

GLAA QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Robert White At Large 2016
808 Madison Street NW, Washington, DC 20011
Khalid Pitts, Treasurer

Robert White, 202-306-2876
Sean Rankin (GC), 202-821-5304

HOME RULE

1. Will you oppose congressionally imposed school vouchers, which have been shown not to improve students' academic achievement, and which often go to schools that operate outside the non-discrimination provisions of the D.C. Human Rights Act?

RW: YES – I oppose congressionally imposed school vouchers. D.C. Education policy should be left to the D.C. Government and the stakeholders involved in the education of our children, and public funds must trigger adherence to the DC Human Rights Act.

HEALTH

2. Will you press the Dept. of Health to complete and issue the long-delayed LGBT Health Report, which is supposed to be issued annually?

RW: Yes, I will. As a Councilmember, I will be an oversight hawk and commit to be aggressive in addressing it when I see that government agencies fall short of their required obligations. The last report was issued six years ago, in 2010, despite efforts from advocates to have a new one completed and released. There are significant health disparities, including mental health, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS, within the LGBT community, which we cannot adequately address without up-to-date data. I will be an advocate for the LGBT community on this issue and will work with the community to see that the Administration addresses this issue.

3. Will you support budgets that target funds to address LGBT health disparities, including [those] in mental health and substance abuse treatment, and mandate data collection on this population across all programs.

RW: Yes, as I mentioned above, there are significant health disparities within the LGBT community. We have an obligation to address and prevent this, so I will support budgets that meet the needs of the LGBT community. I also support the collection of data except where it may run afoul of health privacy concerns. Data collection is extremely necessary in order to monitor the impacts of various programs and make necessary funding adjustments.

4. Will you support separating Emergency Medical Services from the Fire Department?

RW: The resignation of FEMS Medical Director Juliette Saussy shows that we have to separate the Fire and EMS services. With many of our Firefighters not interested in providing EMS services, we need emergency personnel who are dedicated to and good at providing medical services. It is also important that all emergency responders receive cultural competency training to better equip them to deal with psychiatric and substance abuse emergencies and intimate partner violence.

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JUDICIARY

5. Will you support and press for passage of Bill 21-38, the Death with Dignity Act?

RW: Yes, I support Bill 21-38. There are many others who have blazed this path for us and who certainly are more eloquent than I am. Therefore, I will address it simply: I believe that each person should have the opportunity to address the conditions of his or her life and work to improve them as well as rationally and emotionally address how he or she may choose to die. I am not content to see people suffering, particularly in their dying days. Our compassion for people's pain and dignity should compel us to support this bill.

6. Will you press the District to provide "Jobs not Jails" by developing alternatives to incarceration for marginalized citizens who resort to sex work for survival?

RW: Yes. There is an overwhelming number of LGBT sex workers because of discrimination and abandonment from families, job discrimination, housing discrimination, social discrimination, and resulting mental health and substance abuse issues. I believe that it is incumbent upon those who would lead and serve to address the real conditions and circumstances of our citizens, and people generally, at the margins. Where we find desperation, our system should support those in need, not cause greater suffering and do greater long-term harm. Therefore, I will support and work with prosecuting agencies on strong alternatives to incarceration while I also work on the Council to (pass legislation that will make it unnecessary for people to resort to what may be considered criminal activity to survive. I will introduce and support legislation to give people alternatives that will help them avoid incarceration. I believe in compassion and providing opportunity and will act in accordance with this core belief.

I am particularly focused on employment discrimination against transgender men and woman and will work on the Council to strengthen and enforce our laws in order to stem this problem.

7. Will you support and press for the passage of a reintroduced Bill 20-63, the Police Monitoring Enhancement Amendment Act, to give the Office of Police Complaints unfettered access to information and supporting documentation of the covered law enforcement agencies?

RW: Yes, I will support a reintroduction of the bill. I believe that everyone is subject to the law and oversight. The Office of Police Complaints (OPC) performs a critical mission that protects residents and enhances confidence in our Police force and government. However, OPC can only perform its function if it has unfettered access to all necessary information.

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YOUTH AND SENIORS

8. Will you support improved services and treatment for LGBT homeless youth and seniors, including transitional housing?

RW: Yes, I support this. Further, in my policy statement of LGBTQ Equality, released at my campaign LGBTQ kick-off on Monday, April 25th, I specifically call for more local funds for LGBTQ youth and support the work of Casa Ruby, the Wanda Alston House, SMYAL, and others. I also noted the work being done by Mary's House for Older Adults, which I have supported financially in the past, and my support for more housing for LGBTQ seniors. *My policy paper is attached.*

As a result of significant discrimination and mistreatment by family members, we have far too many homeless LGBT youth, but not enough beds. And, sadly, many of our elder LGBT residents do not have kids or other family members to take care of them in their old age, so they are being forced back into the closet, particularly as a result of housing discrimination and even discrimination from caretakers. This is unjust. Therefore, I will work hard to provide sufficient services and treatment across the board for LGBT homeless youth and seniors.

I will ensure that DC government funds the Housing Production Trust Fund, Permanent Supportive Housing, and the Rent Supplement programs at levels sufficient for the number of people in need and the high cost of housing in the District.

I have always tried to personally support non-governmental programs that provide services to the LGBT community. I have supported organizations such as Mary's House for Older Adults, Al Sura, Black Gifted & Whole, and Team Rahim through financial donations. I also am an active member of the Stein Democratic Club. I also attend many Pride events each year, attend annually the Transgender Day of Remembrance service in DC, and Al Sura's annual events.

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES

9. Will you defend the right of adults in the District to choose adult-oriented entertainment for themselves, and the right of appropriately licensed and zoned businesses to provide it?

RW: YES I believe that responsible adults, regardless of orientation, have the right to adult entertainment, I believe that it should be appropriately regulated and licensed accordingly. It must meet the standard regulations for all businesses as well as meeting the specific standards for this particular business segment. I respect adults' privacy and their personal forms of self-expression including venues appropriate for such expression. Live, let live, and do no harm. And pay your business taxes on time.

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I have always worked to defend the rights of and protect the LGBT community. When I was Legislative Council to Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, I worked directly with her, other members of Congress, Congressional committee staff, and with advocates to develop strategies to protect DC's marriage equality bill from being over-turned by Republicans. We were successful! And when I served as Director of Community Outreach for Attorney General Karl Racine, I worked to involve the agency in public education on same-sex partner violence. I will continue to do so on the Council.