



**GSSCC Candidate Questionnaire**  
**Montgomery County Council – At-Large**

Name: Hoan Dang  
Email Address: Hoan@VoteDang.com  
Web Address: www.VoteDang.com  
Elected Office You are Seeking: Montgomery County Council, At-Large  
Legislative District: At-Large  
Number of Years Lived in that District: 41 years  
Party Affiliation: Democrat  
Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held:

- Sr. Program Analyst for ITility, LLC creating and managing three (3) multi-million dollar budgets and procurement plan for a federal government client, 2011-present
- Former Corporate Internal Auditor, Regulatory Compliance Analyst, and Sr. Financial Analyst for Lockheed Martin Corporation, 1998-2010
- Board Member of the Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce, 2010-present
- Appointed member of County Executive Ike Leggett's Asian Pacific American Advisory Group, 2002-present
- Board Member and former President of the Association of Vietnamese Americans, 1997- Present
- Board member of the George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy, 2001-Present
- Founding Board Member of the Asian American Political Alliance, 2004-Present
- Appointed member of the Washington Suburban Transit Commission, 2011-present
- Board member of IMPACT Silver Spring, 2001 – 2006
- Co-Founder and former Chair of the Montgomery County Asian American Health Initiative, 2004-2009
- Former Chair of Maryland Democratic Party AAPI Leadership Council from 2014-2017
- Member of the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee (MCDCC) 2010-2014
- Graduate of Leadership Montgomery, Class of 2004

1. GSSCC believes that a thriving business community brings prosperity for all of our citizens by increasing the number of good private sector jobs and expanding the tax base to support necessary public services.
- Please list all the initiatives/legislation you have supported/or would support to foster the growth of existing businesses and encourage new business creation.

**Suggested Responses**

- Supported Council Member Nancy Floreen's proposed 10% cut to the energy fuel tax in 2015.
- Support the continuation of Basic R&D Tax Credit and the Growth R&D Tax Credit beyond the 2020 expiration.
- Fought against Nail Salon Law (House Bill 1167) to protect small business from burdensome regulations by testifying in Annapolis and organizing the Vietnamese American community in Maryland
- Support County Executive Ike Leggett's Excellence in Business Services initiatives to make it easier for business to start, grow and thrive in Montgomery County

- Support County Executive Ike Leggett's Realigning the Workforce System to develop innovative ways to address both community needs and market demands such as additional vocational apprenticeship programs.
  - Support all findings and initiative recommendations listed in the Regulatory Reform subcommittee report published by the County Executives Economic Advisory Group published in June 2017
- Please describe your plan for increasing the tax base – rather than tax rates – in the County.

When considering specific programs or policies that encourage or expand job growth and economic development, it is important to recognize two facts that has led Montgomery County to rank 20th out of 24 local jurisdictions for job growth in the past 15 years:

1) Our county has relied too much on federal spending to prop up our economy, which has led to diminishing resources from the federal level and a slow growing economy right here at home.

2) Our county government is not seen as business friendly and in some cases, perceived as inefficient to businesses located here or considering locating here. I would first work with our county departments to help institute a culture change where we begin to work with our business communities as partners instead as adversaries. This includes changing how our County departments engage with businesses for inquires, permits and regulatory compliance. Montgomery County should be a leader in improving interactions with businesses by making procedures less complex and easier to understand.

I support many of the regulations the County has in place to protect the environment, workers and our communities. But we can also improve upon these regulations to better engage with the business communities. Specifically, I would support decreasing Montgomery County's local energy tax, which has a disproportionate negative impact upon our business community. The energy tax adds \$8,000 to \$15,000 a month that office-building tenants pay. More importantly, the local energy tax harms the exact industries we are trying to attract such as bio-technology, health care, cyber security and information technology that all require higher levels of energy. I support the FY16 resolution to amend the fuel/energy rates to reduce this burden on our business community. We can still reduce our carbon footprint while supporting our business community to expand and employ more people.

- What is your plan for making Montgomery County more attractive to businesses looking to expand or relocate (i.e. increased tax incentives, subsidies, streamlining the development approval process)?

