

# Candidates for LA Mayor Hit the Debate Stage

By **Magnolia Lafleur** - March 31, 2022



*The candidates on stage*

*Photo courtesy of Myung J. Chun/Los Angeles Times*

By **MAGNOLIA LAFLEUR** | *Reporter*

The five leading candidates to be the next mayor of Los Angeles shared the stage for a debate at the University of Southern California's Bovard Auditorium on Tuesday, March 22. The debate marked the first time Palisades Village Developer Rick Caruso joined his fellow candidates, including Rep. Karen Bass, Councilmembers Joe Buscaino and Kevin de León, and City Attorney Mike Feuer.

*Los Angeles Times* columnist Erika D. Smith and FOX 11's Elex Michaelson moderated the event.

The debate kicked off with the topic of homelessness. All the candidates promised to make affordable housing available, and eradicate the encampments through the city.

Bass, who was endorsed by Nancy Pelosi, said she did not agree with LAPD arresting individuals in encampments and stated that, "On day one, I would appoint a chief. That person would report directly to me."

Caruso and Buscaino both said they were in support of working with the police force to address homelessness.

None of the candidates suggested a regional on-the-ground task force, like the Pacific Palisades Task Force on Homelessness.

On the topic of crime, none of the candidates supported defunding the police. Michaelson also asked each candidate, “Do you personally feel safe in the streets of Los Angeles?”

All five candidates said they feel safe, but they understand that others don’t, and would move to hire more officers to tackle crime.

“Homicides are up 50% since 2019, vehicle theft is up 50% since 2019, shootings are up almost 50%” Caruso explained. “Here’s the difference between everyone on the stage and me, I inherited a mess. After the Rodney King beating, I was asked to be the president of the Police Commission, I inherited a department and reformed it ... 30% reduction of crime. I’ve done it before, I’ll do it again.”

“In my office, I want to have an office of community safety so that we can prevent the crimes of the future and make the investment in communities that will do that,” Bass said.

“We need to utilize our resources in a much more effective way,” De León responded. “We need to hire [a] mental health specialist to get our LAPD officers off the mental health frontline and back on the line of duty to protect and serve.”

“I propose an increase of 500 officers to 10,000,” Feuer said. “And a series of reforms to make sure that our officers are embedded in communities that are distrustful of police for five-year stints ... We cannot ask LAPD to do it alone, we need to complement that with neighborhood-based violence prevention and intervention-based programs.”

On the topic of affordable housing, all the candidates agreed that they were in support of creating more affordable housing.

Buscaino said he would declare a state of emergency on housing, León proposed a first-time home buyer’s fund, and Bass, Caruso and Feuer promised to cut the approval bureaucracy and red tape that comes with buying a home.

On the topic of COVID-19, Caruso, Bass and Feuer said while they would abide by the advice of public health experts, they would avoid shutdowns. Buscaino said he would end all COVID-19 emergency orders, and León would like to focus on educating the community for future pandemic preparedness.

After the debate, all the candidates—but Caruso and Bass—met with reporters to answer additional questions.

The next debate is slated for May 1 at Cal State LA.

The primary for the 2022 city election is slated to take place on June 7, with the final two contenders of each race meeting in the general election on November 8.