

QUESTIONS FROM GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE CLIMATE FORUMS - MARCH 8 and MARCH 9, 2022

Responses from Rushern Baker

Climate Policies

1. How important is it for you to make Maryland a leader in fighting climate change, and to be seen as a climate leader yourself?
 - a. Very important. With thousands of miles of vulnerable shoreline in a state that is one of the most vulnerable to sea level rise in the country, we need a real commitment to combating the effects of climate change. We need to raise public awareness about the effect that ill-thought out land use policies can have on the environment and development policies that will limit that impact. We also need to encourage the development of appropriate alternative energy sources like wind and solar, which in addition to helping residents by keeping energy costs low, is an economic development and jobs generator as well. I am proud that we transformed Prince George's County into a national model for environmental and climate policy solutions and I know we can do the same for our state.
2. Would you hire a climate czar in your administration? If so, what would that person's responsibilities be?
 - a. Yes absolutely. This individual would be responsible for our coordinated response effort to climate change across all of the relevant state agencies. They would coordinate with agency and department heads, track our progress through data collection and hold us accountable to our goals, while ensuring that equity is the foundation of efforts, not an afterthought.
3. What efforts will your administration support to decarbonize Maryland's government operations and/or the Maryland economy? Will you commit to investing in green or environmentally friendly schools, libraries and other public facilities to continue the reduction of Maryland's carbon footprint?
 - a. I have a few ideas to continue decarbonizing Maryland's economy: 1) We should mandate net-zero emissions from new building, including green buildings for all new publicly-funded construction, 2) We should expand the cap and trade elements of RGGI beyond the energy sector, and 3) We should continue expanding access to public transit and transitioning our government vehicle fleet (including buses) to be zero emission.
4. What are your plans for increasing access to affordable renewable energy for Maryland residents?

- a. As County Executive, I launched a clean/solar energy grant program to ensure that all county residents had the opportunity to install clean energy for their homes. This program is certainly scalable to the statewide level. We would also work closely with the private sector to boost renewable energy generation on underutilized tracts of land, such as vacant or blighted properties or large parking lots.
5. Does nuclear power need to be part of Maryland's clean energy portfolio? How do you propose to safely store nuclear waste from the Calvert Cliffs plant?
 - a. I'm highly concerned about the storage of nuclear waste, especially considering it will remain radioactive for many many generations to come. However I would want to ensure we are generating enough capacity from renewable energy sources before we decommission our nuclear plant. It's certainly a better option than coal or natural gas from an emissions standpoint. Also, examining the current energy crisis in Germany, you can see the major downside to transitioning away from nuclear before other cleaner options are available.
6. How would you commit to working with environmental justice advocacy organizations in Maryland to help you identify and select the heads of agencies and commissions responsible for protecting our environment? Do you feel the state should diversify the leaders on environmental commissions and in agencies?
 - a. Yes, I see a large, pivotal role for environmental advocacy organizations on my transition team. I will have an environmental transition team that will provide significant input on what my environmental priorities should be, the status of environmental departments, and what qualities I should look for in leadership. Beyond that, good transition teams can also provide valuable input into not only in what the priorities should be, but how to best accomplish them. I think my appointees should be like the people of Maryland--diverse in all ways. You may look no further than the diversity and balance of my former cabinet in Prince George's. Our Directors come from diverse backgrounds but all are exceptionally qualified to do the work. Notably, my appointment to the Department of Environment was the first Latino in that position and one of the first in the history of the County appointed to a cabinet post.
7. How will you prioritize and ensure funding allocated to address environmental injustice will be used in the communities impacted most by climate change – and who will oversee this effort?
 - a. First of all, we should make access to a clean and healthy environment a constitutional right. I have had experience on cumulative impact issues in

several of our neighborhoods in Prince George's, and have been disappointed in the State's inability to protect vulnerable communities. In addition to supporting cumulative impact legislation, I will also order a review of MDE to have updated technology to ensure adequate air quality monitoring. I would also support partnering with the University of Maryland healthcare system to ensure that health impact studies take place in our most distressed communities so we know the impacts and can measure how much progress we are making. Additionally, communities disproportionately impacted by climate change should absolutely receive an equitable portion of climate mitigation funds. I would look to our climate czar to oversee this effort.

