



# GLBT Alliance of Santa Cruz County Candidate Questionnaire

for endorsement in the November 2016 general election

Dear Candidate,

The GLBT Alliance is Santa Cruz County's queer political organization focusing specifically on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) political issues. We are a membership-driven, local political organization, and have been working on behalf of Santa Cruz LGBTQ community since 2001 to keep us aware of political issues and campaigns impacting LGBTQ and allied civil rights, and to help achieve and enhance those rights through advocacy and action.

As we begin our endorsement process for the 2016 election cycle, we congratulate you on declaring your candidacy and invite you to complete and submit a candidate questionnaire. Participating in our endorsement process allows our membership to get to know you, what you stand for and who you are as a candidate. It also allows us to learn about your understanding of and experiences with LGBTQ issues important to our community.

Please return questionnaires no later than Monday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, by 8 pm, to:

The GLBT Alliance of Santa Cruz County  
[glbtalliance@yahoo.com](mailto:glbtalliance@yahoo.com)

## Candidate and Campaign Information

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Candidate Name: <b>Steve Pleich</b>   |  |
| Campaign Address:   |  |
| Campaign Website: <a href="http://pleichforcouncil.com">pleichforcouncil.com</a>  |  |
| Campaign Manager Name/Email/Phone:<br>831-466-6078, <a href="mailto:spleich@gmail.com">spleich@gmail.com</a> ; Ardy Raghian - 650-521-4731 - <a href="mailto:araghian93@gmail.com">araghian93@gmail.com</a> |  |
| Office you seek to be elected to: <b>Santa Cruz City Council</b>  |  |
| Please choose the option best describing your candidacy: <b>Open Seat</b>   |  |
| Are you a member of the GLBT Alliance? <b>No</b>  |  |
| Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ community? If not, do you identify as an LGBTQ ally? <b>No and Yes</b>   |  |

## Questionnaire (please answer questions directly and keep responses succinct and brief)

1. Please describe your qualifications for the position you seek (include your key issues, priorities if elected, and any key endorsements you'd like to share), plus anything else that you'd like our members to know about you and your candidacy.

Walking in the neighborhoods and talking with voters has affirmed my belief that much remains to be done if we are to be a safe, green, affordable and resource sustainable community. As a 17 year Santa Cruz resident, I have been involved in community building and consensus building work as a legal advocate, nonprofit board member and grant writer and I understand that hard work and dedication can bring about the change we wish to see. As I walk, I am hearing concerns about the need for controlled and sensible growth combined with improved city services, an expanded parks and open spaces program, sustainable transportation, and the need for truly affordable housing and rentals - but that's not all. I am also hearing that you want "your voice" to be heard on matters that determine the future of our community. We need to restore your voice to the community by taking money out of local politics, by encouraging community members to engage in local government and by making sure that the voice of the community is heard at city hall. Help me create a community where people come first, where every voice is heard and where the community voice becomes community action. That's the vision I believe in for the future of our community.

I am very pleased to be endorsed by LGBTQ community leader and Special Parents Information Network (SPIN) Executive Director Cece Pinheiro. As Vice Chair of ACLU Santa Cruz County, I have written and spoken out for Marriage Equality and LGBTQ rights and am very proud of the accomplishments of the locally, regionally and nationally in support of these issues.

2. Why are you seeking the endorsement of Santa Cruz County's grassroots LGBTQ political organization, the GLBT Alliance?

As a council member and as a community member I would like to see more LGBTQ representation in local government and would encourage LGBTQ youth to participate in youth programs and youth council. Your endorsement would be helpful in forming the coalitions and partnerships, both in and out of government, that are the necessary building blocks of engagement. My campaign is primarily focused on support for working men and women in our community. Santa Cruz has historically been a community where working men and women have built their businesses, pursued their professional careers and raised their families. As a City Council Member, I believe I can support our local workforce in a number of ways. (1) Raise the minimum wage to a level that provides a living wage for our workers. Working men and women are the foundation of a strong, vibrant economy but they must be provided with the opportunity to earn a fair, living wage. (2) Increase the availability of affordable housing, rent-to-own

housing and rental units so that working people and young professionals have the opportunity to live here. (3) Support sensible and sustainable transportation options for work, for school and for recreation.

