

**Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC
2012 Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates**

***Responses from Tom Brown
DC Council Candidate for Ward 7***

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

1. In the event of congressional action leading to a ballot initiative in the District that would take away the civil marriage rights now enjoyed by same sex couples, will you oppose the initiative and will you publicly defend civil marriage equality.

Yes. This is a civil rights issue. As Dr. King taught, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." When DC passed its marriage equality law, DC made marriage equality a civil right, and I will defend DC's law.

2. Will you support legislation giving the directors of the Office of GLBT Affairs and the Office of African Affairs the authority to issue competitive grants as other minority constituent Offices have, that will be open to organizations serving the populations within the offices' purview?

Yes. The DC Government should encourage a wide variety of organizations to plan and propose ways to meet the needs of GLBT and OAA constituents. DC should open grant competitions to as many of these organizations as possible. In these competitions, DC should place great weight on an organization's record of serving relevant constituencies.

3. Will you defend the District's hard-won and life-saving medical marijuana program against attacks or further restrictions, whether from Congress, federal officials or D.C. officials?

Yes. For the program to succeed, DC must carefully plan the location of distribution and growing facilities. Program success also depends on the careful monitoring of these facilities.

4. Describe steps you will support to improve performance at the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration (HAHSTA), including HIV prevention, HIV/AIDS surveillance, and mental health services.

As a parent, a minister, a youth leader and a community leader, I first will advocate abstinence (for youth) and monogamous relationships (for adults). For those who do engage in sex, I will encourage men and women to protect themselves and their partners.



As a Council member, I will support legislation that provides for testing for communicable diseases; and to set a good example, I will take the tests myself and do so publicly.

In addition, I will promote public education, in partnership with such organizations and campaigns as The Rubber Revolution, DC's Doin It (The Female Condom) and Mental Health America.

PUBLIC SAFETY

5. Will you press for increased oversight of the Metropolitan Police Department's gathering and analysis of crime statistics to ensure greater comprehensiveness and objectivity, including transgender-related hate crime data?

Yes. We must fight hate crimes, no matter who the victim is. In addition, since bullying can lead the way to hate crimes, I would encourage educational programs and school policies aimed to prevent bullying.

6. Will you support funding for MPD to hire or contract qualified trainers to provide LGBT-inclusive cultural competency training including the handling of intimate partner violence?

Yes. In addition, I will encourage the Metropolitan Police Department to develop and conduct the training along with representatives from such organizations as The DC Center for the LGBT Community and the DC Coalition against Domestic Violence.

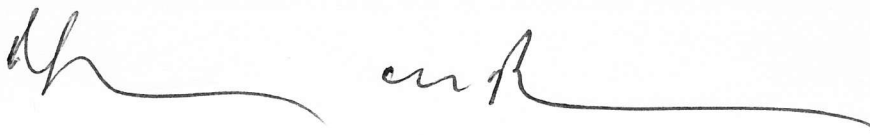
7. Will you oppose legislation to make permanent the so-called Prostitution Free Zones (PFZs), which facilitate anti-transgender profiling, and will you vote to repeal the current PFZ law?

Yes and yes.

Prostitution is a societal evil that threatens public health and safety, and that exploits virtually all who engage in it.

Often, drug and alcohol addiction, extreme poverty and mental health challenges drive people to prostitution. Consequently, to effectively deal with prostitution, DC must address the underlying problems of addiction, poverty and mental health needs.

Addressing these problems should be a particularly high priority in areas where prostitution is prevalent, for example, along some parts of Eastern Avenue in Ward 7.



Without addressing addiction, poverty and mental health issues, law enforcement will not be effective. This is particularly true for Prostitution Free Zones, which have more value as a political gimmick than as a law enforcement strategy.

Furthermore, because I am concerned about protecting civil rights, laws that give too much discretion to the police concern me.

HUMAN RIGHTS

8. Do you agree that the Director of the Office of Human Rights should be required to have professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement?

