

LIBERTY CITY LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER DEMOCRATIC CLUB

2010 STATEWIDE CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name **Dan Onorato** Office Sought **Governor** Date **March 16, 2010**

COMMUNITY

1. Who advises you on LGBT issues?

There are many members of the LGBT community whose advice I seek, including Malcolm Lazin, Abbe Fletman, Gary Van Horn and Stephen Glassman.

2. Do you employ any openly LGBT employees on your staff or campaign staff?

Yes, I employ openly LGBT employees at high levels of my staff.

CIVIL RIGHTS

3. Do you support the rights of LGBT people to the following:

Marriage?

Civil Unions?

Domestic Partnership?

Second-parent adoption?

Protection from workplace discrimination?

I support civil unions and domestic partnerships, both of which provide same-sex couples with essential rights and responsibilities. As Allegheny County Executive, I championed legislation that provides protection against workplace (and other) discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity – and as Governor, I will do the same at the state level.

4 Do you support PA-HB-300 which would amend the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act to prohibit discrimination of individuals in employment, housing and public accommodation based on their sexual orientation or gender identity or gender expression? Have you signed on as a co-sponsor.

I support statewide anti-discrimination legislation and, as described above, I successfully pushed for similar legislation for Allegheny County.

5. What is your position and voting record on a woman's right to choose?

I support Pennsylvania's current law and will oppose and veto any changes to it. In addition, I support funding for family planning and comprehensive sex education.

HEALTH CARE

6. What public health education programs would you advocate to foster a more complete understanding of the unique health needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people?

I am committed to addressing health disparities wherever they exist, including the specific health needs of LGBT people.

7. How would you act to assure proper sensitivity training and education for public health professionals, administration and staff as related to treatment of members of the LGBT community?

One of the reasons that members of the LGBT community suffer from diminished health outcomes is a lack of understanding and sensitivity. As Governor, I would listen to the needs and suggestions of the LGBT community and bring together the LGBT community and health care professionals to find solutions, including comprehensive training.

8. Would you support a state healthcare plan that offers sex reassignment surgery and other gender identity health coverage to state employees?

I am not prepared to endorse this policy change. I do support maintaining domestic partner health coverage for state employees.

9. Would you support funding for needle exchange programs to fight HIV/AIDS?

I believe in a comprehensive approach that includes education, counseling and treatment to help Pennsylvanians who face drug addiction. Now that the federal government has lifted its ban on the use of federal funds for exchange programs, I believe state funding should be used for other programs in education, counseling and treatment.

10. Would you support condom distribution in Pennsylvania's jails, detention centers, correctional facilities or prisons?

No; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that HIV education, testing and counseling be made available to at-risk populations.

VIOLENCE AND POLICING

11. What procedure will you enact to ensure that transgender people are treated with safety and dignity in the prison system? For example not housing male to female transsexuals with male prisoners? A lawsuit was brought by a teenage transsexual girl at the Youth Study Center who was harassed and assaulted. What actions will you take to protect LGBT children in the legal, foster care and group home situations?

I am a strong believer in the importance of having an effective child welfare system in order to give children and teenagers the best possible shot at a successful adulthood, and that includes addressing the unique challenges of LGBT youth.

12. Where do you stand regarding HB 745 that was passed last year and would amend Title 18 Ethnic Intimidations Act to define crimes against individuals based on "actual or perceived ancestry, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity as ethnic intimidation, or hate crimes. Introducing and passing the bill in the state Senate would add the above listed groups as protected classes of Pennsylvanians and would allow the Commonwealth to prosecute hate crimes that Federal government may not have the resources to prosecute.

I will call on the General Assembly to add sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, ancestry and physical and mental disability to Pennsylvania's hate crimes law. The Legislature has already passed this statute once, but it was thrown out by the courts due to the process the General Assembly used to enact it.

13. What will you do to make domestic violence shelter services to members of the LGBT community?

I support adequate resources for local domestic violence and rape crisis centers, which have been inadequately funded in the past. These resources must be coupled with effective outreach and education.

FAMILIES AND YOUTH

14. LGBT students experience more harassment and violence at school than straight students. LBGT students are more likely to cut school or drop out because they are afraid for their safety. How would you propose to address the violence against LGBT youth?

Schools must be safe places to learn and for children to socially and emotionally develop, and LGBT students in particular are too often subject to bullying in our society. I am a strong supporter of Pennsylvania's anti-bullying law, and as Governor, I will ensure that the Department of Education provides technical assistance and enforcement of the state law in support of effective school policies and programs to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying.

15. How would you devise and implement a statewide plan for the child welfare system to address the particular issues and needs of the youth and their foster families?

As I described above, I am committed to running an effective statewide child welfare system – as Allegheny County has been recognized for doing under my leadership. One of the areas where we have achieved the greatest success is in serving children in foster care.

16. Do you support reality and community-based school sex education, HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs that are an alternative to abstinence only education? If yes, would it include the following? (Please check all that apply).

- A) Birth Control
- B) Safer Sex education
- C) Condom distribution
- D) Different sexual orientations
- E) Gender identity

I support comprehensive sex education, which includes HIV/AIDS education and prevention.

17. Would you create establishing programs and services to address the unique needs of LGBT Senior Citizens? If so, what type of services do you envision, and how would you propose to fund and implement these services?

A civil union or domestic partnership law would ensure that LGBT seniors have confidence that their health care, legal and other important decisions would be made in alignment with their wishes.

18. Would you work to provide state financial support organizations serving youth like community centers such as the Attic?

Organizations that work with LGBT youth are important, and I would seek ways to support their efforts once the state emerges from the current budget crisis.

LOCAL CONCERNS

19. How would you support the continued and/or expanded funding and support of LGBT community events, such as the various pride events sponsored by organizations in the Greater Philadelphia area?

As Governor, I would welcome the invitation to participate in LGBT community events. As noted above, funding would depend on the state's emergence from its budget crisis.

20. How will you work to offer programs in homeless shelters to address the unique needs of the LGBT community?

Members of the LGBT community – and especially LGBT youth – are disproportionately likely to be homeless, and it is important to address their unique needs in order to help members of the LGBT community transition to stable housing. Service providers should be offered training in sensitivity and best practices, among other strategies.

21. What is your opinion on the City of Philadelphia's actions regarding the Boy Scouts of America Cradle of Liberty Council's occupancy of city-owned property, and would you support similar actions towards other groups or organizations determined to be in violation of the Fair Practices Ordinance?

I hope that the city and the Boy Scouts can ultimately reach an agreement that enables the Boy Scouts to remain in their long-time home while respecting the city's ordinance.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

22. Would you support a statewide bill that requires companies that obtain state contracts to offer domestic partnership benefits to their employees?

The first step should be to ensure that companies that receive state contracts offer health care to their employees, and I would encourage companies to also include domestic partners in their health plans.

23. Would you support a requirement that all government offices have specific recruitment plans for members of the LGBT community?

All state agencies must be non-discriminatory in their hiring process and should implement inclusive workplace practices. I would also establish the expectation that state agencies will recruit talented candidates at a diverse set of job fairs and other networking opportunities.

24. How would you work to assure that LGBT owned and operated businesses receive equal opportunities in business development, lending practices or government grants for economic revitalization?

As I describe in my Plan for Economic Development, we need to improve accountability and transparency in Pennsylvania's economic development programs. One of my strategies for achieving this goal is to establish an ombudsperson in the Department of Community & Economic Development to link women- and minority-owned businesses (including LGBT-owned businesses) to the state's economic development programs and funding sources.