



LGBT DEMOCRATS OF VIRGINIA

Virginia Partisans: The PAC of LGBT Democrats of Virginia

Endorsement Questionnaire

Instructions: Please return questionnaire via email to president@vapartisans.org. At the Board's discretion, interviews may be scheduled with candidates prior to making endorsement and contribution decisions.

Note: Your answers are "on the record," will be circulated to all members of the Board, and may be shared outside the organization and published to the LGBT Democrats of Virginia website.

Candidate and Campaign Information

Name: Stephanie Clifford

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Campaign Website: stephanieclifford.org

Campaign Manager: Evan Day

Campaign Manager Phone/Email: 801-231-3047, evan@stephanieclifford.org

Race and Election Information

Office Sought: House of Delegates

Indicate whether office is partisan or non-partisan: partisan

City, County or District of office:

Select One: Challenger Incumbent Open Seat

Select One: Caucus Primary General

Election Date(s):

Biographical Information

1. Previous elected offices held:

Vice President, Arlington Young Democrats, 2010-2011

Arlington Democrats Precinct Captain – Oakridge and Virginia Highlands Precincts

2. Candidate bio (include issues relevant to LGBT Community):

Stephanie, a native of Janesville, WI, has lived in Arlington for 9 years, and has been in the area since 1995. She lives in South Arlington with her husband Carl "Cliff" Clifford, a professional photographer, and is step-mother to Mandi and Karla who live in St. Augustine, Florida. Stephanie most recently served as an Associate and Director of Special Events at the Podesta Group in Washington, DC. Previously she was the Chief of Staff for John McLaughlin at Oliver Productions, where she helped coordinate all aspects of Dr. McLaughlin's public affairs television programs. She also has served as the Director of Marketing for Eurotech, Ltd., an international environmental technology development firm, where she managed the company's marketing, public relations, and investor relations.

Stephanie holds a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Classics from the George Washington University. She is a graduate of the 2011 Sorensen Institute Candidate Training Program.

She is an active member of her community working with groups such as Arlington County Democratic Committee, Arlington Young Democrats, Alexandria Democratic Committee, Virginia Democratic Women's Caucus, The Farm Team, Kiwanis Club of Arlington, Arlington Committee of 100, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment, Sierra Club, League of Conservation Voters, Arlington Gay & Lesbian Alliance, National Organization for Women, NARAL, and the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization.

3. Are you a member of the LGBT Democrats of Virginia (formerly the Virginia Partisans)? If so, when did you join?

Yes, 2011

4. Have you been endorsed by any LGBT organizations now or in the past? If so, please list years and races.

No, this is my first campaign besides positions within the Democratic party

Activities

1. Have you attended events for, joined, or otherwise expressed support for LGBT organizations or groups?

I'm proud not only to support but also be an active member of groups such as Arlington Gay & Lesbian Alliance, Human Rights Campaign, LGBT Democrats of Virginia and Virginia Partisans, and the Arlington Young Democrats LGBT Caucus. I attend their events (for the cause and also because they are some of the most enjoyable parties) as well as those of Equality Virginia and other groups.

2. Have you attended events for, joined, or otherwise expressed support for the Whitman Walker Health, the Tidewater Aids Task Force, GLSEN, SMYAL, or other LGBT and LGBT-related causes or organizations?

I have attended events and contributed to the groups listed in 1 above. Organization that help youth are especially important to me because of all the LGBT individuals - family, friends, and others - I know who had such a hard time at that point in their lives. I've supported GLSEN and SMYAL with donations and sponsored AGLA's scholarship fundraiser this year to help LGBT students in Arlington attend college.

3. Have you ever volunteered for or attended LGBT Pride, an LGBT Youth Prom, or other LGBT or LGBT-related events?

Yes, I attended DC Pride this year and in the past as well as other events held by the groups listed in 1 above.

Positions – Please articulate your views on all the issues below regardless of whether they are Federal, State, or Local in nature and whether you have or, if elected, would have the ability to vote on the issues.

➤ **Discrimination Protection**

1. If elected, would you establish a written non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation **and** gender identity for your employees? Do you have such a policy in place for your campaign?

Yes, I would establish a written non-discrimination policy that includes both sexual orientation and gender identification for my employees. My campaign is composed almost entirely of unpaid volunteers and discrimination on the basis of either sexual orientation or gender identity is not allowed for staff or volunteers. We have our non-discrimination policy posted on our volunteer form on stephanieclifford.org.

