

**Candidate and Campaign Information**

Candidate Name: <b>Karina Cervantez Alejo</b>	
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Office you seek to be elected to: <b>State Assembly</b>	District Number: <b>30</b>
Please choose the option best describing your candidacy:    Challenger    Incumbent <b>Open Seat</b>	
Are you a member of the GLBT Alliance? If so, when did you first join? <b>No</b>	
Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ community? If not, do you identify as an LGBTQ ally? <b>I identify as an ally</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.

Many throughout the 30th Assembly District share my story. I grew up in a small agricultural community with two immigrant parents who spent most of their days working in the agricultural fields. My childhood taught me the meaning of hard work and what it's like to struggle to get by and make ends meet. I saw firsthand the difficulties of those living in poverty. With the support of many, I was able to get a great education. After college, I worked with youth transitioning from juvenile hall back into the community.

I was elected to the Watsonville City Council in 2012 and served as mayor in 2014. Currently, I serve as Mayor Pro Tempore. In my capacity as a City Councilmember, I sit on, serve on, or have been appointed to various city, county, and regional boards and commissions, including: Board of Directors of Santa Cruz METRO Transit District; Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission; City- County-Schools Intergovernmental Committee; and the League of Cities Board of Directors where I represent the 18 cities in the Monterey Bay Division. In 2014, Governor Jerry Brown also appointed me to the Central Coast Water Quality Board, whose jurisdiction covers 9 counties.

My key issues if elected include:

Education: As an educator, I understand that we must continue fighting for a world-class educational system that helps ensure a strong, educated

workforce. Serving in the state legislature is a great privilege that comes with great responsibility to ensure that our schools serve all students equitably. Strengthening the educational pipeline includes keeping our colleges and universities accessible and affordable for students and working families.

**Water Infrastructure:** California continues to struggle and adapt to the realities of a historic 4-year drought. There are communities throughout our state that do not have access to clean drinking water. At the state level, we have to invest in our water infrastructure to increase our long-term water supply.

**Economic Development:** I believe we must continue to create good paying jobs in California and confront our growing income inequality gap, while helping small businesses grow and thrive so they can hire more workers.

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

The GLBT alliance has a legacy of fighting for equality and justice in our community. I would be honored to have the endorsement of the organization and its grassroots leaders that promote and expand civil rights for all, ensuring that the rights of the LGBT community are not overlooked in the struggle for social justice.

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.

I have always been a supporter and ally of the LGBT community. My humble upbringing in and around the agricultural fields of California's Central Valley reinforced my strong belief in equality and justice for all. My endorsements reflect the rich diversity of our communities, and include leaders from the LGBT community. I am a staunch supporter of marriage equality, and celebrated the Supreme Court's recent ruling on gay marriage with the Santa Cruz County Diversity Center. But I also recognize that we have more work to do to increase inclusion in our communities and fighting for the protection of civil rights. As an educator, I have been a proponent of ensuring the safety of LGBT students in our public schools. As an adjunct faculty professor, I have also included the academic work of scholars that identify as LGBT. While in public office, I have also marched with our LGBT community during Santa Cruz Pride and have worked with leaders of SOMOS LGBT in Watsonville to bring Pride to our predominantly Latin@ community. This support has been marching as an ally, helping with permitting through the city. I will continue to fight for inclusion and to end discrimination in housing, employment,

health care, and in our efforts for immigration reform both at the local and state level.

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

I have worked with the immigrant community in our region and was aware of some of the challenges immigrants identifying as LGBTQ confront in obtaining lawful immigration status. Along with discrimination that might result from their immigration status, they also face discrimination from their gender identity and sexual orientation in the legal system and from their immigrant community.

I have also worked with youth in the criminal justice system needing access to trauma-informed care. I have worked with LGBTQ students with histories of abuse, lacking safe school environments, and who didn't have the necessary support at home. It's important to develop a strong network of social and legal services that are more responsive to students identifying as LGBTQ.

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?

My philosophy and practice in public service is to listen to multiple perspectives and learn as much as I can about issues and policies that I will be asked to take a position on. Perspectives from minority communities are often marginalized, misrepresented, or not included during policy-making discussions. As an elected official committed to inclusion, I will continue to be proactive in seeking input about how my decisions might impact the LGBTQ community. As a legislator, my kitchen cabinet of advisors will always reflect the diversity of our state, including members of the LGBTQ community.

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.

Increase funding to the Civil Rights Enforcement housed at the California Department of Justice. This office is charged with education to the public about their state and federal civil rights, and offers an avenue to remedy injustice. The LGBTQ community struggles disproportionately with employment and housing discrimination and as victims of hate crimes. Violations of civil rights should be prosecuted.

Safe Schools for LGBTQ students: Bills such as AB827 that require schools to provide in-service training to teachers about the resources available for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students. Similarly, continue to invest in anti-bullying programs in schools and

promote the full inclusion of LGBTQ history in the school curriculum with support from the state to do this successfully.

7. If elected, how would you use your position to help further issues of importance to the LGBTQ community?  
Serving in elected office is a privilege that also comes with great responsibility. I commit to be a partner with the LGBTQ community and work to develop policies that will continue to promote economic, social, and political opportunity for minority communities.
8. If you receive the GLBT Alliance's endorsement, will you display it in your campaign literature?  
I would proudly displace the endorsement from the GLBT Alliance.