

STONEWALL DEMOCRATS of Western New York

PO Box 857, Buffalo, NY 14205

Website: www.SDWNy.org

OFFICERS

May 2014

Bryan Ball
President

Kitty Lambert-Rudd
*Vice President
Political Affairs*

Nola Trotter
*Vice President
Community Affairs*

Ronald Groth
Treasurer

Robin Jansma
Secretary

Dear United States Congressional Candidate,

Stonewall Democrats of Western New York is the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and queer (LGBTQ) Democratic voice in western New York. We are the largest LGBTQ political organization in WNY, working to advance the civil rights of the LGBTQ community in our community and government and elect Democrats who are supportive of the civil rights movement and other progressive issues important to our community. Since the 1990's, our membership has included community activists and citizens, straight allies and representatives from city, county, state and federal government.

Our endorsement process for the 2014 election season has begun. With increasingly discriminatory action and language being taken and used by House Republicans, issues of LGBTQ civil rights in Congress are at an incredibly precarious place. Among the issues most important to our community are several pieces of legislation and policies—a transgender-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act and LGBTQ-inclusive immigration reform, among others. As a candidate for the United States Congress, we are interested in your candidacy, which provides you with an opportunity to vote on these important measures. We would like to provide you with the opportunity to engage in our process for endorsement by Stonewall Democrats of WNY. As you may know, an endorsement from Stonewall Democrats of WNY is important to many local LGBTQ community members, as well as our family, friends and supporters, as they decide whether to volunteer for particular campaigns and as they prepare to head for the polls to cast their vote.



An Affiliate of



To be considered for endorsement, please complete and **at your earliest convenience**, so that we may consider endorsement for your candidacy at one of our next meetings. **The completed questionnaire should be either emailed to endorsements@sdwny.org, faxed to (716) 853-2448 (Attention: Bryan Ball, Stonewall Democrats of WNY) or mailed to:**

Attention: Endorsement/GOTV Committee
Stonewall Democrats of WNY
PO Box 857
Buffalo, NY 14205

You should also be aware that our revised endorsement process is attached. Should you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us. We thank you and look forward to receiving your completed questionnaire for consideration for endorsement by Stonewall Democrats of WNY.

Sincerely,

Bryan Ball
President, Stonewall Democrats of Western New York

Stonewall Democrats of Western New York Endorsement Process

Candidates for elected office who wish to be considered for endorsement must complete our questionnaire and schedule an interview appointment with the membership at a general meeting.

Endorsement of a candidate requires a vote of sixty percent of the membership present at that meeting. If no candidate receives the required sixty percent vote for endorsement, subsequent ballots shall be taken deleting the candidate receiving the least number of votes or no votes on the previous ballot.

If, after the completion of balloting, no candidate has received the sixty percent of the vote required, candidates may be rated as “acceptable,” “unacceptable,” or “no position,” depending upon the candidate’s record and/or position statements. If sixty percent of those voting cannot agree on a rating, the candidate will be assigned the rating of “no consensus.”

If a candidate is endorsed, the remaining candidates will not be rated.

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2014 ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE – UNITED STATES CONGRESS (HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES)

Name: James D. O'Donnell

Campaign Address: 62 Hilltowne Dr. Orchard Park, NY 14127

Email: jim@votejimodonnell.com

Phone: 716-830-2795 Fax: 716-299-3493

Office Sought: NY27 Congressional District

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Before you continue, please understand that:

- Stonewall Democrats of WNY may publicize your responses in press releases and voters' guides, on our web site, and via other channels of communication. Stonewall Democrats of WNY will also identify candidates who fail to respond to this questionnaire.
- Stonewall Democrats of WNY will hold you publicly accountable for actions inconsistent with your responses during your campaign and if elected during your term in office.
- Stonewall Democrats of WNY will not consider endorsement of any candidate if they support any state or national version of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) legislation.
- Stonewall Democrats of WNY will not consider endorsement of any candidate if they advertise on or support any homophobic website.

Part 1:

Please submit your typewritten responses to the following questions on a separate sheet.

1) Why are you seeking this office?

I am seeking this office because I believe that my district deserves better representation than what the current representative is providing. I believe that our government is capable of doing great things for the people it is meant to serve. However, due to the majority of representatives representing their party over their constituency, the government is incapable of doing even the mediocre things and therefore they don't even try to be great. I believe I can change that.

2) Why are you seeking the endorsement of the Stonewall Democrats of WNY?

I would like your endorsement because your group represents something that should not be – hear me out. There shouldn't be a group of any faction of people that are so disenfranchised by the government that is supposed to be representing them that they feel the need to form a lobbying group. Lobbying groups, by their very purpose, are supposed to be entities solely formed and/or employed by groups that seek the government's approval or aid in doing something that the government wouldn't naturally do. After all, if the government is representative, as it is intended to be, every congressman or woman would be all the only lobbyist a normal citizen, such as the people you represent, would ever need. The fact that normal citizens need a lobbying group just to convince the government to allow them to live their lives as they please, and as they were meant to, is an indictment on the very core of the system of government we

have. I am seeking your endorsement because I want to end the need for your group and groups like yours across the country, and I need everyone's help to do it.

