

# RUNOFF

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL AND SAFETY CONCERNS

2023 JOINT RUNOFF



**CEER**  
COALITION FOR ENVIRONMENT,  
EQUITY, AND RESILIENCE



**LINK  
HOUSTON**



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**Candidate Name:**

**SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

**Running for:**

**MAYOR – CHALLENGER**

**Campaign Site:**

**WWW.SHEILAFORHOUSTON.COM**

**1**

**Q1. If you are elected, what will you do to address the impact of environmental quality (air, land, and water quality) on health? What does environmental justice mean to you?**

A. It is in everybody's interest to have communities with clean water, and clean air; communities that are thriving where they are not a dumping ground for toxic stuff that makes people sick. I have long been a champion of environmental justice and have brought millions to make a seismic change in our air, land, and water quality through bills like the Inflation Reduction Act and most recently the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Illegal dumping, air quality, flood control, and water quality are all key issues in this mayoral race, and I have been among the first to say enough is enough. If elected, I will continue to make this fight a cornerstone of my administration.

**Q2. What do you think are the most effective strategies to decrease air pollution from (1) industry and (2) the transportation system?**

A. Transportation today must be palatable for all communities across Houston, and it must be a good neighbor in these communities. We need to increase transportation options that offer alternatives to carbon-fueled vehicles and build a network that is energy-efficient. I will be a champion for METRO, having already delivered over \$800 million dollars to expand the network. We just broke ground on the line going out to Hobby Airport, and to become the destination city that we can become, we must build on that progress.

**Q5. If elected, how will you engage your constituents and ensure that impacted community members have a voice and influence in decision-making related to environmental issues?**

A. Houston is a city of neighborhoods and the civic-minded people who make those neighborhoods hum. Championing this means inclusion. Community members most impacted by climate change will have a seat at the table in my administration. That is the only way we protect and promote our most vulnerable residents and neighborhoods.

**Q3. How would you work to protect public health and safety considering our region's history of (1) industrial disasters and (2) roadway injuries and fatalities?**

A. No loss of life or injury on our roads or through industrial disasters is acceptable. We have made progress in Houston but need to step up enforcement on speeding, running through traffic lights, and road safety. The same concept of enforcement applies to industrial disasters, we must be a city that holds polluters and those that skirt workplace safety rules more accountable than we have in the past.

**Q4. What will you do to expand the city's role in solving the climate crisis, especially for those on the frontlines exposed to extreme heat and weather events?**

A. As one of the nation's major cities, Houston has an outsized role to play in solving the climate crisis. The climate emergency is a public health and environmental problem that we cannot ignore - particularly because the most disadvantaged communities bear the disproportionate brunt of extreme weather events. A Sheila Jackson Lee administration will take the lead on this. We need to reduce the carbon footprint of city vehicles and infrastructure and create public-private partnerships to find comprehensive solutions to the long-term effects of the climate crisis.



## Candidate Name:

*JOHN WHITMIRE*

## Running for:

*MAYOR – CHALLENGER*

## Campaign Site:

*WWW.JOHNWHITMIRE.COM*

### **Q1. If you are elected, what will you do to address the impact of environmental quality (air, land, and water quality) on health? What does environmental justice mean to you?**

A. Environmental justice means that no one community should suffer unfairly from issues like pollution. For too long, we have allowed our low-income and minority communities to shoulder the burden of facilities like landfills placed in their neighborhoods. Look at the people who have become ill from the Union Pacific's creosote plume in the Fifth Ward. In 2019, I helped stop a concrete batch plant that was planned for the Acres Homes community across the street from a park. I called it "a shameful attempt to permit a plant next to our residents and in our neighborhood." I testified before the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, which too often sides with business over people. I told them "We need to show people that we are responsive, and quite frankly, this agency is controversial. You have an opportunity to restore faith in this agency." The owner withdrew his application

### **Q2. What do you think are the most effective strategies to decrease air pollution from (1) industry and (2) the transportation system?**

A. For industry, environmental laws need to be enforced. Frankly, the TCEQ does not do a good job protecting our residents. We need more monitoring of air pollution so we know the extent of the problem. For transportation, obviously we need to reduce vehicle emissions. Metro should focus on a transit system that connects residents and gets them to where they need to be for work, school, medical visits and other activities. Metro should also explore more HOV express buses, which are relatively inexpensive and move at faster speeds compared to other forms of public transit and it should look at adding circulating buses in job centers to get commuters closer to their final destinations.