Yes. Furthermore, the Director should have the confidence of DC's human rights advocates.

YOUTH AND SENIORS

9. Will you oppose both federal and local voucher programs that fund students in religious schools that are beyond the protections of the D.C. Human Rights Act?

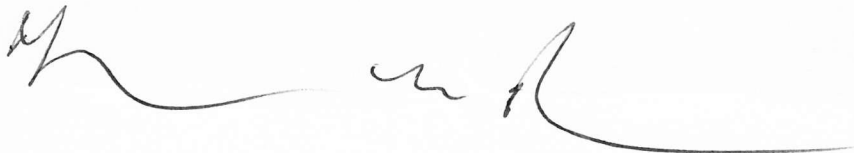
Yes. A school that discriminates against groups protected in the Human Rights Act should not be eligible for government funding.

10. Will you oppose the use of either federal or District taxpayer funds to promote "abstinence only until marriage" sex education that undermines safer-sex programs by excluding more comprehensive information?

Yes. We must approach sex education comprehensively. First, in our homes, places of worship and even in our schools, we should explain the moral imperative and the practical advantages of abstinence before marriage. However, we also must be realistic and provide young people with a wide range of information about why and how they should protect themselves.

11. Will you support legislation to ensure equal Medicaid spousal impoverishment protections for same-sex partners, including providing local funding to pay for benefits that are denied at the federal level due to the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act?

The federal government should not discriminate in its Medicaid policies. If DC or a state legalizes same sex marriage, then Medicaid should not discriminate against these couples.



However, DC's local dollars are so scarce that we cannot afford to counter the federal decision.

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESS

12. Do you support the rights of adults in the District to choose adult-oriented entertainment for themselves, and the right of appropriately zoned businesses to provide it, without excluding any ward?

Yes.

Residential, family-oriented communities make up virtually all of Ward 7. I would not want to see adult-oriented entertainment in our Ward. Furthermore, I would assist Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners and other community leaders in efforts to keep adult-oriented entertainment away from our children and out of our residential neighborhoods.

However, I understand that our opposition must take place in the framework of the zoning process, and I realize that we must respect the rights to current and prospective business operators in that process.

13. Will you support legislation to curb abuses involving endless series of baseless complaints to harass or extort bars and restaurants?

Yes.

I would approach this issue with the same collaborative spirit I used in building a Workforce Development Council. To foster the goal of workforce development, I helped found and lead an organization that included people from

*large and small businesses,
labor unions,
service providers,
government agencies and
community organizations.*

To address disputes concerning bars and restaurants, I would follow the same collaborative process: bringing together

*business owners and operators,
restaurant/bar employees and the unions that represent them,
customers,*



neighbors in the communities where the bars/restaurants operate, and officials from the agencies that regulate and support the bars and restaurants.

Only after working hard to bring about collaboration, would I resort legislation.

14. What will you do to provide alternatives to incarceration for marginalized and at-risk populations like homeless youth and transgender people who resort to prostitution for survival?

In my response to Question 7, I have already addressed the importance of helping prostitutes overcome addiction, poverty and mental health challenges.

I add a specific concern for teenagers whose families have turned them out, because of the teen's sexual orientation. I would try to keep families together, and I would make sure that these teens had access to the services they need.

I value SMYAL's contributions in this area, and I would continue to support them and others who provide similar services.

Actions That Illustrate My Record on Behalf of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender people:

Early in my life, I faced and overcame the dual challenges of homelessness and severe emotional trauma. This experience, coupled with my religious convictions and my respect for humankind, has led to a life of human service, service for all people.

I served as assistant director of Harris House, a community of 150 people at the margins of society – many with mental health challenges.

I taught students of every sexual orientation at Anacostia High School and at the Kipp School on Benning Road.

The non-profit that I now lead provides counseling, training and job placement to a wide range of individuals including those returning from prison and jail, and those trying to get off public assistance, and those trying to lead productive and law abiding lives.

GLAA's constituents are among the people I have served and will continue to serve.

