



2016 Presidential Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Q.1 - In a majority of states, no explicit laws protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Americans from discrimination, like the federal laws that exist on race, religion, sex, national origin, age or disability. If elected, would you support and sign into law the Equality Act (S. 1858/H.R. 3185), which would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity?

Support

Comments: I am proud to be an [original cosponsor](#) of the Equality Act. The *Windsor* and *Obergefell* Supreme Court decisions should rightly be celebrated, but taking discrimination out of our marriage laws is only the first step. Our nation has trended towards inclusiveness over the past fifty years, and we must continue that progress.

Q.2 – The U.S. Constitution provides strong protections for individuals and organizations to exercise religion and to freely speak about beliefs. But some federal and state lawmakers are seeking to pass legislation, like the First Amendment Defense Act, that would create loopholes that could be used to deny equal treatment to LGBT people based on so-called "religious freedom" claims. Would you oppose efforts that allow individuals to use their religious beliefs as a justification to discriminate against LGBT people in the public sphere?

Yes

Comments: I am strongly opposed to creating loopholes that could be used to deny equal treatment to LGBT people based on so-called "religious freedom" claims.

Q.3 – Would you oppose any attempt to amend the U.S. Constitution to deny rights to same-sex couples or allow discrimination against LGBT persons?

Yes

Comments: As a Representative and Senator, I have opposed all efforts to write discrimination into our Constitution, and I will continue to do so if elected President.

Q.4 – Do you believe the civil institution of marriage (with absolutely no requirements imposed on houses of worship) should be legally available to two committed adults of the same sex?

Support

Comments: I am a longtime supporter of marriage equality and am proud that Vermont was the first state to pass a same-sex marriage law without being ordered to do so by a court. Happily, the Supreme Court caught up with the American people this past June and declared a right to marriage for everyone.

Q.5 – New treatments have improved the quality of life for those living with HIV and new prevention strategies can help reduce the risk of contracting HIV, but these medications are often too expensive and too difficult to access for those who need them. Do you support increased funding for HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and research?

Support

Comments: I am seriously concerned with the high cost of prescription medications, especially HIV/AIDS drugs, and I have introduced legislation to radically overhaul how we sell medicine in this country. The United States government provides treatment to millions of HIV/AIDS patients around the world through PEPFAR and at home through state ADAP programs. Yet PEPFAR is able to treat patients for a fraction of the cost of ADAP, because PEPFAR can obtain those expensive medications for much less. The U.S. pays, by far, the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, thanks in large part to legal monopolies we grant drug companies through our patent system. I have introduced legislation that would end those harmful monopolies and require the patents for all new HIV/AIDS drugs be placed in the public domain, allowing generic companies to immediately bring their versions to market and drive down the price of these life-changing medications. Companies who successfully bring innovative new treatments to market would instead receive a cash prize. In 2012, I held a hearing about this proposal and not one other senator showed up, which was disappointing but not surprising.

I am also a strong supporter of increasing funding for NIH research and expanding access to HIV/STI treatments and screenings through the Title X program.

Q.6 – Even as we experience increased transgender visibility, the levels of violence and harassment transgender people face – particularly transgender women of color – constitute a national crisis. The federal government has a critical role to play in preventing and addressing violence, including: expanding access to critical safety net programs to address issues like homelessness and job placement; implementing and enforcing rules that prohibit discrimination against transgender people by federally funded service providers; ensuring medically necessary transition-related care under the Affordable Care Act; ensuring the safety of those in jails, prisons, and immigration detention centers and robust enforcement of the federal hate crimes law. If elected President, will you prioritize a comprehensive federal response to address anti-transgender violence?

Yes

Comments: There is no doubt that transgender people face violence, including domestic violence, at far higher rates than the general public. I will support all of the policies mentioned. We also must expand cultural competency training so healthcare providers and domestic violence shelters are equipped to handle the needs of transgender patients or survivors.

Q.7 – While all states allow LGBT people to adopt children, some legislators are pushing to prohibit capable, committed adults from adopting because of their sexual orientation. Do you support giving appropriate judicial authorities the full authority to make decisions on adoption based on the best interest of the child, without bans based on sexual orientation or gender identity?

Support

Comments: I am a cosponsor of the Every Child Deserves a Family Act.

Q.8 – LGBT students are subject to pervasive discrimination, including harassment, intimidation, and violence. Would you support and sign into law the Student Non-Discrimination Act (H.R. 846/S. 439), a federal bill that would prohibit public schools from discriminating against students based on sexual orientation or gender identity?

Support

Comments: I am a [cosponsor](#) of this bill.

Q.9 – Bullying and harassment of LGBT students, as well as students perceived to be LGBT, is widespread. Would you support and sign into law the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 311), which would require school districts receiving federal funding to adopt codes of conduct specifically prohibiting bullying and harassment, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and religion?

Support

Comments: I strongly support this bill.

Q.10 – At least 75 countries criminalize consensual same-sex sexual relationships, with as many as 10 punishing consensual same-sex conduct with the death penalty. Transgender individuals also face laws that criminalize their identities and create significant barriers to their health and safety. Do you believe that LGBT rights are human rights and that U.S. national security is strengthened by protecting, supporting, and defending the human rights of LGBT people abroad?

