

Gertrude Stein Democratic Club Candidate Statement 2011

Bryan Weaver Candidate for At-Large City Council

Human Rights

As a councilmember I will continue to fight — as I did as an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner — to ensure that LGBT couples have the right to marry and enjoy all the benefits that come with those rights. I believe any initiative to limit LGBT marriage is a clear violation of the Human Rights Act of the District of Columbia, and as elected officials we must be vigilant in protecting rights; I cannot support any ballot initiative depriving a protected minority of their rights. The larger point of a ballot initiative is to exclude our LGBT brothers and sisters from all of the rights, protections and responsibilities that come with a legal, civil marriage. This discrimination is wrong. We cannot keep turning our backs on gay and lesbian Americans.

The District of Columbia at all levels of government has a major problem with transparency, patronage and corruption. As an ANC Commissioner I saw the difficulty of administering small grants programs without adequate oversight resources. Until the District makes a concerted effort to completely revamp its grant-making programs, priorities and non-competitive earmarks for every agency, no new grant-making authority should be bestowed upon any District department/agency. The LGBT office staff would be better used to identify resources for the 501C3 organizations within existing city programs and/or providing councilmembers reports on the adequacy of support services going to the community. However, while at this time I am not supportive of grant-making authority, as a legislator, I will introduce needed measures to the budget to ensure that critical services that have proven effective, are fully funded. D.C. will not be a true beacon of equality if we are not taking care of those communities in need.

As a legislator, I will speak out about the need to increase education and sensitivity training programs at all levels of government and within the private sector, as appropriate, to ensure an aggressive effort to hire transgendered workers. Quality workers are not defined by their gender and employers should in no way judge a person's ability to do a good job based on their gender identity. Education and sensitivity training should not be limited to the hiring process and I would support mandatory sensitivity training for government workplaces that employ transgender workers.

I served as a regional spokesperson for the Democratic National Committee (DNC). As you know, the DNC has very strong LGBT programs and initiatives for which I was a spokesperson on many occasions. I also served as spokesperson for an openly gay candidate running for Congress in San Diego (Christine Kehoe).

While no staff or volunteers have been asked to identify their race, ethnicity or sexual orientation, yes my campaign does have self-identified LGBT members. Several of my campaign volunteers/members of my inner circle are prominent LGBT leaders in national political circles.

My spokesperson is Latina, my campaign committee chair is African-American, my treasurer is a woman and I am in the process of hiring additional staff from a very diverse pool of candidates.

Public Safety

Since its inception in 2000, the GLLU has offered an invaluable service to members of the LGBT community and MPD. Because D.C. has such a diverse and growing LGBT community, the services of GLLU are becoming that much more important. The GLLU provides the necessary shield both to stop would-be attackers as well as rapid response to victims of crime. The GLLU is a huge asset to MPD and should be expanded as necessary, including the addition of a full-time sergeant.

However, while the importance and continued support of the GLLU is evident, that does not mean that all members of the Metropolitan Police Department as well as D.C. Fire and EMS should not receive the proper training necessary to deal with any and all situations — including LGBT issues. Every single first responder should be fully trained and educated on how to understand, deal with and accept all residents of the District, including members of the LGBT community.

In addition to a strong public education campaign (public service announcements, speeches by councilmembers and the Mayor, public panels, etc.), one way for the District to aggressively respond to the increased incidents of hate crimes is urgently pursue and publicly report each incident of a hate crime. Far too often more effective action isn't taken because the circumstances of an event are shrouded in secrecy. While each victim most definitely deserves their privacy, that does not limit MPD from releasing information about each incident as well as compiling a weekly/monthly report of alleged hate crimes for distribution to affected parties including the council. MPD also needs to consider the possibility that more crimes are actually hate crimes and not random assaults. As an ANC Commissioner, I personally witnessed fights on 18th Street in Adams Morgan, which are classified as simple assaults (a fist fight between two people on the street) where fists are thrown as much as the term "faggot". These are not simple assaults; these are hate crimes, pure and simple.

