RIDGECREST PAC 2030

Candidate Endorsement Questionnaire — Election 2027

Candidate Name: Lawrence C. Gaceta

Office Sought: Councilman – City of Ridgecrest (4-Year Term)

Campaign Website: Under Construction

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Campaign Treasurer / Contact: None

Submission Date: September 1, 2026



Candidate Background and Qualifications

1. Why are you running for this office?

My family has been proud to make Ridgecrest our home since 2003. At age 57, I am running for Ridgecrest City Council to apply a lifelong commitment to public service, self-sufficiency, and community stewardship toward building a resilient local economy. With decades of experience in defense logistics, leadership, and grassroots community volunteering, I aim to ensure our municipal governance operates with transparency, fiscal discipline, and strategic foresight. My focus is on strengthening our partnership with Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, improving infrastructure, and encouraging sustainable economic growth while preserving the quality of life that defines our desert community.

My ethos encompasses Unity, Service, and Navigation. My background and civic involvement have trained me to look at communities through a specific lens. My **mission** is to bring foundational Hawaiian values to the governance of Ridgecrest. At the heart of this is the principle of stewardship—the absolute belief that every resident in Ridgecrest is a caretaker of this land, its people, and its resources. Safeguarding constitutional liberties is a top priority. My **vision** builds upon existing core beliefs, supporting every resident in achieving generational growth, even while navigating limited scarce resources. My **values** are deeply anchored in family, the philosophy of 'each one, teach one,' and the fundamental belief that all progress—big or small—counts toward our ultimate goals. I am **committed** to excellence, hearing concerns at all levels and creating synergy within leadership to make tough decisions.

2. What personal, professional, civic, or public service experience qualifies you for this position?

I have done this before in a military capacity as Senior Enlisted elected as Vice President of the Chief's mess stationed aboard CVN-70 (USS Nimitz). My qualifications stem from a comprehensive background in military service, defense contracting, higher education, and extensive civic engagement:

• Military & Defense Experience: Retired U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer specializing in Aviation Ordnance, aircraft maintenance, basic electronics, and airframe repairs. Professionally, I work as a Senior Logistics Analyst for air-to-ground guided missiles, with past aircraft maintenance management experience across F-14, F-18, H-

60, AV-8, and MQ-9 Reaper drone programs.
• Education & Continuous Learning: Completed a B.A. in Business Administration and an M.A. in Business Management, and am actively pursuing a Doctorate in Organizational Management and Leadership.
• Civic & Public Service: Certified health and life coach with over 4,000 sessions conducted globally; completed 60 hours of sexual assault and domestic violence crisis training in Kern County with over 1,000 volunteer hours supporting local shelters; regular volunteer with the local Salvation Army Fresh Rescue program; active supporter of veteran initiatives; and regular participant in roadside cleanups and local military museum projects.

3. Describe your decision-making process when balancing constituent concerns, staff recommendations, legal requirements, and fiscal constraints.

I firmly believe people are responsible for their personal actions and inactions. A combination of my leadership and coaching experience will be my rudder. I utilize an analytical 'slice of cake' evaluation framework. This process breaks down complex municipal problems into distinct layers—evaluating operational facts, staff expertise, budgetary impact, and legal compliance (such as the Ralph M. Brown Act and California Public Records Act)—while keeping the complete community context in view. I weigh constituent feedback against fiscal realities, ensuring that decisions are legally sound, transparent, mathematically sustainable, and aligned with long-term stewardship principles before taking action.

4. Are there any potential conflicts of interest, business relationships, employment interests, or property interest that voters should know about?

No. As a defense contractor working as a senior defense logistics analyst, my professional work aligns directly with national defense and supporting China Lake's military mission. I have no property or business holdings that present a conflict of interest with the municipal responsibilities of the Ridgecrest City Council.

Policy Questions for All Candidates

1. How does your philosophy of local government align with Ridgecrest 2030's four goals: stimulate, protect, promote, and defend?

My governance philosophy relies on leadership, stewardship, self-reliance, and resource efficiency:
• Stimulate: Support business growth by streamlining permitting processes and leveraging all local talent.
• Protect: Safeguard our constitutional rights and groundwater, maintain public safety, and invest in roads and municipal infrastructure.
• Promote: Support local downtown revitalization, eco-tourism, dark-sky preservation, and native xeriscaping to highlight our region's natural 'small town' character. Support all mentorship" iron sharpen iron" program creation. Advocate math, reading, and writing tutoring initiatives because everyone counts.
• Defend: Champion a balance of human rights and NAWS China Lake by ensuring off-base development remains compatible with military operations and testing environments.