3. Please tell us about any past or current experiences or involvement you've had addressing LGBTQ issues, or working to support the LGBTQ community.

As previously noted, the ACLU has been both active and supportive of LGBTQ issues locally. As a chapter, we make an annual contribution to the Queer Youth Awards and table at the event when we are able. We are also a prominent participant in the annual Pride Parade.

As Chairperson of the tea Board of Directors of the Mental Health Client Action Network (MHCAN), I play a daily role in support our LGBTQ clients.

As an 8 year veteran of our local suicide hot line, I have attended Triangle Speaker presentations and am proud to say that suicide interventionist training focuses on responding to LGBTQ callers. It is a major and important part of our ongoing training which includes regular re-certification in cultural competency.

4. What political or civil rights issues were you aware of, prior to reading the attached informational materials, regarding LGBTQ equality?

In my work with the ACLU, which has been for the past five years, I have and continue to be aware of the civil liberties, civil rights and human rights issues concerning and related to the LGBTQ community. As admin on our Facebook page, it is my responsibility to keep our chapter current on all these issues and in so doing keep myself current and engaged as well.

5. What is your philosophy about working with minority communities of which you are not a member, and how will this manifest in your future work with the LGBTQ community?

I am proud of my reputation as a person who has showed up, stood up and spoken up for the rights of every member of my community. Diversity and inclusiveness will always be part of our community and my efforts in that respect reflect these values. They always have.

6. Please describe any programs you know of that impact the LGBTQ community and that are governed by or funded through the elected office you are running for, and include any suggestions you may have for improvements.

As I mentioned in my response to a previous question, I believe that LGBTQ and LGBTQ youth should be more actively engaged in council and youth council. I believe an LGBTQ commission should be mandated by council and that a proactive program partnering with local businesses to certify LGBTQ and LGBTQ YOUTH safe spaces should be initiated. More outreach to schools should be a part of any city sponsored program. These would just be the beginning of a larger, long term strategy.

7. If elected, how would you use your position to help further issues of importance to the LGBTQ community?

A city council member is our community's highest elected, most powerful and most influential position. It would be used accordingly.

8. If you receive the GLBT Alliance's endorsement, will you display it in your campaign literature?

Of course; and proudly.

## **Attachment 1: Informational Handout on Local, State and National LGBTQ Issues**

### **National LGBTQ Political Landscape**

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) recently released a report citing a surge of more than 175 anti-LGBT bills have been introduced across 32 states in 2016, and specifically names 2016 as the most dangerous year on record for transgender Americans.

Current anti-LGBT efforts include attempts to turn back the clock on marriage equality, as well as various “religious exemption” bills that would allow the use of tax-payer dollars to discriminate against same-sex couples, and laws that protect LGBT “conversion therapy,” practices.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has catalogued anti-LGBTQ legislation currently pending in states across the nation and in the federal government, by category, locality and active status. Please read through their list, here: <https://www.aclu.org/lgbt-nondiscrimination-and-anti-lgbt-bills-across-country>.

In particular, there are 44 proposed new laws across 16 states targeting transgender people. These laws would prevent transgender folks from changing the gender marker on their birth certificates, impose humiliating burdens on transgender people seeking to get married, make it harder to access gender-affirming health care, and would deny access to bathrooms that align with one’s gender identity. 23 of these bills specifically target children and students.

HRC Report on Anti-Transgender Legislation Nation-Wide:

<http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/files/assets/resources/HRC-Anti-Trans-Issue-Brief-FINAL-REV2.pdf>

The U.S. House of Representatives has introduced the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) to prohibit discrimination in hiring and employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity by employers with at least 15 employees. This legislation has been introduced in every Congress since 1994 except the 109th. Protections based on gender identity were first added to ENDA in 2007. At that time, some believed that ENDA did not have enough support with transgender inclusion to pass Congress, and gender identity was dropped it from the bill. It passed the House and then died in the Senate. In 2009, 2011 and 2013, a transgender-inclusive version of ENDA was reintroduced and in 2013, the Senate passed it with bipartisan support. However, as a result of a political maneuvering by the republican majority in 2014, a version of ENDA with a narrow religious exemption amendment was added to the 2015 defense authorization bill and was then rejected by the House Rules Committee. The legislation remains in flux to this day. Read more on ENDA, here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/815/text>.

