

# GUARDIAN

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*Primary Election Day is Tuesday, August 26; See inside for candidate Q&A*

## HRCNCF Queries Candidates for School Board & County Commission

The Human Rights Council of North Central Florida (HRCNCF) received written responses to its candidate questionnaire from most Alachua County Commission and all School Board candidates.

Primary Election Day is Tuesday, August 26, with early voting running daily from Saturday, August 16 to Saturday, August 23 at three voting sites: the downtown elections office at the County Administration Building, 12 SE 1<sup>st</sup> St., and at the Millhopper and Tower Road libraries.

### Alachua County School Board:

All four School Board candidates provided written responses to the questionnaire (*see verbatim responses below*).

In the District 3 race, incumbent School Board member Gunnar Paulson faces challenger Philoron Wright.

Paulson provided excellent written responses to the candidate questionnaire, noted HRCNCF President Bob Karp. His opponent, Philoron Wright, opposed providing gender-neutral bathroom facilities to accommodate transgender students. Paulson supported such facilities.

In the District 5 race, Rob Hyatt faces off against Jancie Vinson. Hyatt provided strongly supportive responses regarding allowing Gay-Straight Alliance clubs to meet as well providing gender-neutral bathroom facilities to accommodate transgender students. Vinson said on both issues that she would need to gather more information before making a determination.

Because School Board races are nonpartisan, all registered voters in Alachua County may vote in each School Board race.

In addition to voting early from August 16-23, voters may request a vote-by-mail ballot by calling the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections Office at 352-374-5252 or order one on-line at [www.votealachua.com](http://www.votealachua.com). On Election Day, August 26, voters must go to their own precinct polling locations to cast a ballot.

### Alachua County Commission Democratic Primary:

There are two hotly-contested Democratic primaries for county commission on the August 26 primary ballot.

Only registered Democrats in Alachua County may vote in these primary races.

In the District 2 race, incumbent Commissioner Lee Pinkoson faces off against challenger Harvey Ward Jr. The winner of this Democratic primary race will face write-in candidate Harry Patterson on the Nov. 4 general election ballot.

### Three ways to vote:

- ✓ **Vote by Mail:** Contact the Supervisor of Elections at 352-374-5252 or at [www.VoteAlachua.com](http://www.VoteAlachua.com) to have a ballot mailed to you.
- ✓ **Vote Early:** Early voting runs from Saturday, August 16, to Saturday, August 23, at the County Administration Building, 12 SE 1<sup>st</sup> St., downtown, and at Millhopper and Tower Road libraries. Hours are 9 AM to 5 PM. Note that free reserved parking spaces are available for voters on SE 1<sup>st</sup> Street.
- ✓ **Vote on Election Day:** Vote in your own polling precinct from 7 AM to 7 PM on Tuesday, August 26.

In the District 4 race, Ken Cornell faces off against Kevin Thorpe. The winner of this Democratic primary contest will face Republican John Martin on the Nov. 4 general election ballot.

Five of six county commission candidates responded to the HRCNCF questionnaire; John Martin did not respond.

Endorsements were based on responses received from the HRCNCF candidate questionnaire as well as the candidates' records of civic involvement in LGBT issues (*see verbatim responses below*).

HRCNCF President Bob Karp noted that all five candidates' responses to the written questionnaire were very good on LGBT issues.

Regarding the District 2 Democratic primary race, Karp noted: "Harvey Ward Jr. had strong written answers to the questionnaire and has attended many LGBT events, including the county commission's passage of the LGBT inclusive human rights ordinance last year."

At the same time, Karp said that incumbent Commissioner Lee Pinkoson voted in the majority for the human rights ordinance, which included both sexual orientation and gender identity and expression nondiscrimination protections in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

As for the District 4 Democratic primary race, Ken Cornell continues to be a consistent supporter of LGBT issues ever since he first ran two years ago against Robert Hutchinson for county commission, noted Karp. "His questionnaire responses and involvement in LGBT events reflect his support," said Karp.

Karp also noted that though Kevin Thorpe is a political newcomer in Alachua County, his questionnaire responses were unequivocally positive on LGBT issues.

"We're fortunate to have four candidates in the Democratic primary contests that are strongly supportive of our issues," said Karp.

## HRCNCF 2014 Alachua County Commission and School Board Candidate Questionnaire Responses

### RESPONSES TO 2014 Alachua County Commission Candidate Questionnaire

- 1. Last year the Board of County Commissioners amended the Alachua County Code of Ordinances to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. Do you support this action and why?**

#### COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT 2:

LEE PINKOSON (DEM): Yes. I also supported making such a change in the Library District as well as the Regional Planning Council.

HARVEY WARD JR. (DEM): Yes, wholeheartedly. One of the most basic tasks of any government should be to ensure equal protection under the law for ALL its people. There can be no doubt that LGBT citizens have been a target of discrimination, and the very least county government can do is promise these protections.