### **Q3. How would you work to protect public health and safety considering our region's history of (1) industrial disasters and (2) roadway injuries and fatalities?**

A. Industry generally falls under the purview of the state and federal government. I will be an advocate for our community to see that those agencies are living up to their responsibilities. There is no doubt we need to improve our streets. Houston's traffic problems have many causes and will require many solutions. Building more sidewalks. Designing streets with safety as a priority—to control vehicle speeds and to allow drivers to be able to see other vehicles, pedestrians and bikers. To resolve traffic issues, we need long range planning and cooperation among all the governments and agencies in the region.

### **Q4. What will you do to expand the city's role in solving the climate crisis, especially for those on the frontlines exposed to extreme heat and weather events?**

A. It's not a matter of "if" but "when" another devastating weather event hits Houston. We need to be ready. I will place a greater emphasis on our OEM office and ensure that it is fully staffed and ready for an emergency. We need to have in place plans to coordinate with our many nonprofits like the Red Cross that provide help to Houstonians in need. We need to ensure that we reach out to all our residents with information in their language. And I am the only candidate who can reach out to our state officials in the middle of the night to get help sent to Houston immediately. We need to continue promoting green building, electric cars, recycling, planting more trees and protecting workers who often are laboring under extreme weather conditions.

### **Q5. If elected, how will you engage your constituents and ensure that impacted community members have a voice and influence in decision-making related to environmental issues?**

A. I will listen. I will ensure our government is transparent. I will appoint citizen representatives to boards and commissions. I will make City Councilmembers real partners in governing and empower them to work with our city departments to solve issues. If a Councilmember has an idea on how to fix a problem affecting their constituents, then they can take on that problem and work with city employees to solve it. The priority in my Senate office has always been constituent services. When someone comes to us with a problem, we don't send them to another government agency; we work with them to find a solution to their problem. That's how it will be in the Whitmire Administration.



**Candidate Name:**

**MELANIE MILES**

**Running for:**

**CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE 1 - CHALLENGER**

**Campaign Site:**

**WWW.MILESFORHOUSTON.COM**

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**Q1. If you are elected, what will you do to address the impact of environmental quality (air, land, and water quality) on health? What does environmental justice mean to you?**

A. Environmental justice, to me, means ensuring that all residents, regardless of their background or where they live, have the right to clean air, safe water, and healthy land. To address these concerns, I will work to develop and implement policies that reduce air pollution, protect water quality, and promote sustainable land use practices. This includes advocating for stricter emissions standards, supporting renewable energy initiatives, and enhancing public transportation options to reduce air pollution. I will also champion policies that protect our water sources, promote green infrastructure, and address flooding issues. Furthermore, I will engage with these organizations and communities to ensure that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed in the decision-making process. Together, we can achieve environmental justice by creating a more equitable and sustainable Houston where everyone can enjoy a healthier quality of life.

**Q2. What do you think are the most effective strategies to decrease air pollution from (1) industry and (2) the transportation system?**

A. To decrease air pollution from industry, implementing robust emissions regulations and holding companies accountable for compliance is essential. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms, regularly updating emission standards, and incentivizing cleaner technologies can drive industry towards greater environmental responsibility. For the transportation system, promoting sustainable mobility solutions is key. Expanding public transit, investing in electric and hybrid vehicles, and incentivizing carpooling and cycling can reduce emissions. Implementing stricter vehicle emissions standards and encouraging the adoption of electric vehicles will also play a crucial role. Additionally, fostering mixed-use urban planning to reduce commute distances and prioritizing green infrastructure can further alleviate air pollution. Public education on the benefits of sustainable transportation choices is vital for long-term success. Collaborating with organizations like BikeHouston and LINK Houston will be instrumental in developing and implementing these strategies effectively.

**Q5. If elected, how will you engage your constituents and ensure that impacted community members have a voice and influence in decision-making related to environmental issues?**

A. If elected, I will prioritize robust community engagement to ensure that impacted community members have a meaningful voice in environmental decision-making. This will involve regular town hall meetings, community forums, and listening sessions where residents can express their concerns and ideas. I will establish advisory committees comprising diverse community stakeholders, including environmental organizations, frontline communities, and experts, to provide input on environmental policies and projects. Collaboration with organizations like Air Alliance Houston, Bayou City Waterkeeper, BikeHouston, CEER, and LINK Houston will be integral to this process. Furthermore, I will advocate for transparency in decision-making, making environmental data and policy proposals easily accessible to the public. By actively involving constituents and prioritizing their input, we can ensure that environmental policies are rooted in community needs and aspirations, fostering a more equitable and sustainable future for Houston.

