



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: Alfonso Lopez
Address: 1201 South Barton Street, #141, Arlington, VA 22204
Phone: (571) 243-8717
Email: alfonsolop@gmail.com
Campaign Website: <http://www.AlfonsoForDelegate.com>
Campaign Manager: Brian Straw
Campaign Manager Phone/Email: (571) 241-5840/brian.d.straw@gmail.com

Race and Election Information

Office Sought: Virginia House of Delegates
Indicate whether office is partisan or non-partisan: Partisan
City, County or District of office: 49th District
Select One: Challenger Incumbent Open Seat
Select One: Caucus Primary General
Election Date(s): Primary - August 23rd, 2011 General - November 8th, 2011

Biographical Information

1. Previous elected offices held:

Elected Democratic Party positions –

- At-Large Member, Democratic National Committee (2009-2013)
- Member, Credentials Committee, Democratic National Committee (2009-2013)
- Southern Region Vice Chair, Hispanic Caucus, Democratic National Committee (2009-2013)
- Steering Committee, Democratic Party of Virginia (2009-2013)
- 8th Congressional District Committee and State Central Committee, Democratic Party of Virginia (2005-2009, 2009-2013)
- President, Democratic Latino Organization of Virginia (2005-2009)
- Vice-Chair, Arlington County Democratic Committee (2006-2008, 2008-2010)
- Steering Committee, Arlington County Democratic Committee (2003-2010)
- President, Arlington Young Democrats (2004)
- Vice-President, Arlington Young Democrats (2003)
- Steering Committee, Arlington Young Democrats (2001-2005)

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

I am a lifelong Democrat and activist with 20 years of Federal and Virginia legislative policy experience on issues critical to the people of Arlington and Fairfax. An Obama Administration political appointee, Kaine Administration cabinet-level appointee, Hill Senate staffer, and long-time environmental advocate, I have the passion and the practical experience to make the best case for our values and needs in Richmond.

I learned from my parents the values of hard work and dedication.

My father came to the United States at the age of 19 with \$260 in his pocket and the dream of a better life. He worked as a bus boy and waiter, learned English, and started attending school. He graduated from Northern Virginia Community College in 1975. Then he took one class a semester every year until he graduated from George Mason University - one month before I graduated from Robinson High school.

My mother devoted her life as a teacher and guidance counselor in Arlington Public Schools to helping immigrant children continue their education after high school. As a result of her dedication and determination, over 1,000 children – who could have been forgotten – graduated from college.

I graduated from Vassar College and received my law degree from Tulane University Law School. While in law school I also earned a Certificate in Environmental Law. In 2003, I was chosen as Fellow of the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia.

I have worked diligently as an activist to expand the rights of others, including in 2006 as a *Member of the Statewide Board of the Commonwealth Coalition* where I helped fight efforts in the General Assembly to pass the Marshall-Newman Amendment (an egregious piece of legislation that curbed marriage equality in Virginia).

I also led the three-year effort to amend the Democratic Party of Virginia (DPVA) by-laws and create a pathway for new groups to be represented on the State Central Steering Committee. As a result of this effort, for the first time in our history, representatives from the Military & Veterans' Family, LGBT, and Latino Caucuses now sit on the DPVA Steering Committee.

I live with my wife, Sarah Zevin, and son, Aaron Rafael, along Columbia Pike.

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

I was a member of Equality Virginia (EV) and a Charter Member of the Commonwealth Coalition. I, at the time, believed that Equality Virginia and the Virginia Partisans had linked membership rolls. Charley Conrad has informed me that was not the case. With that in mind, I will be joining the LGBT Democrats of Virginia as an Ally as soon as possible.

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

N/A – I have not run for political office before.

Activities

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

Yes. In 2006, I helped fight efforts in the General Assembly to pass the Marshall-Newman Amendment (which curbed marriage equality in Virginia) as a Member of the Statewide Board of the *Commonwealth Coalition*. I also spent countless Sundays at the Columbia Pike Farmer's Market with Charley Conrad urging people to vote against the Marshall-Newman Amendment.

I also led the three-year effort to amend the Democratic Party of Virginia (DPVA) by-laws and create a pathway for new groups to be represented on the State Central Steering Committee. Working with Charley Conrad and Frank Leone, we were successful in getting the bylaws updated. As a result, early this year, representatives from the LGBT, Military & Veterans' Family, and Latino Caucuses were made full members of the DPVA Steering Committee.

At Vassar College I attended meetings of the LGBT community calling for the creation of Blegen House – a campus life resource center for the LGBTQ communities. Blegen House was eventually created in 1993.