2. Have you in the past, do you now, and, if elected, will you support efforts to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation **and** gender identity in employment and housing? Please address Federal and State versions of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and any relevant local laws. Please note whether you have introduced and/or co-sponsored or co-patroned legislation in the past (if not, please explain why).

Neither candidate has held legislative office so neither of us have patroned legislation in this area. I am more than willing to support, patron or co-patron employment non discrimination legislation that covers both gender identity and sexual orientation and would make it a top priority. Discrimination should not be allowed in any areas, but especially not in such fundamental areas as employment and housing. LGBT citizens must be added as a protected class to our state anti-discrimination code. I also support the fully inclusive federal legislation. Coming out is a personal decision, but a supportive environment allows one to be a better worker. LGBT individuals already face discrimination in not being able to provide benefits to their partners; the possible loss of a job is a heavy burden that should be removed. I fully support the state bills introduced in the past by fellow pro-equality Democrats such as Senator Don McEachin and Delegate Adam Ebbin and would introduce any legislation necessary to accomplish the goals of ending workplace discrimination in hiring and firing. Further, I will support legislation that will authorize local governments to provide health and other benefits to the domestic partners of employees.

3. Have you in the past and do you still now support the repeal of the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) law? Do you oppose any efforts to implement exclusionary policies based on sexual orientation for the Virginia National Guard? Please note whether you have introduced and/or co-sponsored or co-patroned legislation in the past (if not, please explain why).

Neither candidate has held legislative office so neither of us have patroned legislation in this area. I support the implementation of the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell on the federal level and oppose any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation in the Virginia National Guard. I completely opposed the mean-spirited and bigoted policy proposed by Delegate Bob Marshall. It injures Virginia, places us out of sync with federal law and compromised our effectiveness. I will oppose and encourage my colleagues to oppose such backwards legislation. If elected, I also will introduce legislation to end discrimination against LGBT students at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). From talking with my husband who served 12 years in the US Army and Army Reserve and other family members and friends who have served in all branches, I know that these policies are not necessary for the effectiveness of our military at any level.

➤ **Marriage and Partnership**

4. Have you in the past, do you now, and, if elected, will you support efforts to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)? Please note whether you have introduced and/or co-sponsored or co-patroned legislation in the past (if not, please explain why)

This is a federal issue, but I certainly support the repeal of DOMA. As of 2004, there were 1,138 federal rights, benefits, and privileges available to married couples that are denied LGBT individuals. I also recognize the implications of this legislation for immigrant communities. Regardless of whether states recognize these marriages, people can still be deported and families broken up. Neither candidate has held legislative office so neither of us have patroned legislation in this area.

5. Have you in the past, do you now, and, if elected, will you support efforts to repeal the Marshall-Newman Amendment to the Virginia Constitution? Please note whether you have introduced and/or co-sponsored or co-patroned legislation in the past (if not, please explain why).

We must repeal the Marshall-Newman Amendment and move forward with full marriage equality. While I recognize the priority of non-discrimination legislation, I will be proud to put my name to the repeal every time it is introduced and introduce it myself if necessary. I voted against it in 2006 and encouraged others to do the same. Some say that in ten years we will look back on the lack of marriage equality and see it as an embarrassment, but I say that this is an embarrassment right now and always has been. Our Commonwealth cannot be last again, we should not wait for another Loving v. Virginia. We cannot wait 10 years and we must not wait for the courts to tell us what we already know: discriminating against our own citizens is just plain wrong. Neither candidate has held legislative office so neither of us have patroned legislation in this area.

6. Do you believe that same-sex couples should enjoy the same rights, benefits and responsibilities as their straight counterparts? Have you in the past, do you now, and, if elected, will you support efforts to legally recognize same-sex marriage by both the Federal and Virginia government? Please note whether you have introduced and/or co-sponsored or co-patroned legislation in the past (if not, please explain why).

Yes. I support full marriage equality in Virginia and federal recognition of such marriages. I have always supported the legal recognition of same-sex marriage and will take the lead on those efforts if elected. Same-sex couples deserve the same rights in marriage, employment, and all other areas. There is also an economic impact of employers being unable to provide these benefits to potential employees and the language in the statutes is so broad that it also affects same sex business partnerships. Even on the federal side of these issues, the views of our local electeds affect community views and can be part of the dialogue. I acknowledge that while the federal community is united behind fully inclusive legislation, the most potential to make this happen on the state level is to support bills such as the one introduced by Senator Don McEachin.