HARRY PATTERSON (WRITE-IN): One of the Ten Key Values of the Green Party, of which I'm a proud member, is the respect for diversity in all areas of society. This includes not only racial, cultural and ethnic diversity, but sexual and gender-identity diversity as well. To deny that all these groups have much to contribute to our society, and to deny that they deserve the protection that the Constitution guarantees to all citizens, is an idea that has no place in a modern democratic republic. These values must be extended to all facets of our civil society, without limit. We must recognize and embrace our LGBT brothers and sisters, and our society will be better for it.

#### COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT 4:

KEN CORNELL (DEM): Yes. The decision to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is always the right one. Not only is it a fundamental human right, it is good for Alachua County's economy. Skilled

employees and innovative businesses are looking for communities that have a fundamental respect for every citizen, regardless of identity. The human rights ordinance isn't the end of our work: We have to look at every aspect of county government to eliminate discrimination and ensure everyone has equal access to a complete and fulfilling life here and be vigilant in our search to end all discrimination.

KEVIN THORPE (DEM): It is my personal conviction that no one should be discriminated against for any reason. I believe that the same civil rights that are afforded to married couples should also be afforded to all couples without regard to sexual orientation.

- 2. Would you support Alachua County having a domestic partner registry where same-sex and opposite-sex couples can officially recognize their relationships? By registering at a county-sponsored domestic partner registry, couples would be able to obtain documentation that could be used to facilitate visitation rights for partners at hospitals, access to domestic partner health insurance, and coverage under the laws of the county where references are made to families or spouses.**

#### COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT 2:

LEE PINKOSON (DEM): Yes.

HARVEY WARD JR. (DEM): Yes. I would not only support, but would happily propose such a measure. My understanding is that it has been successful in other communities, and I see no reason we should not pursue a domestic partner registry for Alachua County.

HARRY PATTERSON (WRITE-IN): Without knowing more about the details, in general I would support a domestic partner registry. If the intention of such a registry is to provide some legal recognition of committed couples, and especially same-sex couples that are denied the rights afforded to married couples, I would support it.

#### COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT 4:

KEN CORNELL (DEM): Yes. A domestic partnership registry is the next step to ensure all couples have a fair chance for success and happiness here. Domestic partnership registries have been successful inside the Gainesville city limits and in counties making up millions of Floridians. It's just good policy to allow loving couples to visit each other in the hospital, share health benefits and the offer the protection of all county laws that apply to families.

KEVIN THORPE (DEM): ABSOLUTELY!

**3. Do you advocate diversity training for county employees to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues?**

COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT 2:

LEE PINKOSON (DEM): Yes and the county has implemented such training.

HARVEY WARD JR. (DEM): Yes. Quality diversity training is not only helpful for most employees on a personal basis, it promotes a more positive customer service environment. Clearly such training should include LGBT issues.

HARRY PATTERSON (WRITE-IN): I would be in favor of informing all county employees as to the county's policies regarding LGBT rights in the workplace. This could take place at the time new employees are hired, be stated in a meeting of a department's employees or published in a memorandum to all current employees. A signed statement by all employees, that they have been made aware of these policies, may be appropriate. Should problems arise regarding an employee's violation of another worker's civil rights, and if diversity training regarding LGBT issues is appropriate, then that training should be required.

COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT 4:

KEN CORNELL (DEM): Yes. As part of the effort to ensure equal access to county services for all citizens, county staff that interact with the public should be up-to-date on issues impacting Alachua County's LGBT community. Every citizen, regardless of background, deserves respect and understanding from the government employees that serve them.

KEVIN THORPE (DEM): ABSOLUTELY!

**4. Would you support annual proclamations in recognition of Alachua County Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Days?**

COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT 2:

LEE PINKOSON (DEM): Yes and I have read a few of them since I have been on the commission.

HARVEY WARD JR. (DEM): Yes. Even while positive awareness of the LGBT community is growing, county government can and should actively participate in increasing understanding and celebration of diversity.

HARRY PATTERSON (WRITE-IN): Governments at all levels grant recognition to various groups, many of which contribute far less to our society than does the LGBT community. With that in mind, I would have no problem with

a proclamation that recognizes the contributions of our LGBT citizens.

COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT 4:

KEN CORNELL (DEM): Yes. LGBT Pride Days are an important expression of community solidarity, and an event that brings people to our county and showcases our commitment to equality. Public support by the county government is an important demonstration of that pride.

KEVIN THORPE (DEM): ABSOLUTELY!

**RESPONSES TO  
2014 School Board of Alachua County  
Candidate Questionnaire**

**1. The School Board of Alachua County's Student Code of Conduct specifically bars discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Would you support and vote for a similar antidiscrimination policy that would prohibit such discrimination against teachers, administrators and other School Board employees?**

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 3:

GUNNAR PAULSON: Yes!

