

*Questions for Candidates and Elected Officials*

**Amanda Renteria, Democratic candidate for US House of Representatives, 21<sup>th</sup> District**

**1. Nearly a quarter of Kern’s population (24.4%) is at or below the federal poverty level, according to the California Poverty Measure, but ranks 23 in the state in terms of eligible residents’ utilization of CalFresh—an estimated loss of \$73.6 Million in federal nutrition benefits. What policies would you support to boost participation among the currently eligible population for a program that has a \$1.79 economic multiplier for every \$1 spent?**

In a district with double digit unemployment and high rates of poverty, with 44% of the population under the age of 25, we must work hard to ensure residents have access to information about programs available to them. There are a number of programs in the Farm Bill and SNAP, for example, for education and outreach. One of the problems, however, is that many folks in our communities do not know about these programs, though they are the same communities the programs are meant to help. Being a Member of Congress is not just about passing laws, it is about making sure that constituents know how laws affect them, and how they can benefit from programs passed at the state and federal level. As a Member of Congress, I plan to use my office to engage in outreach throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> District, so that residents are able to benefit from programs meant to help them.

**2. California’s current three-year drought is the worst in at least 100 years. Consequently 428,000 acres have been fallowed, and over 17,000 jobs lost. What policies would you propose to build on-farm resilience in the face of climate change and a more sustainable use of Kern’s water?**

Our current leadership has engaged in partisanship and stakeholder squabbling over water, which has prevented us from achieving a solution while the crisis worsens. I believe the example Governor Brown has set by working across the aisle and with all stakeholders is exactly the approach we need to mediate the effects of the water crisis as quickly as possible and develop long-- term solutions. This is why I was the first person in the race to endorse Proposition 1, the water bond, as an important step toward easing the harmful effects the drought has had on our families, farms, and economy.

As we continue to address the water crisis, we must focus on:

Immediate Assistance: The Valley is facing a critical time and farmers and families are in need. I would support measures like The Emergency Drought Relief Act that would strategically open the Delta Cross Channel Gates so additional water could be transferred. In addition, the Bureau of Reclamation must increase monitoring to adjust pumping in real time so that water is distributed more efficiently.

Reducing Regulatory Wait Times: There is no doubt that something can be done to improve the burdensome reviews needed to address our Valley’s needs. I support expediting temporary barriers and operable gates in the Delta and mandate a faster timeline of just thirty days for federal agencies to approve water transfers and any other actions necessary to bring more water to the Valley.

Offering Real Funding for Farmers: We must use taxpayer funds wisely. An earlier version of the Senate bill included WaterSMART grants, which would prioritize emergency water needs, permanent crop damage, and economic loss from the drought. This would help ensure that our nation's resources help those most affected by the drought, and in Congress I will work to get such a measure passed.

Long Term Storage Solutions: In addition to the measures above, I believe a long term solution must be included in a final bill. Now is the moment to once and for all put in place the measures needed to solve this crisis for future generations.

Thinking Bigger: This is not just a Central Valley problem. The water crisis affects the state, country, and world. Because of this, it is necessary to invest at the federal level in infrastructure and innovation. We need a comprehensive and revolutionary approach including new and breakthrough technologies to help conserve and recycle our limited water supply and find new sources of water and delivery mechanisms that will set our district, state, and country on a path toward sustainability.

**3. We estimate that 17.2% of the California's workforce is in the food system, including production, processing, distribution, retail, and service industries. According to the KEDC, nearly a quarter (24%) of Kern's private sector jobs are food system-related, yet many of the workers are undervalued and are more likely to experience substandard working conditions. What labor issues in the food chain are you most concerned with, and how would you address them?**

As the daughter of migrant farmworkers, I am very concerned with the working conditions for those at all levels of the food system. We must take steps to improve conditions from the farm to the store, including raising the federal minimum wage and improving access to the resources and opportunities necessary to live happy, healthy lives. The Central Valley provides food to the world, and we must ensure that those doing the hard labor to keep our food system running are valued, treated well, and compensated fairly. Education is also key, which is why it has been a central platform in my campaign. We must improve education at all levels, from K-12 to college and vocational programs, which will help our workforce and boost our economy.

**4. The Kern Food Policy Council is pursuing the creation of a comprehensive, county-wide food system assessment that will help us create new relationships between policy and action, as well as explore the potential for community-based pilot projects directly addressing the physical and economic health and well-being of Kern County residents. In what ways, if any, would you support this effort?**

I strongly believe that we must work hard every day to ensure that what we are doing at the federal, state, and local levels is working. As Chief of Staff to the Chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I not only developed a reputation of bringing people together to solve complex problems, but I also got the opportunity to work on many issues and policies impacting the food system here in the 21<sup>st</sup> District and across the country. In fact, I believe pilot programs are essential to creating the best, most effective policy. They worked when we were writing the Farm Bill and they can work for the 21<sup>st</sup> District.

As a Member of Congress, I look forward to applying my experience and engaging with folks at all levels across the Central Valley to find new ways to improve the lives of my constituents and ensure our policies are working for us. I am impressed by the work the Kern Food Policy Council is doing because it is exactly what the Central Valley needs. I am passionate about this community, and I am tired of watching it get overlooked. The Central Valley is perfectly positioned to be a leader and an example for the nation; we just need to make our voices heard!