

GUARDIAN

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Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 8 – see inside for candidate Q&A

HRCNCF Queries Congress, State House & Senate Candidates

The Human Rights Council of North Central Florida (HRCNCF) received responses to its candidate questionnaire from U.S. Congress and State House and Senate candidates.

HRCNCF announced its endorsement of two local ballot measures: YES for the renewal of the one mill ad valorem tax for Alachua County public schools, and FOR the Wild Spaces & Public Places one-half percent sales tax to fund environmental lands, parks and recreation.

The candidate questionnaires covered a range of LGBT issues on both the national and state level. (See verbatim responses below to State House/Senate and U.S. Congress candidate questionnaires).

All three Alachua County Commission races have incumbents facing write-in candidates. Mike Byerly and Robert Hutchinson both won their primary contests on August 30. Commissioner Chuck Chestnut, however, only faces write-in and openly transgender candidate Chloe Goldbach who responded to the candidate questionnaire.

HRCNCF President Bob Karp noted that, despite not having responded to the questionnaire, Commissioner Chestnut has been a longtime supporter of LGBT rights both when he was on the Gainesville City Commission, as a State Representative and as an Alachua County Commissioner when he voted for the fully-inclusive human rights ordinance in 2013.

“Ms. Goldbach provided excellent answers and has a refreshing and thorough knowledge of LGBTQ and other issues,” said Karp, adding that he hoped for and anticipated a promising political future for Ms. Goldbach.

For the newly redrawn U.S. Congress seat which now includes all of Alachua County, Democrat Ken McGurn is challenging Republican tea party

You're invited!

The Human Rights Council of North Central Florida invites you to meet with local police and sheriff deputy LGBTQ liaisons at a town hall meeting to hear your concerns and comments about local law enforcement.

Connecting with the LGBTQ Community: A town hall meeting with GPD and ACSO

**Wednesday, October 19
from 7 to 8:30 PM**

at the Pride Community Center of
North Central Florida
3131 NW 13th St. Gainesville

Liaisons from ACSO and GPD are eager to hear your concerns and suggestions to help better serve the LGBTQ community.

HRCNCF is pleased to host the second in a series of town hall meetings featuring LGBTQ liaisons from both the Gainesville Police Department and the Alachua County Sheriff's Office for an open-ended conversation about the safety concerns of the LGBTQ community.

incumbent Ted Yoho, who has cultivated a reputation as one of the most socially conservative members of Congress. Both Yoho and no-party-affiliated candidate Tom Wells did not respond to the questionnaire by press time.

Karp noted that both Ken McGurn and his spouse Linda have been long-term gay rights supporters. In fact, in 1994 they attended a press conference of local business owners who stood up to oppose the gay rights repeal effort, which ultimately succeeded at the ballot box. It took two decades for the county commission to reinstate the human rights ordinance, which this time included both sexual orientation and gender identity.

“As someone who helped organize that press conference, there were few local business owners at that time who were willing to speak out publicly in support of gay rights,” said Karp.

For State House District 21, which covers much of western Alachua County, Democrat Marihelen Wheeler faces Republican challenger Chuck Clemons. While running for County Commissioner in the 1990s, Clemons ran on a platform opposing extending gay rights protections in the county's human rights ordinance.

“Wheeler has been a consistent and vocal supporter of LGBT rights,” said Karp. He noted that while Clemons did not respond to the questionnaire, Wheeler responded with thoughtful and well considered answers. As a school teacher, she noted the importance of recognizing and dealing expeditiously with bullying behavior.

In the newly redrawn State Senate District 8, Democrat Rod Smith is running against Republican Keith Perry who has been consistently opposed to extending LGBT rights at the state level. Perry did not respond to the HRCNCF questionnaire.

Perry did however contribute a total of \$800 in 2009 to the political committee funding the citizen-led effort to effectively repeal sexual orientation and gender identity from Gainesville's human rights ordinance. Smith has consistently supported LGBT rights in the past, and he has done so with his questionnaire responses. This Senate race is one of the most expensive and closely watched in the state.

Incumbent Democratic Sheriff Sadie Darnell faces off against Republican Jack Jacobs who did not respond to the HRCNCF questionnaire.

“Sheriff Darnell has been and continues to be an effective and outspoken supporter of LGBT rights,” said HRCNCF President Bob Karp. He noted that Darnell has appointed openly-gay liaisons from ACSO and has been responsive to the needs of the LGBT community. During her tenure in office, Darnell added gender identity protections to the Sheriff's Office antidiscrimination policy.

In addition to voting early from October 24 to November 5, voters may request a vote-by-mail ballot by calling the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections Office at 352-374-5252 or ordering one online at www.votealachua.com. On Election Day, November 8, voters must go to their own precinct polling locations to cast a ballot.

HRCNCF 2016 Candidate Questionnaire Responses

Responses to 2016 State House/Senate Candidate Questionnaire

1. **National studies have shown that harassment and violence toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth leads to higher dropout rates and up to three times the rate of suicide among LGBT teens compared to their non-gay peers. Would you sponsor and/or vote to support a bill that requires school districts to specifically prohibit bullying directed toward students based on real or**

perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, thus creating a safer, friendlier learning environment for all students?

