

# NIAC Action PAC Guide Book: Endorsements

NIAC Action observes the following best practices in evaluating and endorsing candidates to ensure our process is rigorous, inclusive, and transparent.

## Who We Endorse

The NIAC Action Political Finance Committee, Board of Directors, and staff all play a role in the endorsement process, beginning with NIAC Action staff evaluating which races and candidates merit consideration and providing recommended candidates for the Board to vote on whether to endorse. Considered candidates generally fall under the following categories:

### **State/Local Candidates**

In order to foster a new generation of Iranian-American civic and political leadership, NIAC Action works to identify, encourage, and support Iranian Americans who share our values and are qualified to serve in state and local office.

### **Federal Congressional Candidates**

Electing Iranian Americans and allies to federal office is crucial to achieving the policy goals of our community. NIAC Action staff evaluates which House or Senate incumbents and challengers are worthy of consideration based on where they have stood on issues of importance to our community, whether they have the ability to influence policy or public discourse on those issues, and the size of the Iranian-American population they seek to represent.

### **Community-Recommended Candidates**

Members of the NIAC Action Board and Political Finance Committee are encouraged to recommend or inquire about candidates for endorsement consideration. NIAC Action staff will conduct a vetting process (described below) for all endorsement requests or inquiries to determine if the candidates' positions are consistent with the values of our organization and an endorsement would serve our strategic interests.

## Endorsement Consideration Process

### Candidate Research

For each candidate under consideration, NIAC Action staff conducts research into the candidate's stated values and policy positions, as well as on the state of the race and the campaign's viability:

Candidate platform and bio - NIAC Action evaluates the candidate's official campaign material, social media, and biography to identify their positions and history, as well as any areas that need further clarification.

Voting history - For incumbent members of the House or Senate, NIAC Action's Congressional Scorecard provides an evaluation of votes and other actions taken by the candidate in office. NIAC Action's policy and organizing staff also provide information regarding the accessibility and level of responsiveness these elected officials have provided our staff and membership, and the candidate's specific role on priority legislation and initiatives relevant to NIAC Action.

Press coverage, public opinion, and election data - NIAC Action evaluates local press, candidate profiles, public interviews, blogs and community forums to further gauge the candidates' affinity with our community. NIAC Action utilizes public sources, including FEC data and polling data, as well as our staff network to gauge the state of the respective race and viability of a candidate.

### Outreach & Candidate Questionnaire

If no prior contact with the campaign has occurred, NIAC Action staff will contact the campaign to introduce them to our organization and discuss a potential endorsement.

To be considered for an endorsement, candidates are required to complete a NIAC Action local or Federal candidate questionnaire. The **first section** of each questionnaire collects information on fundraising progress, any polling information, and additional information on the campaign's infrastructure. The **second section** of each questionnaire pertains to the candidates' positions on the priority issues for NIAC Action and our community. In addition to further gauging the candidates' positions and values, the questionnaire serves the important function of putting candidates on the record and providing a mechanism to hold endorsees accountable to their stated positions.

## **Campaign Interview**

Candidates who have submitted completed questionnaires will be invited for an interview with NIAC staff members, Finance Committee members, and NIAC Action board members. Candidate interviews are an opportunity for candidate's to elaborate on their policies and values, answer any questions not listed in the questionnaire, and for board and finance committee members to gain a greater understanding of the candidate and their campaign needs.

## **Endorsement Vote: NIAC Action Board**

Candidates who successfully undergo the endorsement consideration process will be presented with staff recommendation to the NIAC Action Board for a final vote. The informational materials on each candidate is also made available to Finance Committee members to provide any feedback that should be taken into consideration as the Board votes on its endorsement decisions.

## **Candidate Review**

Members of the Board and the Finance Committee are equipped with the following to make an informed decision on candidates:

- Completed questionnaires
- Background information on the political landscape for each candidate
- Number of Iranian American voters and NIAC Action members in the district
- Prior election history
- Prior voting history
- Overall financial health of the campaign
- An assessment of any opponent(s)/challengers
- Strength of the campaign's field efforts
- List of relevant national endorsements
- Policy platforms relevant to NIAC
- A risk assessment if there are any controversial elements and/or weaknesses identified in the campaign.

## **Deciding on Level of PAC Support: Finance Committee**

Once the Board has approved the endorsement of a candidate or a slate of candidates, the endorsement is sent to the Finance Committee with a recommendation for the level of support NIAC Action PAC should provide. The Finance Committee then votes on the final amount of financial support the PAC will provide each respective endorsee.