I also support the rights of same-sex couples and LGBT individuals to adopt. The best interests of the child must always come first. Every child should have the opportunity for a loving home regardless of the gender and marital status of the parent or parents. Parents should not have to undergo an expensive and uncertain process to be the legal parents of a child they might have held from his or her very birth. It is inhumane to deny children the families who want them and have the love to give to them. The implications of this discrimination go beyond LGBT communities to straight couples and others families. In today's society families come in all forms. Imagine the tragedy of a child who loses his or her parents and then is unable to be adopted by two loving Aunts. I vow to change this law and will put my heart and all my effort into ensuring that our Commonwealth secures the rights and benefits of our laws for all our families. Neither candidate has held legislative office so neither of us have patroned legislation in this area.

➤ **Education and Schools**

7. Have you in the past, do you now, and, if elected, will you support Family Life Education and guidance programs in public schools that offer age-appropriate, non-judgmental information on sexuality, tolerance, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexually transmitted diseases, and contraception? Please note whether you have introduced and/or co-sponsored or co-patroned legislation in the past (if not, please explain why).

Yes, I support non-judgmental age-appropriate factual based sex education programs as the best means to protect the health of our citizens. I was disappointed this year when the General Assembly restored \$900,000 in funding to abstinence-only programs that have been proven to be ineffective and am committed to moving our limited funds to more effective programs. Neither candidate has held legislative office so neither of us have patroned legislation in this area.

8. Do you consider harassment of LGBT students because of their real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity to be a form of bullying? Would you support legislation that aims to lower the incidents of, and directs schools to put an end to, bullying in public schools and facilities?

Yes, I do consider that harassment to be bullying and would support such legislation. I would also promote the importance of good role models as we cannot completely mandate away bullying. A supporting and encouraging school team including strong role models, either out individuals or allies, is necessary to make students feel more comfortable with themselves and better able to perform academically. We must end overt discrimination and more subtle discriminatory practices such as the bullying of our youth, which frequently goes undetected despite its equally devastating impact. We must stand up to our Attorney General who refuses to allow our universities to protect their own students. Neither candidate has held legislative office so neither of us have patroned legislation in this area.

9. Do you support the formation of Gay/Straight Alliance clubs (GSAs) in schools? Have you in the past, do you now, and, if elected, will you support efforts to promote, encourage and provide support and resources for GSAs in schools?

I believe such clubs can be a valuable tool for tolerance and would certainly encourage the formation of such groups. It is such a vulnerable time for our youth and they need all the help we can provide. In high school in the early 1990s, friends and I attempted to form a club to combat discrimination of all forms in our school. We were not able to gain the needed support even among fellow students to make it officially inclusive of gay students, but were successfully in forming the group focused on promoting racial tolerance.

We have support for Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) in Arlington schools, but in the rest of the state we must do more to increase those dialogues. We must work with organizations such as GLSEN and SMYAL who are already doing great work to help our youth. While we are lucky to have these groups and volunteers generously providing time and resources to the cause, I look forward to the day when kids are accepted by their parents and peers regardless of real or perceived orientation.

10. Do you support the "It Gets Better Project"?

Absolutely! This is a valuable affirmation that students and others need to hear. I also plan to record my own video for the project to share some of the stories of my friends and family members, especially that of my aunt, who I have never felt was fully accepted by my family for who she and her partner are.

➤ **HIV/AIDS Prevention, Testing and Treatment**

11. Do you support public funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, testing and treatment facilities? Have you in the past, do you now, and, if elected, will you support efforts to increase funding for and access to these facilities throughout all regions of Virginia?

Yes, I support public funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, testing and treatment. This is a crucial public health issue I will certainly support increased funding for such facilities throughout Virginia. This disease affects everyone and everyone needs access to testing and treatment. I would support efforts to increase funding and access to these public facilities and would also introduce legislation requiring private physicians to ask whether patients want to be tested for HIV/AIDS and encouraging private insurance companies to pay for those tests.

12. Do you support free access to HIV/AIDS testing at jail and prison facilities? If so, would you support programs that encourage inmates to get tested for HIV/AIDS?

