



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 5th, by 8 pm, to:

The GLBT Alliance of Santa Cruz County
gltalliance@yahoo.com

Candidate and Campaign Information

Candidate Name: **Robert Singleton**

Campaign Address: **877 Cedar Street, Suite 150**

Phone: **707.569.4546**

Campaign Website: www.singletonforsantacruz.com

Email: robert@singletonforsantacruz.com

Campaign Manager Name/Email/Phone: **Liz Foster**, liz.f.foster@gmail.com, **831.345.6476**

Office you seek to be elected to: **Santa Cruz City Council**

District Number: **N/A**

Please choose the option best describing your candidacy: **Open Seat**

Are you a member of the GLBT Alliance? If so, when did you first join? **Not Currently a Member**

Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ community? If not, do you identify as an LGBTQ ally? **I strongly identify as an ally.**

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.

I have owned and operated the company Civinomics for the past 6 years with my business partner Manu Koenig, based in downtown Santa Cruz. Our company's mission is to get more people involved in the civic process with better information. We do this in 2 parts: 1) designing custom software for governments, nonprofits, and businesses to better engage their communities on the issues that matter most to them, including an open and free to use platform for crowdsourcing; and 2) using traditional community organizing tactics, supplemented with technology, to more effectively reach traditionally underrepresented communities. Specifically, we create interactive presentations and surveys that are implemented via iPad, across multiple languages (examples include Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Spanish, etc.), and then hire individuals with existing ties to those communities to ensure transparent and equitable participation for large scale public planning projects.

Our client list includes the cities of San Francisco, Austin (Texas), Oakland, Berkeley, Santa Cruz, and Watsonville; and the issues we have worked on include water supply management, climate action, land use planning, housing and urban development, civic access, homelessness, and transportation just to name a few.

I also work as the Policy Analyst for the Santa Cruz County Business Council, and as the Government Affairs Director for the Santa Cruz County Association of Realtors. I currently sit on the City's Downtown Commission, and on the Board of the nonprofits New Way Homes (NWH) and the Inspiring Enterprise.

NWH develops targeted Section 8 rental housing for those transitioning out of homelessness, foster youth programs, and incarceration (as well as people who just need housing!), via a unique financing model that doesn't require any local housing subsidy funding source (post redevelopment this last part is very important because there are very limited local funding sources). The Inspiring Enterprise is a social and environmental business and nonprofit accelerator program that takes people from idea through implementation over a 9 month period. We work with people who have larger visions about social and environmental change and build them a mentor network, help them write a business plan, raise funds, and build out their core

value proposition.

I think these qualifications, as well as my unique perspective as a 25 year old (millennial what what!) living in Santa Cruz would make me an extremely competent and responsive elected leader.

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

I strongly identify as an ally of the LGBTQI community and firmly believe this community is on the forefront of pushing for the next generation of civil rights in our Country. No one should have to face discrimination or systemic oppression because of how they identify both in terms of gender and sexuality.

I will fight for policy and laws that recognize this community while also acknowledging the structural problems we face whether or not I get the official endorsement. My support is for these social beliefs is unwavering and unconditional.

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 acknowledge that while my direct previous experience in working to support the LGBTQI community is limited, I have always been a firm supporter of equity and compassion.

While I have witnessed discrimination first hand of my friends and colleagues, I have also been privileged as a white cis male living in the Bay Area to not see the totality of the discrimination that affect most members of the LGBTQI throughout the world and rest of the United States.

I have always worked to support safe spaces and venues while living in Santa Cruz and as a UCSC student, including advocating for funds for both the Cantu Queer Center and the Queer Fashion show while serving in student government. I also worked to promote and financially support bringing the Triangle Speakers Series to College Eight while serving on the College Eight Senate because I felt it created a safe space for education and dialogue.

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

While support for legalized Gay marriage is probably the most prominent issue that I have worked for and supported during my adult life, I have also sought after information regarding LGBTQI youth, and their exceedingly disproportionate rates of abuse and self-harm.

Additionally, I have witnessed first hand how difficult it has been for many of my friends who have transitioned, namely with hormone therapy. They have felt constant pressure to either "justify" or "validate" their decision to others (especially family), in spite of the decision being their own.

I have always tried to be supportive, while acknowledging the limits of my own understanding as an ally. This is why safe spaces are so important, because even though I may be supportive, I haven't had to face the same discrimination and systemic oppression that has affected member son this community.

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 has been to be an ally while acknowledging my own limited perspective as a white cis male. I can be supportive, and I can have compassion, but someone's unique story and feelings are their own. The last thing I want to do is universalize my perspective in place of someone else's.

It's the same reason why I get a sour taste in my mouth whenever a white person reacts to the Black Lives Matter movement with "but don't all lives matter?"

Of course all lives matter, but to not acknowledge the unique plight and perspective of African Americans and their historical circumstances in the United States is to do a disservice to their wholly unique perspective. Black Lives Matter embodies this unique perspective and it is not for non people of color to universalize.

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.

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

I think the most important thing I can do as an elected leader, but as a cis white male, is to listen and pay deference. I can never fully understand what it means to be a member of the LGBTQI community, and claiming to do so is partially delegitimizing their perspective and story. I need to acknowledge this limitation on my own perspective, and always be willing to have an open mind and be considerate of other's feelings.

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

Yes I will proudly display your logo on my literature!

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 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.
- 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-city-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.pflagsc.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-scrap>
- 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-scrap>.