PHILORON WRIGHT: It is my belief that all human rights should prevail. Based on our constitutional rights everyone is protected by their civil liberties and are afforded the rights to live in a society free from oppression. I support the notion that all persons regardless of their gender, age, sexual orientation, race, or religious belief should have the rights and privileges of those considered to be in the mainstream. Discrimination of any form should not be tolerated in our society. I vehemently support the School Board's decision to expand the policy against discrimination to include employees.

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 5:

ROB HYATT: Yes. I would support and vote for policy that would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity for all employees of ACPS. There is no place for sexual discrimination of any kind.

JANCIE VINSON: Any form of discrimination, I believe is wrong and shall not be tolerated by me.

**2. Do you support the School Board's policy which offers health insurance benefits to the domestic partners of School Board employees?**

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 3:

GUNNAR PAULSON: I not only support it, I was the school insurance committee chairman that brought up the issue.

PHILORON WRIGHT: The definition of "Domestic Partnerships" varies from state to state. In the state of Florida domestic partners are considered legal partners under the law as long as cohabitation exists for a set period of time. I think it would be prudent to have a documented paper trail to ensure credible status of domestic partnerships or recognized common law marriages. Under these conditions I would support benefits

if this threshold has been met. However, one must consider the overall outcome of such arrangements because of the abuse and fraudulent possibilities that may occur. This is a complex issue that needs further study and research. A footnote to this issue, there are many components to consider, such as; cost, family needs being met and laws that may impact children, schools, and communities.

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 5:

ROB HYATT: Yes. We cannot afford to turn the clock back. This is established policy and has my full support.

JANCIE VINSON: Yes. As a Board Member it is important to support the current School Board Policy to ensure health benefits are available.

**3. National studies have shown that harassment and violence toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) youth, and those who are perceived as gay, in public schools leads to higher dropout rates and up to three times the rate of suicide among LGBT teens compared to their straight peers. Would you support implementing an anti-bullying policy that specifically protects LGBT students?**

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 3:

GUNNAR PAULSON: Unequivocally Yes!

PHILORON WRIGHT: I emphatically support any measure that will keep all students safe and free from intimidation, sexual harassment, and bullying. These behaviors have no place in our society, especially in our schools and institutions for learning that house under-age children. Policies intended to protect all citizens should most certainly be applicable in our schools for our children.

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 5:

ROB HYATT: Yes. It is the duty of the school district to provide a safe learning environment for all students. The results of sexual harassment and discrimination are all too clear. The key to improving this situation is being proactive rather than merely reactive.

JANCIE VINSON: I will ensure to enforce the School Board's Policy to make sure that ALL students are free from harassment and violence. Regardless of their sexual orientation.

**4. Do you support the formation of student clubs known as "Gay-Straight Alliances" which provide an opportunity for gay and nongay students to meet together on school property as do other extracurricular clubs?**

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 3:

GUNNAR PAULSON: Yes! Just this morning I was talking to the sponsor of such a club at Buchholz and advised her about the process of getting a supplement for the sponsor of the club.

PHILORON WRIGHT: I believe we should keep an open mind to the new concept of gay integration in our society and

explore strategies for creating a culture of equality. It is imperative that we appropriately balance our individual beliefs and values such that they do not infringe upon the freedoms of others. The world is rapidly changing and our policies, actions and behaviors must follow. Things once considered to be taboo are now normal, despite our individual bias for or against the issue. I believe we should research the various models and best practices for approaching sensitive issues such as this. Personally, I would like to hear more discussion on the topic.

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 5:

ROB HYATT: I support the opportunity for student-initiated GSA's to form and use school facilities. This is all about promoting an open dialogue and defusing harassment and bullying.

JANCIE VINSON: I would gather more information on the establishment of clubs in order to make sure it is consistent with the guidelines.

**5. Would you support providing gender-neutral bathroom facilities to accommodate transgender students?**

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 3:

GUNNAR PAULSON: Yes!

PHILORON WRIGHT: Clear and concise. No! Age and mental health issues are a concern for me. There must be some boundaries in how we address this issue. There must be a reasoned voice for the decisions we make to ensure appropriate standards for a quality life without impugning others.

SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 5:

ROB HYATT: Yes. There is a basic right to use public facilities. Use of such facilities should not come with the fear for personal safety or harassment.

JANCIE VINSON: I would have to look at the existing situation, budget and the needs in order to make a determination.

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA, INC.**

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--MISSION STATEMENT--

*HRCNCF opposes discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the interest of civic betterment and social welfare. HRCNCF also seeks to work in coalition with other organizations working to end discrimination based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, age, religion, national origin, or disability.*

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 2014, AT 7:00 PM AT PRIDE  
COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA, 3131  
NW 13<sup>TH</sup> ST, GAINESVILLE

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