Yes, I support such efforts. Not only is it the right and humanitarian thing to do, it is a fiscally sound way to prevent the spread of HIV and reduce eventual treatment costs.

➤ **Choice and Contraception**

13. Have you in the past, do you now, and, if elected, will you support a woman's right to choose abortion and to access abortion, birth control and contraception? Would you vote to limit access to abortion, birth control and/or contraception in anyway? If so, how and under what circumstances?

I am proud to have the endorsement of the Women's Campaign Forum in recognition of my commitment to standing up for women's choice. They have recognized the need for more pro-choice women in Virginia especially in light of the legislation passed by the General Assembly this year that led to three new anti-choice laws on the books: banning private abortion coverage in the new health care insurance exchange and by private insurance companies; restoring that \$900,000 in funding for abstinence-only programs; and establishing unnecessary new regulations on first-term abortion providers that could lead to the closing of the majority of these clinics in the state. I categorically support a woman's right to choose and if elected, will stand up against any proposed restrictions on that right given to women by the US Constitution. I will attempt to solve the crisis for Virginia's women caused by the TRAP legislation passed this year and in any case make sure they know of the resources still left available to them.

➤ **Other**

14. Choosing political leadership is a key responsibility for every elected official. Will you commit to making support for full equality a major factor in your leadership selection decisions?

Yes. Even more than making it a major factor, I would make it a requirement of those I supported for leadership.

15. Do you believe it is important for both LGBT individuals **and** allies to "come out"—i.e. share their status as an LGBT individual or an ally to the LGBT community with the public? Do you believe it is important for public officials, in particular, to encourage and support LGBT individuals **and** allies in "coming out"?

I am proud to be known as an ally of LGBT people and will be active and visible in that role as a state Delegate. "Coming out" as an LGBT person or as an ally for equality is very important. Elected officials, and those who seek elected office, have an important responsibility to keep the dialogue going about people who are being treated unequally.

16. If not otherwise described above, how have you advocated for the LGBT community in the community at-large in the past (i.e. have you spoken out publicly for policies at your place of business, testified before government bodies, adopted written policies for your employees, marched for equal rights, etc.)?

As noted below, I have stood up against discrimination in my workplaces and have included written policies in all the employee manuals that I have developed on behalf of past employers. My equality positions are available publically here <http://www.bluevirginia.us/diary/4250/equality-virginia-cannot-be-last-again> and on my website.

17. If not otherwise described above, in what ways have you worked to include LGBT and other minority individuals in your personal and/or professional life? In what ways have you worked to be a role model for inclusion, tolerance and acceptance of LGBT and other minority individuals?

I've worked for two different bosses who asked me to practice discrimination in hiring and managing of employees. One actually told me to pre-screen resumes to eliminate anyone from consideration who I thought might be gay. I refused, he insisted, but I did not do it and went forward with the hiring process including all eligible candidates. I brought in one very qualified candidate I personally knew to be gay for an interview and recommended him to the boss. He then interviewed and dismissed him after he realized he might be gay, saying he "wouldn't want him making my coffee." Because of this and other poor and illegal treatment of employees and potential employees I ended my employment with that firm. At another place of business, non-white employees were given favorable treatment for shifts and advancement opportunities. I spoke to the employer about this and when given a management role, corrected these discriminatory practices. I have also spoken up to management at other jobs on behalf of female employees who were being discriminated against and for anyone else who was not be treated as they deserved.

I am also a supporter of initiatives like "Pride at Work" as a means to accomplish some of these goals. A living wage is important to all workers, but especially in retail where wages are often on the low end and transgendered individuals are over represented. Coupled with the possibility that they might not have access to their partners benefits, a living wage and strong benefits program are all the more important for their ability to provide for themselves and their families.

18. Please use the space below to provide any additional information you would like us to know about your candidacy.

I will work diligently to pass legislation, requested by Arlington County and other jurisdictions, to allow localities to provide health insurance and other family benefits to the partners of LGBT employees.

I firmly oppose the policy at VMI to exclude individuals based on sexual orientation and will seek to end "don't ask, don't tell" at that institution in a speedy manner.

I hope that the Partisans choose to endorse my candidacy, but in any case will remain a friend and active supporter and advocate for the cause.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please contact president@vapartisans.org with any questions.