Our county had depended too much on federal spending to prop up our economy and we are now faced with diminishing resources from the federal level, and a slow growing economy right here at home. Our county government is not seen as business friendly and in some cases, perceived as hostile to business that are located here or considering locating here.

I would first work with our county departments to help institute a culture change where we begin to work with our business communities as partners instead as adversaries. This includes changing how our county departments engage with business for inquires, permits and regulatory compliance. Montgomery County should be a leader in improving interactions with businesses by making procedures less complex and easier to understand. I support many of the regulations the county has in place to protect the environment, workers and our communities. But we can also improve upon these regulations to better engage the business communities.

As mentioned above, I would support decreasing Montgomery Counties local energy tax for small businesses which has a disproportionate negative impact upon our business community. The energy tax adds \$8,000 to-\$15,000 a month that office building tenants pay. More important, the local energy tax

harms the exact industries we are trying to attract such as bio-tech, hospitals, cyber security and information technology that all require higher levels of energy. I support the FY 16 resolution to amend the fuel/energy rates to reduce this burden on our small business community. We can still reduce our carbon footprint while supporting our small business community to expand and employ more people.

2. Montgomery County leaders have continued to approve increases in the County's operating budget that require spending at levels exceeding private sector growth. GSSCC believes the County government needs to do a better job of living within its means. This is even more important given the recent announcement of a \$120 million revenue shortfall for the current fiscal year.

- Did you or would you have supported the 2016 property tax increase?

I did not support the 8.7% increase in property taxes in 2016. If I were elected County Council member during this period I would have ensured our County was not in this position to begin with. This problem all started with over seven years of stagnant funding of MCPS following the great recession. However other County departments saw large increases in their budgets over this same time. Our school system is a huge asset and requires continuous investment to keep up with its exponential growth in students and the resources needed to support them. Once the MCPS problems became too large to ignore, the County council was forced to pass a tax increase to keep MCPS financially solvent. To me, this was irresponsible leadership on part of the County Council who were more concerned with political outcomes than they were with responsibly funding an important asset in our county.

- Did you or would you have supported the 2016 recordation tax increase?

I would have supported this increase to provide additional funding for school capital improvements. The population of MCPS is growing exponentially and State school construction funding has not kept up with our unique circumstances. My approach to raising any tax or fee on residents will always include a thorough analysis of the need for additional funds and whether funds can be raised from other sources. In this case, the impact is minor, especially for those residents who are in lower income brackets and need housing the most. Our tax base relies heavily on our public education system. The cost of overcrowded schools or causing students to ride buses long distances to school because new schools have not been constructed locally can stymie new development. These are considerations that must be taken into account when assessing the need to raise revenues and target who should pay for raising new revenue. In this case, the recordation tax increase will predominately affect higher-income home owners only one time and will not, in my opinion, lead to a decrease in sales of homes valued above \$500,000. Exempting the first \$100,000 of the home's value will benefit the County's need to provide housing for those in lower income brackets.

- Did you or would you have supported the eventual phase out of the County's exorbitant energy tax?

I support decreasing Montgomery County's fuel energy tax which has a disproportionate negative impact upon our business community. The fuel energy tax adds \$8,000 to-\$15,000 a month that office building tenants pay. More important, fuel energy tax harms the exact industries we are trying to attract such as bio-tech, hospitals, cyber security and information technology that all require higher levels of energy. I support the FY 16 resolution to amend the fuel/energy rates to reduce this burden on our business community. We can still reduce our carbon footprint while supporting our business community to expand and employ more people.

- Other than raising taxes, what ideas do you have for creating an economy that will meet the growing needs of county residents?

I believe there is great potential to better maximize the current revenues the County receives already. For example, if elected I will lead a thorough review and analysis on how our County procures its goods and services. To ensure fair competition to save taxpayer dollars. In FY17, the Office of Procurement awarded contracts for goods, services, and construction that totaled to \$1,078,204,368. There are several ways to better compete government contracts to ensure the government is getting the best value for its money and use those savings to balance the budget and maintain our current level of services.

- Would you support consolidation of some County Government functions in order to reduce costs? If so, please describe which programs or services you would recommend be consolidated, reduced, or eliminated.