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've attended Equality Virginia events especially in 2006 while fighting against the Marshall-Newman amendment. I also attended young professional events in the late 1990's that raised money for the Whitman Walker Health Clinic.

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

I have attended Virginia Partisan events and I have joined friends at Gay Pride events and parades in New York City (while in College) and in New Orleans (while in law school).

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 and Yes. I do not and will not discriminate on any basis.

During the administration of Governor Mark Warner there was a successful effort to bring non-discrimination based on sexual orientation in to the Commonwealth's hiring practices. Thanks to the efforts of Equality Virginia, the Virginia Partisans, and others, non-discrimination pledges were signed by members of the House of Delegates, State Senate and Cabinet Level Secretaries.

Governor Mark Warner included sexual orientation in Virginia's EEO practices. Governor Tim Kaine continued that practice. Governor McDonnell, as one of his first official acts, removed sexual orientation from Virginia's EEO practices.

I do not discriminate and I will work to pass legislation that will write in to law a non-discrimination clause in State hiring so the whim of a Governor will not be able to discriminate against an entire group of citizens.

If we want to keep Virginia a strong state for business we need to be able to attract businesses. If businesses see that we discriminate against an entire group of our citizens, they will be less likely to relocate or open a business in Virginia. Discrimination is wrong and will not be tolerated by me anywhere, at any time.

With this in mind, I will fight to pass the Fairness and Justice Act, a bill that would bring Virginia's anti-discrimination employment policy into line with the vast majority of Fortune 500 companies.

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).

Yes, I will support efforts to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and in other areas of our society. When Governor McDonnell took office in 2010, he rescinded the executive order that provided protection for Virginia public employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation. Arlington County remains a leader, providing protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation

for both employment and housing, but the LGBT community across the commonwealth deserves these protections. Further, public employees should not have these protections given and withdrawn based on the whim of the Governor.

As I have not served as an elected official, I have not co-patroned any legislation.

- 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).**

I have always been supportive of efforts to repeal the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell law. This policy is not only discriminatory, but has weakened our military by denying exceptional men and women the right to serve. If elected, I would work to protect the rights of service members in the Virginia National Guard from the same type of discrimination.

As I have not served as an elected official, I have not co-patroned any legislation.

➤ **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).**

Yes, I will support the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act. DOMA not only infringes on the human right of two consenting adults to marry, but also provides cover for less progressive states to deny marriage rights for a marriage performed in another state.

Married couples should not be required to carry around power of attorney documents every time they leave their home-state because they fear that if their partner was sick or hospitalized, they would not be recognized as the spouse. The damage caused by this policy is far reaching and must be repealed.

We must, at the very least, recognize all married couples from other states while we work to achieve marriage equality in Virginia.

As I have not served as an elected official, I have not co-patroned any legislation.

- 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).**

I fought the passage of the Marshall-Newman amendment in 2006 and will continue to fight for the repeal of the Marshall-Newman amendment if elected. The push to pass the Marshall-Newman Amendment was a gratuitous and ugly effort. I am confident that it will eventually be repealed.

Although discrimination against the LGBT community is written into the Constitution of Virginia due to the Marshall-Newman amendment I support marriage equality here in

Virginia and everywhere. It is shameful that good Virginia citizens have to move to other States just to feel safe and secure in their legal rights and in their community. We need to make everyone feel welcome in Virginia. Everyone should feel encouraged to be a part of what makes Virginia a great place to live and raise a family.

As I have not served as an elected official, I have not co-patroned any legislation.

- 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).**

LGBT couples should be entitled to all of the same rights, benefits, and responsibilities as straight couples. I will support efforts to achieve marriage equality by both the Federal and Virginia government.

I also believe that same sex couples should be completely free to adopt. Today there are far too many children who are orphans and/or in the foster care system. Children need good homes and families where they can feel safe, secure, nurtured, and loved. As long as there is love there is a family. It should not matter what form that family takes.

As I have not served as an elected official, I have not co-patroned any legislation.

➤ **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).**

I support age-appropriate, non-judgmental information on sexuality, tolerance, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexually transmitted infections, and contraception. We must work to counter negative stereotypes that are often prevalent among school-age children. This type of comprehensive Family Life education will help all children make better choices, reduces the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and improve the school environment for all children.

As I have not served as an elected official, I have not co-patroned any legislation.

- 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?**

I support the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which would require that all schools receiving federal funding to prohibit bullying and harassment, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. These standards should be added to Virginia Schools' code of conduct.

According to a recent study by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, 85% of LGBT students reported some form of harassment based on sexual orientation and almost two-thirds of LGBT students did not feel safe at school. Schools should be a safe and nurturing environment where students are free to learn. Many LGBT students who report harassment miss class and have a lower grade point average than those LGBT students who are not harassed. An explicit anti-bullying policy for sexual orientation and gender identity would provide recourse and protection for students so they can focus on getting a good education.

