remove barriers for young learners. I understand the pressure our schools, families, and teachers have been under during COVID and will go to Washington ready to be a constant reminder that we owe our teachers and our children immediate action. I support free college for all adults and believe we need to fund universal pre-k and kindergarten and provide total funding for all public-school systems in this country. We also need to better train our teachers in the science of reading so that they have the tools they need to identify and address dyslexia and learning-related disabilities and provide all children with evidence-based instruction to improve overall literacy rates. The data hasn't changed – 38 % of our fourth graders are reading proficiently, which means that 62% are not, and they are not all dyslexic – they need instruction by a teacher who understands how the brain reads.

Housing - Genuine affordable housing for poor, working & middle-class New Yorkers is desperately needed. Unfortunately, and as a whole, New York City does housing very badly, resulting in too many families being displaced. My district in Brooklyn is ground zero for the development of largely unaffordable housing and a legacy of broken promises by virtually every level of government. We need to provide better access to capital for not-for-profit housing developers because they can build more deeply affordable units without the need for high-profit margins. The current call for affordable housing at 5 WTC is emblematic of the problem the community faces. While not a federal issue per se, the affordability crisis is exacerbated by big rezonings, such as what happened here with the Soho/NoHo upzoning. Having lived through several rezonings, in my experience they lead to increased rents and housing prices and displacement, which is a critical problem in our city and more acutely affects our black and brown neighbors.

We need to support approaches in land use that prioritize more supportive housing - a model that we know works since it provides people with the social service support and financial resources they need to stay in their homes. I helped pass a major overhaul of our state's laws to ensure that rent-stabilized housing is permanently affordable; I've also helped pass major rent relief measures during Covid.

The City's housing subsidies need to target people with lower incomes. The percentage of AMI that is used is often too high. I also support setting aside a substantial number of units - at least 15% - created in new state or city-subsidized affordable housing projects for homeless families and individuals and setting in motion their eventual moving to permanent housing. We also need to ensure that folks making less than that who are underemployed, retired, or on PA/SSI/SSD can remain in their homes.

NYCHA needs massive federal investment as well as state and local investment and honesty in communicating with residents, and securing funds to provide jobs, and workforce development to NYCHA residents within NYCHA. I'd support Rep. Velazquez's Public Housing Emergency

Response Act which would provide \$70 billion for capital improvements to public housing nationwide.

The Economy- I grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Yonkers. I grew up seeing how your family and your future are defined by the country's, the state's, and the city's economic stability. I've lived in New York my whole life, and I know, emotionally, we will never be the same after the devastating losses of the pandemic. Still, I am committed to making sure that economically we come back stronger and better than ever. Let's be honest, though, it's not just the pandemic. We face new economic challenges everyday and ones that have persisted for decades. I'm ready to have the hard conversations the minute I step foot in D.C because New Yorkers need some certainty in their economic future. I will fight for strong labor laws that allow workers to negotiate salaries, pass a higher federal minimum wage, guarantee paid family leave, and ensure that small businesses have the support they need to stay the backbone of our community.

I would also like to add that fighting for individual rights and liberties is at my core, whether for reproductive rights and codifying Roe at the state level, being a staunch LGBTQ+ ally, fighting for voting rights and preserving our democracy, and a lifelong history of advocacy for disability rights, I am ready to fight in Washington, DC for these core values.