2. What role should local government or special districts play in expanding travel, leisure, recreation, events, tourism, and amenities that improve quality of life and the visitor economy?

I believe local government should act as a facilitator and partner rather than a bureaucratic hurdle. The City should invest in core public amenities—such as trails, parks, and downtown spaces—while promoting policies that encourage private investment in hospitality and recreation. Initiatives like dark-sky preservation policies and outdoor recreational amenities highlight Ridgecrest's unique geography, attracting visitors while maintaining local quality of life. Support for attracting additional specialized medical staff is also a priority.

3. How would you evaluate whether a proposed fee, rate, tax, contract, project, or program is justified and fiscally responsible?

Every financial proposal must undergo rigorous context-layer analysis. I evaluate whether the expenditure addresses a core essential service, explores all grant or cost-sharing options, accounts for long-term

maintenance costs, and delivers measurable value to taxpayers without creating an unsustainable burden on working families.

4. How would you promote transparency, accountability, public trust, and meaningful resident participation?

Transparency is non-negotiable. I strictly uphold the Ralph M. Brown Act and California Public Records Act guidelines to ensure open government operations. I advocate for accessible public meetings, proactive information sharing, open-door constituent communication, and early public engagement on major policy decisions using an 'each-one-teach-one' approach to keep residents informed.

Office-Specific Questions: Councilman – City of Ridgecrest

1. Given the Council seat's four-year term, what long-term priorities would guide your service on the City Council?

A combination of service, duty to the community, and steadfast leadership serves as my north star. Starting on day one "hitting the deck running" is vital.

- Long-Term Water Reliability & Infrastructure: Prioritizing lasting sustainment while navigating scarce resources, partnering with regional agencies to secure sustainable groundwater practices, and repairing aging city infrastructure.
- NAWS China Lake Advocacy: No military base equates to Ridgecrest surviving on borrowed time. Safeguarding base compatibility, expanding military-community partnerships, and retaining defense talent.
- Economic Diversification & Permitting Modernization: Modernizing municipal permitting to attract local businesses and investments. Scaffold education alignment shifts towards a holistic "The Whole Person" methodology to current real-world and future economics.
- Community Safety & Quality of Life: Supporting first responders, maintaining clean public spaces, enhancing local family resources, and championing general and senior care to promote dignity and prosperity for all generations.

2. How would you evaluate ordinances, development projects, contracts, zoning changes, public-private partnerships, and budget decisions through the lens of job growth and a positive business environment?

Upon receiving reports, critical thinking will be applied by asking follow-up in depth questions. I assess "zero in" whether proposed measures reduce unnecessary regulatory friction or add avoidable costs for business owners. Development proposals should be judged on their long-term economic sustainability, local job creation, compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods, and alignment with base operations. Economic growth should also expand employment and educational opportunities for all working-age residents while bridging skill gaps between seniors and youth.

3. What specific steps would you support to protect and expand key community resources, including water, public safety, infrastructure, housing, parks, and emergency preparedness?

My experience as Vice President of the Chief's Mess aboard CVN-70 (USS Nimitz), a city at sea, will be highly beneficial. Leveraging leadership, strategic planning, and synergy is essential to sustaining our city.

- Water & Environment: Support native xeriscaping policies for city facilities and encourage water conservation technologies.
- Public Safety & Preparedness: Ensure first responders have the necessary tools, equipment, and training while strengthening emergency preparedness plans supported by PACT.
- Infrastructure & Housing: Prioritize road repaving schedules based on traffic volume and support infill housing development that utilizes existing utility infrastructure.

4. How would you support travel and leisure activity while defending and advocating for China Lake's mission, compatible growth, and the base's importance to Ridgecrest?

Understanding the balance of revenue, travel, and leisure initiatives must respect the operational envelope of NAWS China Lake. I support developing recreational assets—such as off-road trail systems, community sports, cultural events, and dark-sky initiatives—that leverage our surroundings without causing light pollution, encroachment, or spectrum interference with base testing operations. Protecting the base's mission is central to securing Ridgecrest's long-term economic stability.

Candidate Certification

I certify that the answers provided in this questionnaire are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that the PAC may rely on these answers when making an endorsement decision. I also agree that the PAC may publish some or all of my responses, accurately quoted or summarized, for voter education purposes.

Candidate Signature: 

Date: SEPT 1, 2026