As a Councilmember, I will work with the County Executive's Economic Advisory Group to facilitate recommendations in the 2017 Regulatory Reform Subcommittee Report, "Improving Business Services in Montgomery County." I have identified examples of priority initiatives that could be consolidated or eliminated to improve the interactions between the business community and County. Some examples are:

- Consolidate information for businesses (e.g., permitting, fees, regulations, and other information) across agencies to make access to the process of establishing a business in the County easier to understand. This should especially be helpful for small businesses that do not have dedicated staff with experience navigating these systems.
- Review business-related functions across agencies to identify those that are duplicative and hinder businesses in starting or continuing business in the County. This should correct some of the conflicting information business owners receive as they deal with different agencies.
- Provide a centrally-located business portal that includes all digitized forms.
- Eliminate businesses having to navigate the same process multiple times for submitting permit applications for more than one business.
- Streamline the procurement process for direct purchases from small business vendors that apply to the County to supply goods under \$10,000. I agree with the above-mentioned report that the County should consider raising the direct purchase limit from \$10,000 to \$25,000; this would save time and resources of both the County and small businesses.

3. In recent years, our members have faced an increasing number of federal, state, and expanded local regulations that directly impact their ability to remain viable.

- Did you or would you have supported the additional increase to the Montgomery County minimum wage to \$15 by 2020?

I supported County Executive Ike Leggett's initial veto of the minimum wage bill in January over his concerns that the county would face a competitive disadvantage due to the minimum wage change taking effect in 2020. I do support the recent bill that was passed unanimously by the County Council which sees hourly minimum wage from \$11.50/hour to \$15/hour by 2021 for businesses with 51 or more employees, by 2023 for businesses with 11 to 50 employees, and by 2024 for businesses with fewer than 11 employees.

- Did you or would you have supported mandatory sick leave, even for part-time employees?

I supported mandatory sick leave for full-time employees but not for part-time employees. Employees should not have to choose between their job and taking care of themselves or a loved one who is sick. Sick leave is also a benefit that will help businesses retain employees better for the long-term.

- Do you support an employer's right to hire and schedule its employees according to its individual needs?

I support workers' right to organize and a minimum of three weeks advance scheduling requirements for businesses that employ 51 or more employees.

- Do you support legislation that dictates minimum work hours or scheduling requirements?

I would not support legislation that dictates minimum work hours, but I would support a minimum of three weeks advance scheduling requirements for businesses that employ 51 or more employees.

- What policy ideas do you have to enhance the success of our member job-creators?

I believe the most important policy position to take to support employer success is to implement a "culture change" within our County government to improve interactions between county agencies and the business community. Specifically, I would work to implement recommendations made by the County Executives Economic Advisory Group for Regulatory Reform. These top recommendations are:

- Improve delivery and culture of customer service by being more responsive and solutions-oriented and less antagonistic
- Provide better guidance/information and more online services, including digitizing certain forms.
- Streamline business interactions by making procedures less complex and by improving coordination among departments
- Improve the County's overall regulatory environment by engaging businesses more frequently when making regulations, encourage County officials to act like partners instead of adversaries, and address excessive and overly complex permitting requirements.

4. Prior to considering any legislation, the County Council seeks a Fiscal Impact Statement to determine the impact of that legislation on the County's budget.

- Would you support a law that requires the same kind of analysis to determine the fiscal economic impact on businesses and non-profits, prior to consideration and enactment of any new law or regulation?

Yes

- Would you require that this analysis include interviews and discussions with actual business owners?

Yes

- Why or why not?

It is imperative our County Council seeks holistic impact statements to determine impacts of its legislation. This includes the County budget, the community, and our business and non-profit community. Throughout my campaign for County Council I have spoken with countless small business owners and there seems to be a large disconnect between the county government perception and the perception of the business community on a variety of issues. I would be supportive of closing this gap by requiring the analysis to include interviews and discussion with actual business owners.

I would also look into the possibility of creating a commission that would be in charge of Fiscal Impact process that would include members government, community, business, and non-profit realms to ensure a balanced approach is taken when studying the impact of potential legislation.

