

## **Ziqiang (Susan) Yuan's letter on The Quincy Sun 5/8/2025**

### **Step Up to Serve**

When I came to the U.S. in 1999 to do postdoctoral research at the University of Vermont, my American landlady proudly showed me how U.S. democracy worked. One evening, she brought me to a city council meeting and explained that the councilors were regular people with everyday jobs, elected by residents, and paid only a small stipend per meeting — they served for the honor of serving their community. That was an eye-opening moment for me. Back in China, no ordinary people knew when or where government meetings took place — let alone were allowed to attend. Officials were appointed. No real elections whatsoever. That city council meeting was my first civic lesson in American democracy.

Who would have imagined that the fresh-off-the-boat young woman sitting in that meeting, observing with wide and bewildered eyes, would one day run for city council herself? Hooray for American democracy!

The thing triggered me to run was last year's pay raise controversy. Ignoring widespread outcry and demands for hearings, the city councilors approved the mayor's 79% raise and their own 50% raise — that would make Quincy mayor's salary higher than the mayors of New York City, Chicago, and Boston. In just 20 days, over 6,000 voters signed the petition to repeal the mayor's raise, including many who had previously supported him. Many from the Asian community, usually quiet about civic affairs, also signed the petition.

I joined the protest and became one of the lead organizers of the repeal campaign, because this raise issue clearly contradicted what American people had taught me about democracy — that elected officials are public servants, not bosses like in the private sector; that people have a say, and that all decisions should follow a democratic process.

While I was collecting signatures and organizing protests, many people encouraged me to run for city council. They appreciated my willingness and courage to stand up and speak for the people — even when it meant standing up against those in power.

I hope my run will inspire more people to step up — to run, vote, and engage in civic life. Democracy only works when people participate. To my fellow immigrants: American people have shown us the beauty of democracy, and we've been fortunate to live in this country. Now it's our turn to give back — to stand up and serve.

Ziqiang (Susan) Yuan

Candidate for Councilor-at-Large

[yuanforquincy.com](http://yuanforquincy.com)