

STONEWALL DEMOCRATS of Western New York

PO Box 857, Buffalo, NY 14205

Website: www.sdwny.org

OFFICERS

July 2016

Bryan Ball
President

Kitty Lambert-Rudd
Vice President
Political Affairs

Nola Trotter
Vice President
Community Affairs

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Treasurer

Cory Promowicz
Secretary

Dear Erie County District Attorney candidate,

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

We have begun our 2016 election season. As a candidate for Erie County District Attorney, we are interested in your candidacy and would like to provide you with the opportunity to engage in our candidate forum and process for endorsement by SDWNY. As you may know, an endorsement from SDWNY is important to many LGBT 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. We are interested in the Erie County District Attorney election not only as members of the LGBT community, but as families, parents and taxpayers, who are residents of Erie County. We look forward to working with candidates for District Attorney intent on promoting the well being, safety and dignity of all people in Western NY.

To be considered for endorsement, please complete and **return the enclosed questionnaire to us at your earliest convenience**, so that we may consider endorsement for the school board at our next meeting on. Please contact Bryan Ball (716-541-5557) to schedule a time for your interview. **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 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

Bryan Ball
President, Stonewall Democrats of Western New York
Bryan_Ball@sdwny.org

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.

Please Note:

Stonewall Democrats of Western New York Buffalo Board of Education Candidate Forum 2016

Due to the number of candidates running for district office to the Buffalo Board of Education, all endorsement interviews at our candidate forum will be scheduled in fifteen minute intervals. Interview will consist of a candidate’s presentation (five minutes) and a question and answer portion (ten minutes—at maximum.)

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2016 ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE – ERIE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Name: _____ Michael J. Flaherty, Jr. _____

Campaign Address: 329 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14222 _____

Email: mjfr@me.com _____

Phone: 716-984-6768 _____ Fax: _____ n/a _____

Other Party Lines Being Sought/Obtained: _____

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, which was deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States.

Part 1:

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

- 1) Why are you seeking this office?
- 2) Why are you seeking the endorsement of the Stonewall Democrats of WNY?
- 3) What three issues do you consider to be most important to the people served by the office you seek? For each issue:
 - a) Provide an example of specific action you have previously taken--either as a public official or as a private citizen--to bring about positive change relative to this issue; and
 - b) Specify what additional action in regard to this issue you intend to propose if elected to the office you seek.
- 4) What three civil rights issues do you perceive to be the most important to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, our children and our families? For each issue:
 - a) Provide an example of specific action(s) you have previously taken--either as a public official or as a private citizen--to bring about positive change relative to this issue; and
 - b) Specify what additional action(s) in regard to this issue you intend to propose if elected to the office you seek.
- 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. Would you sign a written pledge to conduct your campaign accordingly?

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)?

7) If endorsed by the Stonewall Democrats of WNY, would you attend a LGBT community forum to introduce endorsed candidates?

8) What are you doing or what will you do to advocate for greater LGBT representation and empowerment at the ballot box and in elected office through the Board of Education locally?

20) Would you knowingly seek endorsement of or advertise on any homophobic media?

Yes

No

I attest that this questionnaire represents my opinion of the issues on this questionnaire:

Candidate's Signature: _____

Date: 14 July 2016

Please complete the attached issues surveys, sign below and return questionnaire, surveys and your resume **at your earliest convenience** by email to endorsements@sdwny.org, faxed to (716) 853-2448 (Attention: **Endorsement Committee, Stonewall Democrats of WNY**) or mailed to:

Attention: Endorsement Committee

Stonewall Democrats of WNY

PO Box 857

Buffalo, NY 14205

Michael J. Flaherty, Jr.

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1) Why are you seeking this office?

I have dedicated my career to representing the public in the criminal justice system and this office will allow me to seek justice for all. During my time as the Acting District Attorney, the office has moved forward on several initiatives that will benefit the public good. It is important that we elect a District Attorney who will prosecute political corruption, address the opioid epidemic, and continue to engage in the community outreach program we started this year.