Agriculture and Water Quality

8. Agricultural runoff is widely accepted to be the biggest contributor to Chesapeake Bay pollution. How do you plan to reduce farm runoff? Have you accepted or do you plan to accept any campaign contributions from the poultry industry?
 - a. First off, I have not taken any campaign contributions from the poultry industry, or any other special interest group or corporation. It was important for me to opt into Maryland's public financing system for this exact reason—so we can implement much needed reforms at the state level without the influence of big money. This is a complex issue that both affects water quality and an important employer for the state and especially the Lower Shore. The Phosphorus Management Tool has been hotly debated, but I believe it could be effective if implemented fully. Moving forward it will be critical to work with all stakeholders on this and to seek adequate funding for implementation. It will also be important to push for technologies that can effectively and safely dispose of poultry waste in an environmentally friendly way for traditional and alternative uses, but they must be proven. Another point I would like to make is that in order to make effective progress on this issue, good information and analysis is needed about the sources of phosphorus being applied.
9. The state does not regulate or monitor emissions from poultry plants on the Shore, even though residents there have complained about ill effects from the ammonia and other greenhouse gasses. As governor, would you monitor this air quality?
 - a. Yes, as I noted before I would ensure that proper air quality monitoring is installed in all vulnerable communities and partner with the University of Maryland to conduct health impact studies.
10. Plastics are a major source of pollution for fish and crabs. Individual cities have instituted plastic bag bills, but most jurisdictions do not have them, and the state

does not have one, either. As governor, what would you do to reduce plastic and microplastics in our waterways? What measures will you take to require manufacturers and merchants to cover the true cost of their production and use of plastics?

- a. Yes, absolutely. We must change market incentives away from the use of plastic bags and micro plastics by instituting fees on both consumers and manufacturers/ merchants. A statewide ban on plastic bags would also be effective.

Transportation

11. Do you plan to revive the Red Line proposal in Baltimore? How would you make up for the economic development lost to Baltimore since Gov. Hogan killed the Red Line?

- a. Yes I do. I am and have always been an ardent supporter of public transit. I heavily advocated for the Purple and Red Lines and SMRT while in office and would ensure that these projects are completed, as Governor. Unfortunately, from an economic development standpoint, there is no replacement for a strong public transit system and transit-oriented development, which is why my priority would be reviving this project.

12. Do you support proceeding with Gov. Hogan's plans to widen the Capital Beltway and Interstate 270? Do you anticipate that the next governor will be able to kill or alter the project?

- a. No, I do not support it. I know many Marylanders are frustrated with the absurd amount of congestion and traffic they face in their regular commutes, but the current Hogan highway P3 widening scheme is not a sustainable solution. Furthermore, the prohibitive cost of tolls would mean it's inaccessible to low and moderate-income families.

13. During the pandemic, transit ridership has fallen across the country. Because Baltimore's workforce has a high percentage of essential workers, Baltimore's ridership fell about 55-60% compared to 94% in the California bay area. With two out of three jobs in our region requiring at least a 90-minute commute by public transportation, how would you determine the level of investments you would make in public transit services?

- a. I think it's past time for a regional transit authority in the Baltimore-region so that we can ensure we're making equitable and smart investments in public transit for our state's largest city.

14. Shortly after coming to office, Gov. Hogan canceled the shovel-ready Red Line light rail project that would have brought 10,000 jobs in a five-year construction phase, dramatically reduced commute times, and \$3.0 - \$6.5 billion in

transit-oriented-development. The Purple Line from Bethesda to New Carrollton was approved for construction and already has \$12.0 billion committed to development along its corridor. How would you make up for the economic development lost to Baltimore?

- a. As I said above, it's hard to replace a strong public transit system and the economic development opportunities it creates. My priority will be fixing that system. I'll also add that we must get the crime and public safety situation under control in Baltimore if we're ever going to see economic development improve substantially. Right now, many folks are afraid to spend time and money in Baltimore, let alone open businesses. It's a complex issue that must be addressed comprehensively, but I know we can do it if we bring the full resources of the state government to bear on this problem. That's one of the reasons I've committed to moving the Governor's Office to Baltimore when we're not in session.

Climate Mitigation Measures

15. We are losing many historic sites on the Eastern Shore, including Black churches, due to sea-level rise. The Maryland Historical Trust has very little funding to assist with rebuilding and relocating. How would you allocate resources to ensure we do not lose this history?
 - a. I think this is one important component of what must be a comprehensive plan to ensure we're distributing climate change mitigation funding equitably across our state. Communities on the shore face a greater threat to sea-level rise, so it makes sense that we should ensure they have adequate resources to fight this challenge, including to preserve or relocate important historic sites.
16. What efforts will your administration support to decarbonize Maryland's government operations and/or the Maryland economy? Will you commit to investing in green or environmentally friendly schools, libraries and other public facilities to continue the reduction of Maryland's carbon footprint?
 - a. Please see above.