State Representative, District 21

MARIEHELEN WHEELER (DEM): As a public school teacher in a local middle school for 22 years, I have watched bullying happen on many levels for a variety of reasons. As a teacher of special needs children, I was trained to deal with disruptive and hurtful behaviors. Bullying is a behavior that was never tolerated in my class and was addressed with compassion in my school.

I would gladly sponsor a bill that would demand prohibition of bullying.

State Senate, District 8

ROD SMITH (DEM): Yes.

HRCNCF endorses:

YES

**Renewal of Existing One Mill Ad Valorem
Tax for School District**

FOR

**Wild Spaces & Public Places
One-Half Percent Sales Tax**

2. **The Florida Competitive Workforce Act (HB 45 and SB 120) seeks to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in places of employment, housing and public accommodations. For the first time this year, the bill received a committee hearing and vote. Would you co-sponsor this bill, and if it were to come before you for a vote, would you vote for or against it?**

State Representative, District 21

MARIEHELEN WHEELER (DEM): I would gladly co-sponsor and support this bill without hesitation.

State Senate, District 8

ROD SMITH (DEM): I oppose discrimination against people due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

3. **Last year the state Legislature enacted the Pastor Protection Act which shields religious entities and individuals from any lawsuit should they refuse to administer same-sex weddings. Both the U.S. and Florida Constitutions already ensure that religious organizations and associations are not compelled to perform same-sex marriages. Do you support or oppose the Pastor Protection Act?**

State Representative, District 21

MARIEHELEN WHEELER (DEM): I oppose acts such as this as it is redundant and a waste of taxpayer time and money to address such protections.

State Senate, District 8

ROD SMITH (DEM): It is and was unnecessary.

4. **Do you support the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 decision which proclaimed a constitutional right to marriage for same-sex couples? Do you believe that same-sex marriages are of equal worth to society as opposite-sex marriages? Why or why not?**

State Representative, District 21

MARIEHELEN WHEELER (DEM): I do support this decision for constitutional right to marriage for same-sex couples. Basically marriage is not only a commitment of loving people to take care of each other, it is a business contract that allows for two people to handle business affairs for each other. Same-sex marriages should enjoy the same protections under the law with impunity.

State Senate, District 8

ROD SMITH (DEM): Yes, because I agree with the Supreme Court's decision.

5. **The North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill which both eliminated local LGBT nondiscrimination ordinances as well as restricted transgender individuals to using public bathroom facilities that correspond to the gender listed on their birth certificates, as opposed to the gender which they identify with. Should a similar bill come before the Florida Legislature, would you vote to support or oppose such a bill? Why or why not?**

State Representative, District 21

MARIEHELEN WHEELER (DEM): A person's sexuality is not the business of government. I would not support a similar bill in Florida that would not protect anyone against discrimination for any reason. Education is the key in prevention of discrimination and our society is adjusting to this education. The purpose of government is protection of people and their rights to be the people that they are, not who the government thinks they should be.

State Senate, District 8

ROD SMITH (DEM): I have no intention of being a bathroom monitor.

**Responses to
2016 U.S. Congress
Candidate Questionnaire**

1. **Do you support or oppose the Equality Act (H.R. 3185), a bill in Congress that would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in credit, education, employment, federally funded programs, housing, jury service and public accommodations?**

Representative in Congress, District 3

KENNETH "KEN" MCGURN (DEM): I fully support the Equality Act, and will vote for it.

2. **Do you support or oppose broad religious exemptions that permit individuals and for-profit businesses to discriminate against LGBT and other protected classes of people based on religious beliefs? Why or why not?**

Representative in Congress, District 3

KENNETH "KEN" MCGURN (DEM): I oppose religious exemptions that discriminate against any class of people because they not only hurt local economies, they divide us as a people.

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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, OCTOBER 13, 2016, AT 7:00 PM AT PRIDE COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA, 3131 NW 13TH ST, GAINESVILLE

The *Guardian* is published quarterly.

Three ways to vote:

1. **Vote by Mail:** Call the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections at 352-374-5252 to have a ballot mailed to you.
 2. **Vote Early:** From **Monday, October 24 to Saturday, November 5.**
 3. **Vote on Election Day:** Vote in your polling precinct from 7 AM to 7 PM on **Tuesday, November 8.** Go to www.votealachua.com to locate your polling precinct location using the Supervisor of Elections' online Precinct Finder.
3. **Do you support or oppose legislation in Congress which would allow transgender military service members to serve openly?**
- Representative in Congress, District 3
- KENNETH "KEN" MCGURN (DEM): Transgender service members are able to serve openly now, and I support that. It makes our military stronger and more diverse.
4. **Do you support the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 decision which proclaimed a constitutional right to marriage for same-sex couples? Do you believe that same-sex marriages are of equal worth to society as opposite-sex marriages? Why or why not?**
- Representative in Congress, District 3
- KENNETH "KEN" MCGURN (DEM): Yes, we all have the right to love who we want to. Same-sex marriages are equal to opposite-sex marriages.