

# GUARDIAN

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Primary Election Day is August 23 – all candidate Q&A responses are available at [www.hrcncf.org](http://www.hrcncf.org)

## HRCNCF Queries Gainesville, Alachua County, School Board, State House & Senate and Congressional candidates on LGBTQ Issues

The Human Rights Council of North Central Florida (HRCNCF) received responses to its candidate questionnaire from candidates appearing on both the August 23 primary ballot and the November 8 general election ballot.

Due to the total length of responses, all candidate questionnaire responses are available online only at HRCNCF's website at [www.hrcncf.org](http://www.hrcncf.org).

Primary Election Day is August 23, with early voting running daily in Alachua County from 9 AM to 6 PM Saturday, August 13 to Saturday, August 20 at these voting sites: the Supervisor of Elections office at 515 N. Main St., the Millhopper and Tower Road libraries, the UF J. Wayne Reitz Union, Legacy Park Multipurpose Center in Alachua, Orange Heights Baptist Church and the Alachua County Agriculture and Equestrian Center in Newberry.

### **Gainesville Mayor & City Commission races:**

A total of nine candidates are running for Gainesville Mayor since Mayor Lauren Poe is now termed out.

“Harvey Ward not only had excellent questionnaire responses but as city commissioner he has been solidly supportive and knowledgeable on LGBTQ issues,” said HRCNCF President Flo Turcotte. She noted that city Commissioner David Arreola also provided good answers and has a history of involvement in local LGBTQ issues and events.

Three district races are also up for grabs with district boundaries changed due to redistricting. All are open seats with the current commissioners termed out.

“Exceptional responses were submitted by James Ingle, Casey Willits and Bryan Eastman who are running for city commissioner in Districts 2, 3, and 4 respectively,” said Turcotte. “Each of these candidates

### **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 in-person voting runs from August 13-20 daily from 9 AM to 6 PM at the following locations: Alachua County Supervisor of Elections, 515 N. Main St., Millhopper Library, 3145 NW 43<sup>rd</sup> St., Tower Road Library, 3020 SW 75<sup>th</sup> St., Legacy Park Multipurpose Center, 15400 Peggy Road in Alachua, Orange Heights Baptist Church, 16700 NE State Road 26 in Hawthorne, the University of Florida J. Wayne Reitz Union, 655 Reitz Union Drive, and the Alachua County Agriculture and Equestrian Center, 23100 W. Newberry Road in Newberry.

**Vote on Election Day:** Vote in your own polling precinct from 7 AM to 7 PM on August 23.

has a long history of involvement in LGBTQ issues locally.”

Turcotte also noted that, if elected, Casey Willits will serve as the only openly LGBTQ city commissioner. She also noted that in the District 4 race, Christian Newman also provided very good responses to the candidate questionnaire and is clearly supportive of LGBTQ issues.

### **Alachua County Commission races:**

One County Commission race will appear on the Democratic primary ballot with incumbent Commissioner Marihelen Wheeler facing off against Charlie Ray Jackson in the District 2 race. The winner

of that race will face Republican Ed Braddy on the Nov. 8 general election ballot. Braddy is the current Chair of the county's Republican Party and a former Gainesville commissioner (and later mayor) who voted against extending gender identity protections in the city's nondiscrimination ordinance.

"Commissioner Wheeler has an outstanding record as county commissioner," said Turcotte.

Because incumbent Commissioners Ken Cornell and Mary Alford do not face Democratic challengers, they will only appear on the Nov. 8 ballot. Commissioner Alford resigned about a month ago due to questions about her residency in the district; she now faces Republican Raemi Eagle-Glenn who has described herself as "Ultra MAGA". Eagle-Glenn was appointed by the Governor to fill Alford's seat on the Commission.

"Both Cornell and Alford have been long standing supporters of the LGBTQ community," said Turcotte who also noted that having an openly lesbian county commissioner such as Alford is an added plus noting that "it's important that we have a place at the table when it comes to LGBTQ rights."

#### **School Board of Alachua County races:**

Four Alachua County School Board races are on the ballot with only two candidates per race, so the August 23 election will decide the winner of all four seats. School Board candidates must reside in certain districts, but all county voters may cast a ballot in these nonpartisan races.

"We're very fortunate to have great School Board candidates in incumbent Tina Certain, Diyonne McGraw, Sarah Rockwell and Prescott Cowles," said Turcotte. "It's clear from their responses and civic engagement that we they care deeply about LGBTQ issues which, for good or ill, are now front and center in Florida politics."

District 2 candidate and former School Board member Diyonne McGraw will face off against Governor DeSantis appointee Mildred Russell. McGraw was forced out of office by the Governor when it was discovered that she lived outside her district.

#### **State House & Senate races:**

With state house and senate districts newly drawn for redistricting, HRCNCF sent questionnaires to state House Districts 21 and 22, and to state Senate District 9.

Incumbent Democratic District 21 representative Yvonne Hayes Hinson faces off against Republican

opponent Hollye Merton. "Representative Hayes Hinson has been an outspoken LGBTQ rights supporter for decades and has demonstrated the same commitment in Tallahassee," said Turcotte. "We're fortunate to have her there given the regressive, anti-LGBTQ laws – such as the "Don't Say Gay" bill – flowing out of the state capitol.

As for state House District 22, there will be primary elections for both parties, with Olysha Magruder and Brandon Peters facing off in the Democratic primary, and incumbent Chuck Clemons and Ty Appiah facing off in the Republican primary. Representative Clemons voted for the "Don't Say Gay" bill during the past legislative session.

"We were impressed with the thoughtful and knowledgeable questionnaire responses from both Magruder and Peters," said Turcotte.

Candidates Appiah and Clemons did not return questionnaire responses.

In the state Senate District 9 race, Democrat Rodney Long is challenging incumbent Senator Keith Perry who has supported the Governor's anti-LGBTQ legislation. Rodney Long has the distinction of being an early supporter of gay and lesbian rights when as Gainesville City Commissioner in 1992 he voted for the hanging of gay Pride banners along University Avenue. That vote helped to ignite the gay rights activism of the early 1990s in Gainesville and Alachua County.

#### **U.S. Congress races:**

In the race for U.S. Congress Florida District 3, Democrats Danielle Hawk and Tom Wells responded to the candidate questionnaire. Whoever wins the primary will likely face Republican incumbent Kat Cammack who has been a consistent opponent of LGBTQ rights in Congress. She voted against the Equality Act which would provide explicit nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ individuals nationwide.

In addition to voting early in person from Saturday, August 13 to Saturday, August 20, voters may request a vote-by-mail ballot by calling the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections Office at 352-374-5252 or ordering one on-line at [www.votealachua.com](http://www.votealachua.com). On Primary Election Day, Tuesday, August 23, voters must go to their assigned precinct polling locations to cast a ballot.

The *Guardian* newsletter is published quarterly and is available for viewing online at [www.hrcncf.org](http://www.hrcncf.org).

**Visit [www.hrcncf.org](http://www.hrcncf.org) to view all candidate questionnaire responses**