3) What three issues do you consider to be most important to the people served by the office you seek, and how have you/can you use said office to benefit these issues?

I think for everyone, regardless of what subgroup of the population you fall within, the economy is the biggest issue that needs to be addressed. There hasn't been a lot that I have been able to do as a private citizen on any national issue, but I have tried to change things as much as I could on the micro level whenever I see something that is wrong. When it comes to the economy I have been offering free legal/business guidance to any new business that seeks my aid. In fact, one of those small businesses, Custom Builders of WNY, has started to flourish and I will, later this year, be investing in them and forming an even larger company that will employ many more people and assist our local economy. As a representative I will enact tax reform that will bring confidence back to the business world and assist in expansions across the country. More importantly though, the reforms will allow more people to enter the middle class and be comfortable within it.

On similar line as that above, education is what I consider the second most important issue. Access to good education on a local level should be a goal of all representatives. Also, reformation of the way our students pay for that education should be of paramount importance. Currently the federal government spends around \$120 billion on student aid and subsidizing loans. If the federal government simply paid for every student in a public college to attend school free of charge it would only cost around \$90 billion. Because people are afraid of being called the "bad names" like socialist or communist they run away from something like socialized education even though it would save the country money and at the same time allow students to buy houses and invest in our economy rather than be tied down by endless student debt. If elected I would push for free public college.

There are so many issues that need to be addressed, but the last I will mention, to stay in line with this economy theme, is the minimum wage. I will pass a hike to the minimum wage if elected for two specific reasons: it is good for our country and it is excellent for NY. It is good for America because it will assist in pulling people out of poverty, lower our tax burden due to programs such as snap, increase our tax base due to the higher wages, and incentivize people around the country to take on jobs that they might not have in the past because the pay wasn't worth their time. It is good for NY because we have already passed a minimum wage hike, and because of the uneducated media types that are consistently badmouthing the minimum wage some companies have actually bought into the hype they have created and may choose not to relocate to NY or just not start up in NY because our wages are higher than in some southern states. If we pass a national hike to the minimum wage the country will eventually see it was not the job killer it was made out to be, and higher wages in NY will no longer be a "reason" jobs don't find their way here. As a private citizen I have written numerous articles on this issue and have distributed them to outlets across the state and country in order to try and assist in convincing legislators to do the right thing.

4) What three civil rights issues do you perceive to be the most important to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) community?

For all of the following issues I have not done anything as a private citizen to bring about any real change on these issues other than to raise my children to not just be tolerant of people that are different from them, but to stop even recognizing them as different. I believe that whether it is an issue of race, sex, gender, ethnicity, religion, or any other group, the only way to ever actually stop inequality is for us to stop accepting the basis on which these inequalities exist. In the past I thought that the basis I mentioned is a belief that people are different, but it's not, it's a belief that people are alike. Until we teach ourselves and our children that they are different from everyone, and everyone is different from them, and no matter what those differences are, they are a good thing, then equality will never actually be achieved.

I have my own personal reasons for wanting to change the way people see each other, but I would not like this paragraph to be published or shared, once again for personal reasons. DO NOT PUBLISH. When I was 18 I was drugged by a family friend who then tried to rape me while I was passed out. I woke up sometime after he started and pushed him off and drove directly to a police station. I only had them call

my parents to come and get me, but I told him that I told the police. He then killed himself. The reason I don't tell people, and don't want you telling anyone is because I don't want that story to ever be used as a rallying cry against gay people. His actions were not specifically because he was gay, they were because he was sick. I believe that mental disorder was brought about because of all of the negativity about the fact that he was gay. He hid it for so long because of a shame that shouldn't have existed and that is would I believe led to his actions. I don't want anyone to go through what I went through, and one way I can help stop that in the future is to stop giving people reasons to be ashamed of who they are. **DO NOT PUBLISH – END.**

The three issues specifically for LGBTQ people I will address are quality in marriage, equality in the workplace, and equality in our schools. I will push to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act, and I will support legislation that precludes employers and schools from even considering someone's gender when they are seeking employment/admission.