5. Many of our small- and medium-sized business members feel that the policies adopted most recently by County government reflect a lack of appreciation for the contributions they make to our community. Please describe your understanding of the difference between the challenges faced by large multinational

companies and small locally owned/operated businesses. Provide three specific examples of how you will support small businesses and ensure opportunities for them to grow and expand.

A critical component of my campaign focus is to improve the environment for small businesses in the County. This focus is highlighted in my JET initiative (J=jobs; E= education; T=transportation). I view JET as components that must be considered in parallel to be successful.

Small businesses, as defined by the County as those with 50 employees or less, have significant challenges not as significant for larger businesses or multinationals. Small businesses generally do not have the staff and/or expertise to navigate the permitting process nor in developing site data in choosing locations for their business. Many small businesses also do not have the monetary resources to withstand start-up costs or periods of economic downturn. In addition, small businesses that attempt to gain vendor contracts often a challenged to produce the business history that is key to gaining those contracts. Although there are other challenges, the primary ones for small business involve competing against a larger pool of businesses that larger corporations; this significantly impacts the ability in hiring experienced staff.

Although I have included more than three examples of how you will support small businesses and ensure opportunities for them to grow and expand, my priority examples are:

- Consolidate County small business information and resources to one office or website so all information needed across County agencies is available without having to go to various agencies or offices. The priority will be to include information on permitting and availability of resources available to assist small businesses in the start-up process.
  - In County development and redevelopment of specific areas, such as Silver Spring, I will work as a Councilmember to make sure small businesses have the opportunity to be included in planning and implementation. One example is the possibility of including a percentage of small, locally-owned businesses that must be included in development or redevelopment, similar to the percentage of low-income housing required for residential development. Currently, large, national corporations have an advantage in securing prime spots in redevelopment, often pushing out locally-owned small businesses.
  - Although the County does offer support for small businesses in many areas, there are less resources available to the locally-owned small businesses with less than 10 employees, which often are the backbone of local communities. As a Councilmember, I will work with County agencies to see how they can better support this segment of our small business community.
6. The Silver Spring Central Business District was envisioned to become a smart-growth live/work/play community. However, in recent years, Silver Spring has evolved into a primarily residential neighborhood (bedroom community), with virtually no commercial office development in the past 10 years. Local retailers and restaurants are feeling the brunt of having fewer and fewer customers during office hours. What will you do to address this and help bring more businesses back to Silver Spring?

I would first encourage repurposing vacant office space in Silver Spring into classrooms in order to reduce school over-crowding. This would also help spur the local economy and create more demand for commercial office space.

7. The Route 29 Corridor in Eastern Montgomery County has suffered from a lack of commercial and other development for many years. Traffic congestion has increased, and most of it is through traffic to the Beltway or downtown D.C. Few, if any new employment opportunities have been created to provide jobs that would take these cars off the road. What are you going to do to ensure economic development that brings new businesses to Silver Spring including downtown and the East County/Rt. 29 Corridor?

The past decade has seen the economic development of transit-oriented commercial and residential development at stops along the Metro system. This “Smart Growth” initiative has been a boon to those areas along the I-270 corridor and the Red Line stops in Silver Spring and Wheaton. The lack of Metro access to the East County/Route 29 corridor is the primary reason for the lack of attention to this area, as it did not fit with the “Smart Growth” concept.

I support the Colesville Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) initiative currently in progress as a critical initiative that will make the East County more available for commercial development. In addition, once the BRT is fully implemented, I will support creating Enterprise Zones in the East County, such as those that stimulated commercial development in Silver Spring. The currently lapsed Enterprise Zone designation for Burtonsville (2013-16), was unsuccessful because of the lack of transportation access, among other variables. I believe increasing public transportation through the BRT will help to some extent to alleviate this problem. The success of Enterprise Zones is not wholly dependent on transportation; other factors such as skills of residents in the zone, sufficient tax credits or other business incentives, and the history of business development in the area will be assessed to design East County zones that will meet the needs of the community and businesses.