I am in favor of all race, ethnicity and gender being the expression of personal, individual identities. This is the current policy of the census on race and ethnicity, and is eminently practicable in gender identification. I would work with the Department of Corrections for an administrative rules change and with the LGBT community to examine any necessary legislative amendment.

Education and Youth

As the father of two small children, I whole heartedly support the discussion of sexual orientation in learning about sex education in public and charter schools. The more public and open we can be with our children about these issues the better.

Discrimination comes from ignorance, misunderstandings and a lack of personal knowledge of the very people that are being discriminated against. In addition to sexual orientation education

for our students, our teachers and administrators need to be trained to understand, know what to be concerned about and how to work with LGBT students. The school years are often a particularly sensitive time because young people are just learning about or perhaps struggling with their gender identity or sexual orientation. Teachers need targeted training to have the capacity to understand and ultimately help potentially vulnerable students.

I will start by working with each office hand-in-hand to ensure that they are instituting the appropriate measure to instill a safe and supportive environment for all LGBT students. These include all the necessary training programs for teachers and faculty, as well as ensuring supervised and well-lead student discussions and learning about the subject to take away all the mystery and 'hype' which can lead to an abusive learning environment for LGBT students

I will confer with the LGBT community leaders and with their help will conduct an audit of afterschool services to see what is being offered, how effective it has been and what needs to be augmented, replaced, or newly implemented to ensure the needs of LGBT youth are being met properly, safely and effectively.

Health/HIV/AIDS

The current policy of issuing annual reports that repeat the lines that DC is comparable to nations in West Africa is not working. Council oversight has been lacking, as have non-federal funds. The rates in DC are peculiar to our population, our policies and our interest in the issue. We cannot wait for federal largesse (largely from NIH) to solve it on our behalf.

I advocate an "all departments" approach to this issue—police, housing, transport, consumer and regulatory affairs, all departments—must be brought to bear on this issue. We must reduce the wait for housing, increase the access to services and provide consistent monetary support from D.C. tax dollars for the community groups serving the LGBT community.

Budget

After several years of a budget surplus, the District is now facing a multi-million dollar spending gap. There are several ways to address this spending gap:

- a) **Fee collection** — The District of Columbia is owed millions of dollars in outstanding fees and we must collect them. We don't need new fees, but we do need to collect on the ones that we are currently owed including millions of dollars in outstanding parking tickets.
- b) **Taxes** — We need to completely redo our tax code. I have proposed a progressive tax structure that would create six tax brackets for District of Columbia residents, instead of our current system which taxes someone making \$40,000 the same as someone making \$125,000. We also need to work to ensure that corporate taxes for large multi-million dollar national corporations are paid here in D.C.
- c) **Cuts** — Making cuts to city services is never easy, but the District may not be able to close its budget gap without making some very difficult decisions. However none of

those decisions should be made without the direct participation of those affected. As a legislator, I would be sure to meet with any organization/affected group before proposing a budget cut that affects them. I may not be able to prevent that budget cut from happening, but I would work hard to make sure their voices are heard before decisions are made.

- d) **Pay cut**—Although it's only a small slice of the budget deficit, I propose that while the city's budget is in deficit, that each councilmember should take a \$25,000 per year pay cut. The money generated — approximately \$325, 000 per year — would go directly into the city's safety net.

Closing

In closing, I have spent my entire adult life fighting against discrimination based on culture, race and color — that experience makes it is impossible for me not to stand up against discrimination based on sexual orientation. We have been down this road before in this country.

Separate is not equal. The rights to liberty and happiness belong to each of us and on the same terms, without regard to either skin color or sexual orientation. Our rights as Americans do not depend on the approval of others. Our rights depend on us being Americans.

We're elected not to follow but to lead. We're elected to cast what might sometimes be a difficult, challenging, and politically inexpedient vote. We're elected to represent our constituents when they're right, and to vote our consciences regardless of whether our constituents are right. And our conscience should be telling us to stand up for civil rights regardless of how unpopular it may appear.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "A time comes when silence is betrayal." Such a time is now.