**Q3. How would you work to protect public health and safety considering our region's history of (1) industrial disasters and (2) roadway injuries and fatalities?**

A. Firstly, I will advocate for stringent safety regulations and oversight for industries, emphasizing the prevention of disasters through proper training, equipment maintenance, and emergency response planning. Collaborating with organizations like Air Alliance Houston and Bayou City Waterkeeper will help in monitoring and enforcing these regulations effectively. Secondly, addressing roadway injuries and fatalities involves investing in safer infrastructure, promoting responsible driving behaviors, and enhancing public transportation options. I will support infrastructure improvements that prioritize pedestrian safety, cycling lanes, and efficient public transit. Additionally, launching public awareness campaigns and working with organizations like BikeHouston and LINK Houston can help raise awareness and reduce road accidents. By combining strict industrial safety measures with comprehensive transportation safety initiatives, we can mitigate the risks associated with industrial disasters and road injuries, ensuring a safer and healthier environment for all residents.

**Q4. What will you do to expand the city's role in solving the climate crisis, especially for those on the frontlines exposed to extreme heat and weather events?**

A. To address the climate crisis and protect those on the frontlines, I will advocate for bold climate action and resilience strategies. This includes supporting renewable energy initiatives, enhancing green infrastructure, and promoting energy efficiency measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Collaborating with organizations like the Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience (CEER) will help ensure that climate policies prioritize the most vulnerable communities. Additionally, I will work to create climate-resilient neighborhoods through sustainable urban planning and equitable access to green spaces. This will involve investments in cooling centers, improved flood management, and public awareness campaigns about extreme heat risks. Overall, I am committed to making Houston a leader in climate mitigation and adaptation, ensuring that all residents, especially those on the frontlines of climate impacts, have the tools and support they need to thrive in the face of environmental challenges.



**Candidate Name:**

**JULIAN RAMIREZ**

**Running for:**

**CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE 1 – CHALLENGER**

**Campaign Site:**

**[WWW.JULIANRAMIREZFORHOUSTON.COM](http://WWW.JULIANRAMIREZFORHOUSTON.COM)**

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**Q1. If you are elected, what will you do to address the impact of environmental quality (air, land, and water quality) on health? What does environmental justice mean to you?**

A. I will stand with and be a voice for those Houstonians who have to breathe unhealthy air and drink unhealthy water due to pollution. I will advocate for those who have to live in cancer clusters. I will advocate for cleanup and enforcement with state and federal officials charged with enforcing our environmental laws. I will fight to clean up illegal dumping sites and pursue policies designed to reduce it in the future. Environmental justice to me means that those who live in east, northeast and southeast Houston breathe air that is just as clean as on the west side and that all residents have a say in policies that affect the environment where they live.

**Q2. What do you think are the most effective strategies to decrease air pollution from (1) industry and (2) the transportation system?**

A. I believe the most effective strategies to decrease air pollution from industry would include tighter emission standards, more federal and state enforcement of environmental laws, and incentivizing the adoption by industry of technologies that reduce emissions. I believe the most effective strategies to decrease air pollution from the transportation system would include the adoption of mass transit options that Houstonians will actually use, and encouragement of the manufacture and purchase of all-electric and hybrid vehicles.

**Q3. How would you work to protect public health and safety considering our region's history of (1) industrial disasters and (2) roadway injuries and fatalities?**

A. I would advocate for more industrial training on potential hazards within the workplace and the proper handling of hazardous materials. I would also advocate for more inspections by local, state, and federal regulators so that government and the public can be properly informed on what is going on at our plants and in warehouses. 2) To improve public health and safety on our roadways, I would advocate for more enforcement of traffic violations that most often lead to accidents including speeding, running red lights and stop signs, intoxicated driving, distracted driving, and failure to wear seat belts and properly restrain child passengers. I think requiring additional defensive driver safety courses, especially among youth, would help make our roadways safer, as well.