5) Stonewall Democrats of WNY strongly believes that candidates have a responsibility to provide voters with truthful, fair and clean campaigns for public office and to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to a civil, issue-oriented debate with their fellow candidates. Will you sign a written pledge to conduct your campaign accordingly? **Yes I would.**

6) If endorsed by the Stonewall Democrats of WNY, will you list the endorsement on all applicable campaign literature (i.e., all literature listing any other endorsements)? **Yes**

7) If endorsed by the Stonewall Democrats of WNY, will you attend a LGBTQ community forum to introduce endorsed candidates? **Yes**

8) What are you doing or what will you do to advocate for greater LGBTQ representation and empowerment at the ballot box and in elected office locally? **I do not know what could or should be done on this issue, but would be happy to work with people such as your group to implement the changes necessary to fix whatever problems still exist.**

9) Are you willing to meet with members of the LGBTQ advocacy community to discuss how you may be an even stronger advocate for LGBTQ civil rights? **Yes**

10) What are your views on amending the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include LGBTQ persons? **Honestly, my feelings are mixed. I personally think that laws such as the one mentioned, as well meaning as they may be, institutionalize separate categories of citizens. I would prefer that the government simply not recognize these differences at all. However, I understand that our society is not yet at that point, so my answer is probably yes.**

11) HIV/AIDS remains one of the major national concerns of our times. What are your views on appropriations for HIV/AIDS programs, such as those established through the Ryan White CARE Act and HIV Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)? **I do not know enough about the programs to respond.**

Part 2:

Please indicate your level of support or non-support for the state legislative priorities listed below based on the following rating system:

Sponsor: I will sponsor (or am a sponsor of) and will vote for this legislation

Cosponsor: I will cosponsor (or am a cosponsor of) and will vote for this legislation.

Vote For: I am not a sponsor or cosponsor of this legislation, but I will vote for this legislation

Oppose: I will actively oppose this legislation

Legislation	Sponsor	Cosponsor	Vote for	Oppose
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<p>Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) (H.R. 1755/S. 815): A bill which would extend federal employment discrimination protections currently provided on the basis of race, religion, national origin, age and disability to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.</p>		x		
<p>Uniting American Families Act (UAFA) (H.R. 519/S. 296; “Reuniting American Families Act” HR. 717.): A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate discrimination in the immigration laws by permitting permanent partners of United States citizens and lawful permanent residents to obtain lawful permanent resident status in the same manner as spouses of citizens and lawful permanent residents and to penalize immigration fraud in connection with permanent partnerships.</p>	X			
<p>Respect for Marriage Act (RMA) (H.R. 1236/ S. 2523) /Repealing the “Defense of Marriage Act” (DOMA, Public Law No. 104-199, 110 Stat. 2419): RMA would repeal the DOMA legislation, which is a multi-layered law which invalidates, federally, a marriage between two persons of the same gender. It states that no state needs treat a relationship between persons of the same sex as a marriage, even if the relationship is considered a marriage in another state. It also states that the federal government defines marriage as a legal union exclusively between one man and one woman.</p>	X			
<p>Student Non-Discrimination Act (HR. 1652 / S.1088): Prohibits any school program or activity receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating against any public school student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.</p>	X			
<p>Safe Schools Improvement Act (HR 1199 / S. 403): Would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to require schools and districts receiving federal funds adopt codes of conduct to prohibit bullying and harassment, including but not limited to those based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.</p>				I would not oppose this legislation but I also would not support it

<p>Early Treatment for HIV Act (112th Congress- not yet introduced 113th: HR. 1616/S.833): Would permit state Medicaid programs to cover low-income, HIV- positive Americans before they develop AIDS. The act would amend Title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide states with the option of covering low-income HIV infected individuals as “categorically needy.”</p>	X			
<p>Domestic Partner Benefits and Obligations Act (HR. 3135/ S. 1529): The bill would provide domestic partnership benefits to all federal civilian employees on the same basis as spousal benefits.</p>	X			
<p>The Family and Medical Leave Inclusion Act (HR. 1751 / S. 846): Would grant essential benefits to working families by providing twelve weeks of paid FMLA coverage to employees seeking leave to take care of their families, including leave for a domestic partner or children.</p>		X		
<p>Reconnecting Youth to Prevent Homelessness Act (Not yet introduced in the 113th Congress): Would require the Secretary of the Health and Human Services establish a demonstration project to develop programs that are focused on improving family relationships and reducing homelessness for LGBT youth.</p>			X	
<p>Every Child Deserves a Family Act (HR. 2028 / S. 1069): Would prohibit any public welfare agency receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating against any potential foster or adoptive family on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or marital status.</p>	X			
<p>Military Spouses Equal Treatment Act (HR: 683/ S. 373): Would provide equal benefits to families of legally married lesbian and gay service members and veterans.</p>		X		

HIV Organ Policy Equity (HOPE) Act (HR: 698/ S. 330): Would permit HIV positive donor organs to be used for transplant in HIV-positive patients, a currently prohibited procedure.		X		
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I attest that this questionnaire represents my opinion of the issues on this questionnaire:

Candidate's Signature:  _____

Date: 06/9/2014

Please complete the attached issues surveys, sign below and return questionnaire **by either by email to endorsements@sdwny.org, faxed to (716) 853-2448 (Attention: Bryan Ball, Stonewall Democrats of WNY) or mailed to:**

Attention: Endorsement/GOTV Committee
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