Support

I also strongly support setting a national goal for reducing oil consumption in the transportation sector, and am working to include climate resiliency as a planning goal in the bill.

Comments: I signed a letter to President Obama calling for the creation of a Special Envoy for LGBT Rights in the Department of State, and I was very pleased when that position was established earlier this year. As President, I would continue that office and make sure the United States sets the standard worldwide for treatment of the LGBT community.

Q.11 – If elected President, will you only put forth nominees for appointment to the Supreme Court that are committed to due process under the law and upholding the Equal Protection Clause for all Americans, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity?

Support

Q.12 – If elected President, will you commit to making diverse appointments of qualified, openly LGBT individuals in key positions of your Administration, to include your Cabinet and the White House?

Yes: No:

Support

Comments: Creating a diverse Cabinet and staff would absolutely be a goal of mine.

Q.13 – There are approximately 15,500 actively serving transgender members of the U.S. military, making the Department of Defense the largest employer of transgender people in America. The Pentagon is currently reviewing its regulations to permit open service. If elected President, will you support new regulations allowing open service by all qualified transgender people?

Support

Comments: If a person is willing and able to serve, that person should be able to serve regardless of gender identity.

Q.14 – President Obama issued a historic Executive Order prohibiting discrimination against transgender employees of the federal government and prohibiting federal contractors from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. If elected President, will you leave that order in place?

Support

Comments: We absolutely must end LGBT discrimination in the workplace. My state of Vermont passed a law protecting lesbian and gay employees back in 1992 and I cannot believe this is still an issue. I voted for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act in 2013, but Republicans in the House would not even allow a vote on the issue. As President, I will fight to finally sign a law extending protections to all LGBT workers.

Q.15 – This questionnaire addresses most of the key federal issues impacting the LGBT community, but there are many others, including youth homelessness, the ban on gay and bisexual men donating blood, significant gaps in data collection, inability to access to medically-necessary health care, and critically important cultural competency training. If elected President, will you work to address the full range of LGBT concerns across the federal government?

Yes

Comments: I have voted to ban discrimination against homeless LGBT youth. I have consistently supported efforts to get FDA to change its blood donation policy, and while the FDA made a change for the better, we still must move to a policy backed by science, which assesses risk of the individual donor. There is obviously much more to be done, and I will work very hard to ensure no LGBT American faces discrimination.

Q.16 – Please share policy positions not mentioned above that you have publicly taken on ballot measures, legislation or non-policy related matters that affect the LGBT community, including in legislatures, businesses, the legal realm or the media.

Comments: I have been a longtime supporter of LGBT rights. As Mayor of Burlington, I passed one of the nation's first LGBT anti-discrimination laws and supported the city's very first Pride Parade in 1983. My state of Vermont has been a leader on this issue, and I have supported all of its progress, from banning discrimination for lesbians and gays in 1992, adding protections for transgender people in 2007, adopting civil unions in 2000, and allowing marriage in 2009. I have a lifetime perfect score from the Human Rights Campaign and I aim to keep that score intact.

HRC works in coalition with many organizations to achieve equality and justice. Please indicate your positions on these key issues:

Q.17 – Do you support the Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R. 2867/S. 1659), a bill that protects access to the polls for all Americans by addressing the modern day challenges of voting discrimination and restoring the full protections of the Voting Rights Act?

Support

Comments: It is an abomination that Congress has not yet restored the full protections of the Voting Rights Act. But we must go further. We must make it easier, not harder, to vote. I have introduced legislation to make Election Day a national holiday, but that is only a first step. I have also introduced legislation to provide for automatic voter registration – the burden of registering voters must be on the state, not the individual voter. We must re-enfranchise the millions of Americans who have had their right to vote taken away by a felony conviction, and I have supported legislation to do so. We must expand early voting, and make no-fault absentee ballots an option for all voters.

We also need to make sure that there are sufficient polling places and poll workers to prevent long lines from forming at the polls anywhere.

Q.18 – Do you support a woman's right to make decisions about her own reproductive health, including a right to safe and accessible abortion?

Support

Comments I am a strong supporter of a woman’s right to choose, earning a 100% pro-choice score from [NARAL](#). These latest attacks against Planned Parenthood are simply part of a long-term smear campaign by people who want to deny women in this country the right to control their own bodies. We must expand Title X funding, not defund it entirely as Republicans have proposed. We must also fight back against TRAP laws and other restrictions that do not actually affect patient safety.

Q.19 – Do you support comprehensive immigration reform with a path to legal citizenship for law-abiding residents currently in the United States?

Support

Comments: As President, I will fight to sign comprehensive immigration reform into law to bring over 11 million undocumented workers out of the shadows. We cannot continue to run an economy where millions are made so vulnerable because of their undocumented status. I also will oppose tying immigration reform to the building of a border fence. Undocumented workers come to the United States to escape economic hardship and political persecution. Tying reform to unrealistic and unwise border patrol proposals renders the promise illusory for millions seeking legal status.

This country faces enormous problems and they will not be solved unless we are united. It is time to end the politics of division in this country.

We cannot and we should not be talking about sweeping up millions of men, women, and children – many of whom have been here for years – and throwing them out of the country. That’s wrong and that type of discussion has got to end.



Candidate Signature: _____

Candidate Name: Bernard Sanders

Office Sought: President of the United States