**Q4. What will you do to expand the city's role in solving the climate crisis, especially for those on the frontlines exposed to extreme heat and weather events?**

A. I'm not exactly sure what is meant by this question. Specifically, "those on the frontlines" can be interpreted in different ways. I can say generally that the city has adopted a fairly robust Climate Action Plan to meet the Paris Climate Agreement goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. I don't see that plan changing in any substantial way, given public opinion and the makeup of city council. If, by frontlines, we mean those residents unfortunate enough to live in flood zones, I think we should try to expand the city's efforts (albeit slow, wasteful, and small-scale) to find funding to buy up those homes.

**Q5. If elected, how will you engage your constituents and ensure that impacted community members have a voice and influence in decision-making related to environmental issues?**

A. As an at-large council member, my door will always be open to meet with constituents and advocacy groups, like Air Alliance Houston. I will use Air Alliance Houston as a resource on environmental issues. I will attend community meetings, give reports, and solicit input. I may participate in town halls on various issues. I plan to disseminate a newsletter via email listing upcoming committee and council meetings, agendas, and other important events.

**Candidate Name:****NICK HELLYAR****Running for:****CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE 2 – CHALLENGER****Campaign Site:****WWW.NICKHELLYAR.COM****Q1. If you are elected, what will you do to address the impact of environmental quality (air, land, and water quality) on health? What does environmental justice mean to you?**

A. As a former interim executive director and board member of Bike Houston, I strongly believe we must do more to ensure we are protecting the environment, and crucially so, in a way that is equitable and fair to Houston's diverse tapestry of communities. To do this we must use all the tools we have in our tool box. We must work to create an inclusive infrastructure that accommodates lower emission modes of transportation, increase the energy efficiency of the city's facilities, preference renewable sources of energy over dirty alternatives, and limit industrial pollution to save ourselves and our children from a wide variety of health risks. Furthermore we must be vigilant in providing a skeptical eye to projects that deepen the physical infrastructural barriers within marginalized communities (such as free way expansions).

**Q2. What do you think are the most effective strategies to decrease air pollution from (1) industry and (2) the transportation system?**

A. Under current law, industrial plants, land fills, metal recycling facilities, amongst others, are often legal to build directly next to residential areas. Nearby communities can find themselves afflicted with health issues due to poor air quality and noise pollution. The city can fix this with rules that ensure there is an adequate buffer between industrial uses and residential areas. (2) Much of our air pollution emerges from our mono modal transportation system. When the only option is driving, people have to drive more as buildings are pushed further and further apart to accommodate larger and larger parking lots. Addressing our climate needs requires us to create a transportation system that truly works for everyone. That means one where walking, biking, and taking transit are genuinely viable options that are available to people.

**Q3. How would you work to protect public health and safety considering our region's history of (1) industrial disasters and (2) roadway injuries and fatalities?**

A. Avoiding industrial disasters will require us to take a collaborative approach. We must work with our federal and regional partners to ensure that the industry in our area is fully complying with the existing safety and environmental standards in place. (2) The city's Vision Zero plan commits our city to a goal of zero transportation deaths and major injuries by 2030. To meet this important goal, we must use every opportunity we have to create streets that are safe for all modes of transportation. As the former interim director of Bike Houston and someone who makes many of his trips on his bike and on foot, I know how our infrastructure can often not adequately take into account the needs of certain users. In office, I will fight to make sure all needs are addressed in our transportation system.

**Q4. What will you do to expand the city's role in solving the climate crisis, especially for those on the frontlines exposed to extreme heat and weather events?**

A. The climate crisis is a real and crucially important issue that the city has a key role in addressing. Flooding remains a significant threat for many parts of our city, and increasingly, periods of extreme heat are commonplace. To address flooding, we must make sure we fully fund and commit ourselves to completing our planned flood mitigation projects and as well the full extent of drainage improvements required to keep Houstonians safe. Furthermore, we must work to preserve and expand our green spaces, which act as a crucial mechanism for flood mitigation. As it pertains to our heat issues, an integral step to protecting Houstonians is making sure we have adequate tree coverage on our green strips and near our sidewalks. Adding trees to an area can significantly reduce surface temperatures and provide protection against the elements.

**Q5. If elected, how will you engage your constituents and ensure that impacted community members have a voice and influence in decision-making related to environmental issues?**

A. If elected, I will prioritize active, consistent engagement with Houstonians on environmental issues, utilizing town halls, social media, and community forums to ensure inclusivity. I believe it's crucial we bring a wide variety of perspectives to the table. Houston's resilience and environmental health will be a collective endeavor, and I'm committed to fostering collaboration between community members and environmental experts to address environmental challenges and advance sustainable, equitable solutions.