There are many more nuanced issues facing the LGBTQ community, nationally. We encourage you to learn more about issues facing LGBTQ youth, seniors, the Latino/a LGBTQ community, immigrants and same-sex immigrant couples, transgender healthcare, transgender issues in the criminal justice system, “bathroom safety bills” and religious exemption efforts nation-wide. Please review these and more:

- Federal Judge Strikes Down Mississippi’s Same-Sex Adoption Ban, <https://www.frontiersmedia.com/frontiers-blog/2016/04/01/federal-judge-strikes-mississippi-sex-adoption-ban/>
- Why So Many States Are Fighting Over LGBT Rights in 2016, <http://time.com/4277247/north-carolina-georgia-lgbt-rights-religious-liberty-bills/>
- DHS urged to take action for LGBT people in immigration detention, <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2016/03/28/dhs-urged-to-take-action-for-lgbt-people-in-immigration-detention/>
- Honda protests LGBT detainees’ treatment: <http://ebar.com/news/article.php?sec=news&article=71414>.
- Escaping the cartel, a trans woman seeks asylum at the border, <http://sdgln.com/news/2016/04/01/escaping-cartel-trans-woman-seeks-asylum-border>.
- Activists Try to Calm Fears Over Transgender Bathroom Access, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/activists-calm-fears-transgender-bathroom-access-38119244>.

## California State LGBTQ Political Issues

Here in California, we have seen the election of many LGBTQ and allied state representatives who have helped pass progressive legislation to help protect LGBTQ people from workplace, housing and medical discriminations, to ensure same sex married couples can access partner benefits, to prohibit LGBTQ school bullying and include LGBTQ history in school curriculum, and to make sure transgender students can safely access bathrooms in schools that align with their gender identity. While great progress has been made toward equality, there is still much more to be done.

Equality California (EQCA) is our state's largest LGBTQ organization working to advance the health and well-being of LGBT Californians through direct healthcare service advocacy and education in Sacramento and beyond. Through electoral, advocacy, education and mobilization programs, EQCA forwards a robust state legislative platform in tandem with progressive LGBTQ and allied state law makers to advance equality and social justice for LGBTQ people state-wide. Learn more about EQCA's current legislative platform here: <http://www.eqca.org/category/legislation/2015/>, and the history of recent LGBTQ legislation in California, here: <http://www.eqca.org/legislation/past-legislation/>.

Locally and throughout the state, LGBTQ youth still face bullying in schools. Our seniors still face isolation and discrimination as they seek care for aging. While denying transgender people access to healthcare, training and advocacy is desperately needed to help curb illegal denial of coverage by insurance companies, and better quality healthcare by providers. HIV/AIDS funding is on the decline even though we've seen an uptick in infection rates. We encourage you to learn more about the issues facing LGBTQ people throughout California. Please review these issues covering just some of the challenges LGBTQ people face in our state:

- Anti-gay state laws aid push for CA travel ban bill, <http://ebar.com/news/article.php?sec=news&article=71412>
- A unique Hollywood housing complex will mix LGBT youth and seniors, <http://www.scp.org/news/2016/03/30/59004/planned-hollywood-center-to-house-lgbt-youth-senior/>.
- Exploring Housing Alternatives to Aid Sexually Exploited Youth, <https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/featured/exploring-housing-alternatives-to-aid-sexually-exploited-youth/16934>.
- Why Aging and Caregiving Are Harder for LGBT Adults, <http://www.nextavenue.org/why-aging-and-caregiving-are-harder-for-lgbt-adults/>
- LGBT curriculum riles some East Bay middle school parents, [http://www.mercurynews.com/news/ci\\_29710289/lgbt-curriculum-riles-some-east-bay-middle-school](http://www.mercurynews.com/news/ci_29710289/lgbt-curriculum-riles-some-east-bay-middle-school).
- Deaf lesbian couple who were attacked with a bat: 'We're scared to walk the streets', <http://sdgln.com/news/2016/03/26/deaf-lesbian-couple-who-were-attacked-bat-were-sacred-walk-streets>.
- New Racist and Homophobic Texts Between Officers Part of Deeper 'Systemic' Culture at SFPD, <http://www.towleroad.com/2016/04/homophobic-texts/>

## Local LGBTQ Community Issues

HRC manages a "Municipality Equality Index", or MEI score-card, rating cities across the nation for the ways they support the LGBTQ people who live and work there, even where states and the federal government have failed to do so. Please review the MEI, here: <http://www.hrc.org/resources/mei-2015-see-your-citys-score>.

