

Gertrude Stein Democratic Club 2012 Questionnaire

Name: Muriel Bowser, Democrat Ward 4

Date: February 7, 2012

Human Rights

1. As a member of the Council, how will you work to increase the capacity of LGBT social service organizations? Would you support increased funding or assist in securing additional funding for LGBT social service organizations?

I am always open to reviewing the resource needs of social service organizations, especially those that serve vulnerable populations. I have consistently supported expanded HIV programs and other health and housing needs of the LGBT community. I am an advocate for removing the waste, inefficiency and overlap in the District budget that oftentimes causes unnecessary cuts in social services. As Chair of the Government Operations Committee I will ensure that my agencies operate consistent with my vision so that the savings can be passed on to our social service providers. I will be a pro-active advocate for ensuring that LGBT organizations receive their fair share.

2. As a legislator, what can and/or will you do to advocate for increased education, job training, and hiring of transgender people? Would you actively support Project Empowerment's efforts to provide options for the Transgender community?

Unfortunately, the transgender community is often left out of receiving city services. This oftentimes results in this vulnerable population turning to commercial sex work. As a member of the judiciary committee, I will ensure that the non-discrimination laws are applied for all populations. The DC Office of LGBT Affairs Project Empowerment is a critical step to engaging the transgender community and providing work-ready skills that lead to job placement. Not only will I advocate for its continued support and expansion but I will use my position as board member for WMATA (metro) to connect the Office of LGBT affairs to the WMATA human resources department so that they are aware of this program.

3. What would you do to eliminate employment discrimination and to insure that the Transgender community obtains fair representation in all District government agencies? Would you actively support legislation and or programs designed for these purposes?

Yes I would support the legislation and vote affirmatively when it comes before the judiciary committee and the whole Council. Employment discrimination has no role in the District. We must take special care to protect vulnerable populations. I will ensure that the many agencies under my immediate oversight on the Government Operations Committee are aware and committed to fair representation.

4. If there is any effort to undo the marriage rights secured for DC's LGBT Community, what will you do to actively defend and help ensure that the marriage rights secured for DC's LGBT Community remain intact?

I have always been a supporter of LGBT marriage equality. I voted for it despite the concerns of some of my Ward constituents and have supported the ongoing effort to legislate the rights, privileges and responsibilities that accrue to married couples. Firstly I am a passionate advocate for DC's ability to make its own decisions without interference from the federal government. I am proud to have been arrested along with Jeffrey Richardson, former Stein Club president to ensure that citizens of DC manage its own affairs. I will march, advocate and get arrested to ensure that marriage equality remains the law in DC.

5. Would you advocate that the unique needs of GLBT seniors are included in all D.C. planning documents, including plans for senior-support services, recreation, housing and medical services, including long-term care?

Ward 4 has the largest concentrations of senior residents. I have been proactive supporters of senior services-ensuring more affordable senior housing and support services. I support the inclusion of LGBT seniors as the city plans its senior social services programming.

6. Would you openly advocate that LGBT cultural sensitivity training is mandated and for all senior service providers (including long term care facilities), plus nursing assistive personnel?

Yes

7. The DC Center, (which houses and assists numerous programs critical to the health and well being of the DC LGBT community) is in search for a permanent home. As a Council member, would you dedicate a staff member to work with the DC Center to identify a permanent home?

I am committed to the DC Center and its work. I am especially proud of the services that it offers to raise awareness and to provide support to those addicted to Crystal Meth. My staff will be available to consult with the DC Center leadership to connect them to the appropriate city agencies and to advocate for a solution.

8. Would you be supportive of the Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs having grant making authority and an increased budget to provide grants in the District providing services to the LGBT community?

Yes, as long as the office can demonstrate that this option is the most efficient way of getting resources to community partners.

9. In the past year, what LGBT related events or activities did you participate in? Are you currently a member of any LGBT organizations or causes?