## Candidate Name:

**LETITIA L. PLUMMER**

## Running for:

**CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE 4 – INCUMBENT**

## Campaign Site:

**[WWW.PLUMMERFORHOUSTON.COM](http://WWW.PLUMMERFORHOUSTON.COM)**

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### **Q1. If you are elected, what will you do to address the impact of environmental quality (air, land, and water quality) on health? What does environmental justice mean to you?**

A. While both state and federal agencies hold permitting powers, our role as Council Members is to be the voice of our constituents. Time and again, I’ve stood against permits for facilities that pose environmental threats, ensuring the well-being and quality of life of our residents remains at the forefront of decision-making. Environmental justice means ensuring that Black and Brown communities in Houston receive equal protection from environmental hazards and equal access to decision-making processes. For too long, these communities have borne the brunt of pollution and climate impacts, exacerbating health and socio-economic disparities. My commitment is to ensure that our policies prioritize the well-being of all Houstonians. Mitigate climate change and uplift marginalized communities, proving that environmental justice and economic prosperity can, and should, go hand in hand.

### **Q2. What do you think are the most effective strategies to decrease air pollution from (1) industry and (2) the transportation system?**

A. I remain committed to championing stricter regulations in partnership with both the TCEQ and EPA. It’s vital for our city’s health and sustainability that we consistently promote the advancement of green technologies. This not only ensures a transition to cleaner methods and processes but also paves the way for a brighter, more sustainable future. Furthermore, an integral part of this initiative is to invest in the expansion and modernization of Metro. Our goal is to make it more alluring to the public, as well as more efficient and environmentally friendly. As we broaden our transportation horizons, there’s a clear need to cultivate EV charging networks citywide. Additionally, preserving our green spaces — our city’s natural air purifiers — remains paramount. Moreover, by championing mixed-use developments, we aim to cut down commuting distances significantly.

### **Q5. If elected, how will you engage your constituents and ensure that impacted community members have a voice and influence in decision-making related to environmental issues?**

A. In my first term, every policy I championed stemmed from community engagement. This engagement manifested in diverse ways: from comprehensive events like our 4-day Cancer Cluster Summit to personal interactions such as phone conversations with community groups. Consistently, I have been a strong proponent of Community Benefits Agreements for city policies. My advocacy ensures that our residents not only have their voices heard but also occupy a significant place in the decision-making process. It is imperative for me that the community remains at the heart of our policy formulation, ensuring that every decision resonates with and serves the needs of our residents.

### **Q3. How would you work to protect public health and safety considering our region’s history of (1) industrial disasters and (2) roadway injuries and fatalities?**

A. Firstly, I will advocate for stringent safety regulations and oversight for industries, emphasizing the prevention of disasters through proper training, equipment maintenance, and emergency response planning. Collaborating with organizations like Air Alliance Houston and Bayou City Waterkeeper will help in monitoring and enforcing these regulations effectively. Secondly, addressing roadway injuries and fatalities involves investing in safer infrastructure, promoting responsible driving behaviors, and enhancing public transportation options. I will support infrastructure improvements that prioritize pedestrian safety, cycling lanes, and efficient public transit. Additionally, launching public awareness campaigns and working with organizations like BikeHouston and LINK Houston can help raise awareness and reduce road accidents. By combining strict industrial safety measures with comprehensive transportation safety initiatives, we can mitigate the risks associated with industrial disasters and road injuries, ensuring a safer and healthier environment for all residents.

### **Q4. What will you do to expand the city’s role in solving the climate crisis, especially for those on the frontlines exposed to extreme heat and weather events?**

A. Our green spaces are important. They act as natural cooling zones, especially beneficial for those exposed to extreme heat, so let’s not pave over them to build new freeways. In our green spaces, we need to plant native, drought-resistant trees and continue the development of community gardens. Additionally, all municipal buildings need to transition to renewable energy sources so we can reduce our carbon footprint. Strengthening our city’s infrastructure is also a priority. By investing in resilient structures and updated drainage systems, we can better prepare for extreme weather occurrences, safeguarding our most vulnerable communities. My vision is to continue working with experts, community leaders, and citizens.