None of the cities within the County of Santa Cruz have been entered into the MEI to be rated. Please consider doing so: <http://www.hrc.org/resources/submit-a-municipality-to-be-rated-2015>.

Locally, in addition to the GLBT Alliance as Santa Cruz County's queer political organization, there are many groups providing a wide array of supports and services to the various demographics within the LGBTQ community. Some of these groups include:



- The Diversity Center (includes Triangle Speakers, the 60+ Seniors Program, STRANGE Youth Program, the Trans Program, Conexiones Latino/a LGBT Program): <https://www.diversitycenter.org>
- The Queer Youth Task Force of Santa Cruz County: <http://www.qytf.org>
- PFLAG of Santa Cruz County: <http://www.pflag SCC.org/>
- Out in Our Faith: <https://tbeaptos.org/?q=content/out-our-faith>
- Cantu Queer Center (UCSC): <http://queer.ucsc.edu/>
- Santa Cruz AIDS Project: <http://www.encompasscs.org/community-support-services/santa-cruz-aids-project-scap>
- Santa Cruz Pride: <http://santacruzpride.org/>
- SOMOS LGBT: <https://www.facebook.com/SOMOS-LGBT-124037564344525/>
- The Community Foundation Diversity Partnership: <http://www.cfsc.org/Nonprofits/Grants/DiversityPartnership.aspx>
- Closet Free Radio (KZSC): <https://www.kzsc.org/blog/tag/closet-free-radio/>
- Out In Santa Cruz (KSCO): <http://outinsantacruz.com>
- Lez Cruz: <http://lezcruz.org>
- SantaCruzGayMen.org: <https://www.santacruzgaymen.org>
- Radical Fairies: <http://www.santacruzradicalfaeries.com/>
- Planned Parenthood Transgender Health Program: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-mar-monte/patient-resources/transgender-services>

The needs of LGBTQ Youth in our area schools are great. While national and state laws aim to protect LGBTQ students, local schools and school districts often lack the funds necessary for training, enforcement and implementation of policies to educate students on equality, and protect students from bullying. While many schools in our areas have Gay-Straight Alliance and Queer-Straight Alliance clubs, not all do, and not all are able to because of complicated local political issues. LGBTQ Youth also face higher rates of homelessness locally and nationally, due to the lack of family support many youth face when they come out of the closet. Please learn more about programs aiming to make youth and student experiences better, here: <http://qytf.org/safe-schools-project/safe-schools-project-report/>.

LGBTQ Seniors often go back into the closet as they pass retirement age, as a result of facing greater risk of isolation and discrimination as they seek specialized aging care in and out of their homes. The Diversity Center's 60+ Seniors Program offers LGBTQ Seniors in Santa Cruz County opportunities to enhance their quality of life through social and recreation activities. Learn more: <http://www.diversitycenter.org/senior>.

HIV/AIDS education and services are an important public health intervention for at-risk communities, which has always centered on the gay male community since the AIDS epidemic first arose in the 1980s. In more recent years, the disease has had an unfortunate resurgence among men who have unprotected sex with other men, and who largely do so without identifying as gay and without seeking medical care or advice accordingly.

The City and County of Santa Cruz each have a long history of responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic by supporting the Santa Cruz AIDS Project, the work of the County Health Department and syringe exchange programs as proven, successful intervention programs. Continued support for successful health education and intervention programs that curb the disease from spreading and that help eradicate HIV is critical, and local government's role cannot be overlooked—especially among those in the LGBTQ community who have been at ground zero of the epidemic since its beginning.

Please read more:

<http://www.santacruzhealth.org/HSAHome/HSADivisions/PublicHealth/HIVAIDSServices.aspx>,  
<http://www.encompasscs.org/community-support-services/santa-cruz-aids-project-scap>.