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 support Gay/Straight Alliance clubs in school because they provide a safe and positive environment for LGBT students. Schools are communities that rely on collaboration and cooperation between students, parents, and teachers. Schools with GSA clubs and harassment protections help get educators and parents involved in providing a safe environment for their students.

I will actively support efforts to promote, encourage and provide support and resources for GSAs in schools.

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

This is an extraordinary and positive program! The "It Gets Better Project" provides another example of adults becoming involved and providing support for LGBT students who are harassed. Just like GSA, the "It Gets Better Project" lets LGBT students know that they are not alone, which can help them stay focused on school. I also support the Trevor Project, which provides mental health support for LGBT youth with a nationwide 24 hour crisis intervention lifeline, online community, and advocacy/education programs. By providing as much support to LGBT students as possible, we can assure that they are provided with an equal opportunity to succeed in school.

➤ **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?

I support increased funding for testing, prevention, and treatment of HIV/AIDS. According to a Kaiser Family Foundation Survey, the percentage of Americans who consider HIV/AIDS the most urgent health problem facing the nation has dropped dramatically from 44% in 1995 to 6% in 2009. Because HIV/AIDS has fallen off the radar of the American public, Republicans have targeted state and federal funding as an acceptable budget cut to reduce deficits. While the Obama Administration has a National HIV/AIDS strategy, we must do everything we can to protect and increase funding at the state level.

Recently, the Virginia AIDS Drug Assistance Program had to drop coverage for 760 people, restrict enrollment in the program, and reduce the length of prescriptions from 90 to 30 days.

This is unacceptable. We must do everything we can in Richmond to increase funding and provide support for this program.

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?

Virginia now provides free, optional HIV/AIDS testing for inmates within 60 days of being released. I support both providing free access to HIV/AIDS testing and programs that encourage inmates to be tested. Often the social stigmas regarding HIV/AIDS prevent many people from being tested.

The first step to combatting HIV/AIDS is to encourage testing so that victims of HIV/AIDS can receive treatment and prevent the further spread of the disease.

➤ **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 fully support a woman's right to choose and have access to abortion, birth control and contraception.

Virginia Republicans recently passed a bill that could require 17 of Virginia's 21 abortion clinics to close. Abortion clinics are currently treated as an outpatient clinic because first trimester abortions do not require an overnight stay. However, the new law would require these clinics to adopt hospital standards. These standards require the space, parking, and equipment necessary for procedures that would keep patients over night.

If elected, I will fight to keep these clinics open and work to ensure that the women of Virginia have access to abortion, birth control and contraception.

➤ **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?

I will gladly commit to making support for full equality a major factor in choosing my political 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”?

Yes. An important factor that can help us sway public opinion on LGBT issues is encouraging LGBT individuals and allies to share their support for the LGBT community. By showing our support for the LGBT community and LGBT issues we can help de-legitimize the messages being pushed by those who oppose LGBT issues.

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.)?

On top of the events I've attended and advocacy efforts/campaigns I have helped push, I would be remiss if I did not mention my efforts in 2006 to encourage Latino leaders in Virginia to assist in the statewide campaign opposing the Marshall-Newman Amendment.

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 have consistently worked to be inclusive of all individuals from all walks of life. I do not, and will not, discriminate in my personal or professional life.

I am also extraordinarily proud of my work on behalf of the Latino and immigrant communities over the years. Under my leadership as the President of the Democratic Latino Organization of Virginia (2006-2010) the organization increased membership, increased Latino voter participation, raised and donated tens of thousands of dollars to Democratic candidates, became an official Caucus of the DPVA, became a DPVA Steering Committee organization, regularly advised Statewide officials/candidates and the General Assembly leadership, raised awareness of anti-immigrant and anti-Latino legislation in Richmond, and fought for comprehensive immigration reform.

My Mom was a LULAC Lifetime Achievement Award winner for her efforts on behalf of immigrant students and her efforts to push the DREAM Act. I am also proud of my role in helping to draft the In-State Tuition memo to Governor Warner that arose out of the Latino Summit.

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

I have family members who are openly gay. I want them to have the same rights and benefits that any other citizen may enjoy.

As a result of my legislative experience and my work in the community, I am proud to have received the endorsement of Charley Conrad, the immediate past- Chairman of the LGBT Caucus, and Jay Fissette, Arlington County Board Member (and former Chair), who in 1997 became Virginia's first openly-gay elected official.

I have been a consistent supporter of LGBT rights in the past and, if elected, I will be a reliable voice leading the fight for equality in Virginia.

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