I am a career prosecutor who believes that politics and party bosses have no place in the District Attorney's Office. I am running as an independent voice and will not be ruled by the party establishment. The Democratic Party went to great lengths to find a candidate to run against me - settling on their second choice - because I would not bend to their will; I absolutely believe in the principle that the District Attorney must remain independent of party politics.

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

I am a progressive Democrat and have been my entire life. Part of being a progressive candidate is believing in equality for all individuals and standing up to people who threaten that right. My opponent has accepted the endorsement of the Erie County Conservative Party which opposes marriage equality.

I seek the endorsement of the Stonewall Democrats because, like the Stonewall Democrats, I am a fighter. I've spent a career fighting for justice and equality and will stand with you in your fight for equality.

3) What three issues do you consider to be most important to the people served by the office you seek? For each issue:

1. That people continue to feel safe and secure in their communities.
2. That we aggressively pursue political corruption.
3. That we address the opioid epidemic that is destroying our community.

a) Provide an example of specific action you have previously taken--either as a public official or as a private citizen--to bring about positive change relative to this issue; and

1. In order for people to feel safe and secure in our community, the District Attorney's Office must be accessible and engaging. We need to open a dialogue and have very important conversations with the community to address their needs. On my first day in office, I established a community outreach program. The program is designed to engage local organizations and to bring the District Attorney's Office to them. We send prosecutors out into the community to participate in on meetings with community groups and assure these groups that we are there to help and want to learn what we can do better. The program has been a tremendous success and we look forward to continuing it. I made it a priority that my office be welcoming and engaging so we can address the needs of the community.

2. On my first day in office I also established a Public Integrity Bureau to address public corruption. In the wake of the investigation and criminal conviction of the State Senate Majority Leader and the Speaker of the State Assembly, I thought it was necessary to establish a unit to investigate complaints against public officials. This is not popular among the political establishment, but - quite frankly - I do not care. It is necessary and we need to address this issue.

3. I also established a narcotics unit on my first day in office. While the unit deals with all narcotics investigations, there has been a focus on heroin and opioid cases. We are working to hold drug dealers accountable while helping those who have been afflicted with addiction seek treatment. It is a delicate balance and I felt it was important to have prosecutors focused exclusively on this issue.

b) Specify what additional action in regard to this issue you intend to propose if elected to the office you seek.

If elected, I will continue what we started. I will also be responsive to the needs of the community and am willing to adapt as needed.

Michael J. Flaherty, Jr.

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

1. The three issues above are as important to the LGBT community as they are to the community as a whole.
2. Protection against hate crimes.
3. Equality in the work place.

For each issue:

a) Provide an example of specific action(s) you have previously taken--either as a public official or as a private citizen--to bring about positive change relative to this issue; and

1. See above.
2. I would support legislation to strengthen penal law crimes and/or sentencing enhancements specific to hate crimes.
3. I have worked hard to diversify the hiring process in the District Attorney's office. As a member of the hiring committee in the prior administration and as Acting District Attorney, we have increased the number of LGBT members on our staff.

b) Specify what additional action(s) in regard to this issue you intend to propose if elected to the office you seek.

I will continue our hiring practice because I believe a diverse work place is best suited for addressing the needs of the community.

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. Would you sign a written pledge to conduct your campaign accordingly?

Yes. I have not uttered one unkind word about my opponents. If my opponents pledge to not run negative advertisements in the election, I would agree to and stand by that pledge.

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, would you attend a LGBT community forum to introduce endorsed candidates?

Yes. As you know, I have attended and supported Stonewall Democrats of WNY for years.

8) What are you doing or what will you do to advocate for greater LGBT representation and empowerment at the ballot box and in elected office through the Board of Education locally?

As District Attorney, I cannot advocate or endorse candidates for office. It is a violation of prosecutorial ethics. Personally, I will always support progressive candidates, but cannot do so through the District Attorney's Office.

20) Would you knowingly seek endorsement of or advertise on any homophobic media?

No.