8. The Chamber supports a balanced approach to transportation policies that take into account the needs of our member businesses, their employees, their customers, and their vendors. That balance must accommodate those who use public transit, drive on our roads, travel by bicycle and on foot, and need sufficient parking options at their destination.
  - Please describe your approach to finding the right balance of transit, roads, parking, and other transportation options.

We need to reduce traffic congestion and increase transportation options by taking a comprehensive and holistic approach to our transportation infrastructure. We need to invest in all transportation modes including trains, buses, roads, bike lanes, sidewalks and everything in-between, including promoting remote work options. We must also support and invest in transportation models that fit the needs of the individual community. The transportation needs in Clarksburg are not the same as the needs in Bethesda, which is why we must consider all available options to reduce traffic congestion. As County Councilmember I would specifically:

- I would support a cost/benefit study of a county wide ride sharing program with hybrid and electric cars that would provide door to door service from home to the nearest public transit hub.
- I will continue to advocate for some of the less costly options to relieve congestion and expand them if they are viable. This may include reconstruction of bottleneck intersections, as is being
- done on Montrose Road and Georgia Avenue, using the newest technical approaches for stop light timing and redesign, and making pedestrian and bike lanes safer.
- Expanding bike trails with connections to every area of the County can play a small but important part in an overall transportation policy.
- Add reversible toll lanes and bus-rapid transit (BRT) capacity to I-270 from the Beltway into Frederick County.
- Continue to support the development of the Purple Line and push for development of key station stops to increase ridership.
- Adopt a multi-modal transportation approach including innovative bus-rapid transit systems in key corridors, Corridor Cities Transit (CCT) public transit, and other master-planned road, transit, bike, intersection and pedestrian improvements.
- Have planning policies that allow for more high-density “smart growth” development near transit hubs while protecting fringe residential neighborhoods and ensure that new

developments are accompanied by new investments in transportation infrastructure and new schools.

- How will you assure the future success of the Metro?

To ensure the future success of Metro we must find a dedicated funding source. As a former board member of the Washington Suburban Transit Commission, I have experience firsthand the funding crisis that Metro faces. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) reports that over the next 10 years, Metro faces a \$7.4 billion budget gap (\$1.3 billion for operations and maintenance and \$6.2 billion for capital needs like buses, railcars, vehicle parts, and track systems). As a County Council member, I will work diligently to build a consensus for dedicated funding with our partners and push for specific changes within Metro to better utilize funding. Specifically, I would work to do the following:

- Work with my local congressional delegation to ensure that Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) legislation is renewed in Congress and its yearly contribution of \$150 million is increased. PRIIA is set to expire in two years' time and without federal funding, an agreed upon dedicated funding will not be possible.
- Ensure the annual dedicated funding amount is \$500 million. The amount that is needed by Metro to pay for maintained, repair and operation of Metro.
- Work to create "assessment districts" to levy taxes on all property owners within ½ mile of rail and bus stations because they benefit in their property values from the presence of nearby mass transit.
- Reforming the board and replace it with a five-person, temporary reform board to oversee Metro for the next three years.

- What will you do to address the needs and concerns of businesses that expect to be harmed financially during the construction of The Purple Line?

Like the current County Council, I support State Senator Will Smith's proposal to set aside \$1 million from the Neighborhood Business Development Program that will allow businesses from Montgomery and Prince Georges counties to apply for a bridge grant or reimbursement for losses attributed to Purple Line construction. I would also work with small businesses affected to ensure they are kept up to date on construction schedules, road closures and other related activities that would impact their business. After speaking with many of these small business owners along the purple line route, many still do not have a clear idea of when and how the construction will proceed which makes it difficult for these small business owners to plan.

9. What is your vision for the future of greater Silver Spring and Montgomery County over the next 5 years?

My vision for Montgomery County is an equitable, safe and welcoming community, with a booming economy, excellent schools, and a fast transportation system, in which residents are engaged and empowered to improve their lives and the lives of others.

10. If elected, how will you measure your success at the end of your term?

If elected, I would measure my success if I am able to accomplish the following three priorities.

- Create a culture of a "business friendly" Montgomery County.
- Double the amount of technical and vocational programs offered to Montgomery County students.
- Begin the implementation of Universal Pre-K in Montgomery County.