I have been a member of the Gertrude Stein organization for many years and support the work of GLAA. I have been a consistent participant in Black Pride and Capitol Pride.

Public Safety

10. Do you think there should be a comprehensive strategic plan to reduce hate crimes and violence in the LGBT community and if so, what elements should be in that plan?

Yes--I think that there should be a comprehensive plan. In general the plan should:

- Identify the city agencies that can provide enforcement, investigation and victim support.
- Identify permanent city financial resources.
- Awareness raising among residents
- Training for law enforcement and victim support agencies

11. Besides holding yearly hearings, what can and/or will you do as a legislator to ensure that the District is aggressively responding to the increase in incidents of hate crimes against the LGBT community that have been occurring recently?

I will commit to periodic briefings from the LGBT community and engaging with the Police Chief in my role as a member of the Judiciary Committee.

12. What would you do to support efforts to insure that marginalized LGBT youth and Transgender citizens of the District who are often victims of hate crimes and discrimination have safe and affirming options when challenged with homelessness, hunger and unemployment?

My first responsibility is to ensure that the District's social service safety net is adequately funded and is effectively delivering services to all populations, especially the LGBT community. I will work with the appropriate DC Council committee chairs to address the issues that play an important role in the affected residents quality of life.

Education and Youth

13. Do you support the current DC Board of Education's Health Standards that include discussions of sexual orientation in learning about sex education in public schools? As a councilmember, will you commit to requiring a report on the implementation of these new health standards as part of your role as a member of the Education committee?

Yes

14. Do you support DCPS leadership in advocating for additional mandatory teacher and faculty training in all DC public schools regarding LGBT student safety?

Yes

15. As a legislator, what will you do to help the efforts of DCPS, OSSE, and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education to make sure that all LGBT students can learn in a safe and supportive environment?

Education falls under the DC Council Committee of the Whole. During oversight hearings, I will engage leadership from OSSE and DCPS about issues of safety and support among our LGBT youth population.

16. As a Council member, what will you do to support after school activities and initiatives that specifically include the needs of LGBT youth?

DC clearly needs to provide more support and increase engagement with organizations such as SMYL, Metro Teen AIDS, Wanda Alston House and others who provide these safe spaces that give LGBT youth opportunities to grow and develop with their fellow LGBT peers. I will advocate and support these efforts by the government.

Health/HIV/AIDS

15. As a legislator, what can and/or will you do to hold the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration (HAHSTA) and the Department of Health accountable for aggressively working to develop and implement a strategy to reduce the unacceptably high HIV/AIDS rates in the District's LGBT community, specifically among gay and bisexual men and transgender women of color?

Since HIV was declared a "modern day epidemic in the City, we have made significant progress. The agency has better data collection in place, has launched a call-to-action social marketing and prevention campaign and provides better treatment services. We need to continue and accelerate this progress. We know where the epidemic is in this city and what populations it affects. I will continue to coordinate with the Health Committee of the Council to ensure that we have culturally competent and effective programs in place and that HAHSTA has proper oversight. I take particular interest in US Helping Us, located in Ward 4 that serves black gay men and MSM. It is through these government/community based organization partnerships, led by HAHSTA that will enable the city to make continued progress.

16. As a legislator, what will you do to ensure that the Department of Health provides an annual report and update on LGBT health statistics? What will you do to insure that the Transgender community as well as communities of color is included in that report?

I will coordinate with my colleague, Councilmember David Catania, chair of the DC Council Health Committee to implement this reporting requirement.

BUDGET

17. As a legislator, what are some of the proposals or initiatives that you would implement to increase revenue for critical city-wide social services that inevitably affect the LGBT community while allowing for a balanced budget?

I am a passionate supporter of social service programs that serve our most vulnerable populations. Before supporting any revenue enhancements, I must be convinced that the city is wisely managing its resources. Most recently we see that the City ended with a significant budget surplus. While this is good news, we need to better forecast our revenues so that we are not making unnecessary cuts to vital services.