

GUARDIAN

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General Election Day is November 8 – all candidate Q&A responses are available at www.hrcncf.org

HRCNCF Queries Gainesville, Alachua County, 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 the November 8 general election ballot.

Due to the length of responses, all candidate questionnaire responses are available online only at HRCNCF's website at www.hrcncf.org.

General Election Day is November 8, with early voting running daily from 9 AM to 6 PM Monday, October 24 to Saturday, November 5 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. On Sunday, November 6, early voting is also available, but only at the Supervisor of Elections office.

Gainesville Mayor & City Commission races:

Three of four Gainesville races from the August 23 ballot will head to a runoff on the general election ballot. Gainesville City Commissioner Harvey Ward led the pack of nine candidates for Gainesville Mayor with 28% of the vote. He will face Ed Bielarski who garnered 26% of the vote.

“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.

In Gainesville City Commission District 2, Ed Book and James Ingle will head to the runoff, while in District 3 Casey Willits will face Dejeon Cain in the runoff. In District 4 Bryan Eastman won his election outright on the August 23 primary election ballot.

“Exceptional responses were submitted by James Ingle and Casey Willits who are running for city commissioner in Districts 2 and 3 respectively,” said Turcotte. Each of these candidates has a long history of involvement in

Three ways to vote:

Vote by Mail: Contact the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections at 352-374-5252 or at www.VoteAlachua.com to have a ballot mailed to you.

Vote Early: Early in-person voting runs from October 24 to November 5 daily from 9 AM to 6 PM at the following locations: Alachua County Supervisor of Elections, 515 N. Main St., Millhopper Library, 3145 NW 43rd St., Tower Road Library, 3020 SW 75th 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. On Sunday, November 6, early in-person voting is also available but only at the Supervisor of Elections office.

Vote on Election Day: Vote in your own polling precinct from 7 AM to 7 PM on Tuesday, November 8.

Vote NO

Alachua County Charter Amendment to Provide for County Commissioner Elections in Single-Member Districts

Visit www.hrcncf.org to view complete candidate questionnaire responses.

LGBTQ issues locally.

She noted that, if elected, Casey Willits would be the only openly LGBTQ commissioner on the commission.

Alachua County Commission races and charter amendment:

Three County Commission races appear on the November 8 ballot along with two county referendums. District 2 Democratic incumbent Commissioner Marihelen Wheeler faces off against Republican Ed Braddy who is the current Chair of the county Republican Party and a former Gainesville mayor who opposed extending LGBT protections in the city's nondiscrimination ordinance.

"Commissioner Wheeler has an outstanding record as county commissioner," said Turcotte, noting that Wheeler's opponent Ed Braddy has been a consistent voice opposing LGBTQ rights.

In District 4, Democratic incumbent Commissioner Ken Cornell faces off against Republican Van Elmore and Anthony Johnson (NPA) while in District 1 Mary Alford faces off against Republican incumbent commissioner Raemi Eagle-Glenn who has described herself as "Ultra MAGA".

"Both Ken Cornell and Mary Alford have been long standing supporters of the LGBTQ community," said Turcotte. She added that having an openly LGBTQ 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."

HRCNCF announced its NO endorsement of an Alachua County charter amendment which, if passed, would make all five county commissioners elected from single-member districts. The amendment was sponsored by a majority of local state legislators in spite of the opposition of the county commission. If passed, voters would be limited to voting for one county commissioner instead of voting for all five, which is currently the case.

"We strongly encourage voters to reject this charter amendment, which drastically reduces accountability of our elected officials to county voters," said Turcotte.

State House & Senate races:

With state house and senate districts having been redrawn for redistricting, HRCNCF sent questionnaires to candidates running in state House Districts 21 and 22, and in Senate District 9.

Incumbent Democratic District 21 representative Yvonne Hayes Hinson faces off against Republican opponent Hollye Merton. "Representative Hinson has been a reliable and 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 passage of regressive, anti-LGBTQ laws such as the 'Don't Say Gay' bill."

As for state House District 22, Brandon Peters won his Democratic primary contest to challenge Republican incumbent Representative Chuck Clemons who supported the anti-gay bills – including the "Don't Say Gay" bill – that the Governor had championed this past session.

"We were impressed with Brandon Peters' questionnaire responses. We believe he has an excellent shot at replacing anti-LGBTQ incumbent Chuck Clemons," said Turcotte.

Clemons did not return questionnaire responses.

In the State Senate District 9 race, Democrat Rodney Long faces off against Republican incumbent Senator Keith Perry who, like Clemons, has supported the Governor's anti-LGBTQ legislation. The redrawn district includes half of Gainesville and Alachua County along with half of Marion County.

Rodney Long has the distinction of being an early supporter of gay and lesbian rights when, as Gainesville City Commissioner in 1992, he voted to permit the hanging of gay Pride banners along University Avenue. That vote in part resulted in an explosion of gay rights activism in the early 1990s in Gainesville and Alachua County.

U.S. Congress races:

For U.S. Congress Florida District 3, Linda Brooks (NPA) and Democrat Danielle Hawk face off against Republican incumbent Kat Cammack who had been an opponent of LGBTQ rights in Congress. She voted against the Equality Act which would provide explicit nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ individuals nationwide. Interestingly, Cammack recently voted for the Respect for Marriage Act, which seeks to codify marriage equality into federal law, a vote which surprised some of her supporters and opponents alike.

Turcotte noted that Danielle Hawk provided excellent responses to the candidate questionnaire, adding: "If elected, Hawk would provide local constituents a much-needed progressive voice in Washington."

In addition to voting early from October 24 to November 6, 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. On General Election Day, November 8, voters must go to their own assigned precinct polling locations to cast a ballot.

The *Guardian* newsletter is published quarterly and is available for viewing online at www.hrcncf.org.

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