

Stonewall Democratic Club Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Tara M. Flanagan

Office Seeking: Re-Election to the Alameda Co. Superior Court, Seat #11

1. Are you a registered Democrat and if so, for how long? Yes; I have been a registered Dem since I first registered to vote at age 18. Most recently, I am affiliated with the Stonewall Dems, and Alameda Co. Dems.

2. Are you a member of the Stonewall Democratic Club, and if so for how long?
Yes; I was first a member in 2012 and 2013, perhaps through 2014; thereafter I renewed my membership in 2018.

What other LGBT organizations are you affiliated with and in what capacity? I have been a member of the Int'l Association of LGBT Judges continuously since 2013, and presently sit on their Board of Directors; in that capacity, I have served as a panelist in 2014 at the National LGBT Bar Association annual conference known as "Lavender Law."

I am a member of the S.F. /Bay Area LGBT Bar Association, "BALIF." I have been a BALIF member mostly non-stop since about 2001 when I moved back to the SF Bay Area from Los Angeles.

3. What specifically have you done to advance LGBT rights and/or to nurture an inclusive and affirming community for LGBT families? A) Prior to becoming a judge, in my work as a domestic violence victim's attorney, I developed a level of expertise on issues pertaining to LGBT domestic violence, and used that expertise to speak on panels at national conferences, to help dispel myths, ignorance and bias within our community and without (e.g., law enforcement, medical institutions, the court system) and train people about the unique dynamics of LGBT domestic violence. I have conducted many 'roll call' police department trainings at agencies such as OPD, Berkeley PD and Hayward PD, and spoken at national legal and medical conferences. I believe that my talking about domestic violence as it affects our community was helpful to raise awareness and empathy amongst many institutions.

B) I ran for my judicial seat in 2012 as an out lesbian, on a platform of 'diversity.' For this, I was warmly embraced by *most* in the County. I think being 'out' and open and running successfully for office helps demystify who and what LGBT persons are, and there is a ripple effect for all. As one of only four LGBT judges presently sitting in Alameda County, I think it's critical that court visitors look at the judicial bench and see something of themselves reflected back.

Since taking the bench in 2013, I have presided over many cases involving LGBT litigants in family law, domestic violence, small claims, landlord tenant, and criminal law. I feel that my familiarity with LGBT issues and my presence as the judge in such cases adds a level of comfort and a feeling of being understood to the litigants who may identify as LGBT. I also feel I have a level of cultural competency that perhaps others might not have as it relates to LGBT court visitors.

In June 2013 I participated in an Oakland City Hall Marriage Equality event, along with then-Oakland Mayor Quan and Congresswoman Barbara Lee, performing marriage ceremonies at no charge and with great celebration when marriage equality became lawful in California after the *Hollingsworth v. Perry* decision. Since then, I have performed many marriage ceremonies for LGBT couples. This is significant to me, as during the early days of my judicial career, I decided that I would not perform *any* marriage until I could perform *every* marriage.

4. What other issues have you advocated for that you feel are relevant to the LGBT community? As a Judge since January 2013, I am restrained by judicial ethics from ‘advocating’ for many political or social justice causes. One must keep a low profile and avoid any appearance of impropriety or bias. Before becoming a Judge, as a lawyer, I was involved in LGBT Bar Associations, including what was then-known as “Lawyers for Human Rights”, L.A. County LGBT Bar Assn. I was also involved and an officer in my law schools LGBT law student organization.

5. Who are your LGBT Supporters? Judge Vicky Kolakowski; Judge Zeke Zeidler, L.A. Superior Court; many LGBT judges across the state; in 2012, I was endorsed by the Stonewall Dems and many LGBT elected officials; I am presently seeking the support and endorsement (to the extent allowed by judicial ethics) of the Int’l Assoc. of LGBT Judges and the new California LGBT Judges Association. I am in the process of reaching out to the ‘Victory Fund.’

As a judge, I cannot ‘endorse’ any candidates other than judicial candidates, and I have ethical restrictions on donations to candidates that I am ever mindful of. I can’t recall the last LGBT candidate I supported financially- in 2016, my campaign donations went to Hilary Clinton.

6. What makes you uniquely qualified for the office you are seeking? Why should Stonewall consider making an early endorsement? I am the incumbent Judge and have proudly and ably served the community since January 2013. Suddenly, I have been the target of a surprise challenge to my seat. Of the 25 judges up for re-election this term, only I alone have been challenged.

As it is not the history or culture in Alameda County for sitting judges to be challenged, one view is that this speaks to several issues:

- 1) an attack on judicial independence, meaning that if a certain subset of lawyers don't like a judge's rulings or interpretation of the law, rather than use the court process to challenge those rulings, they seek to force her/him out of her job; and
- 2) of all the diversity that could have been challenged for a judicial seat this term, only I, an out lesbian, was challenged. One could argue that this is a message that LGBT diversity is not important, or negligible. That still, in 2018, we are considered 'less than.' Each of these arguments/theories (1,2) presents a troubling, chilling premise.

An 'early' endorsement from Stonewall would help send a message that LGBT Judges matter, and our community is not going to accept a challenge to someone who helps the paltry 6% of our county's LGBT judicial bench officers. An early endorsement from Stonewall would be a great benefit to me, and would help to mobilize our community.

7. What do you hope to accomplish if you are elected? I hope to continue to have the opportunity to serve the Alameda Co. community, be fair, work hard to be the best judge I can be.

8. Why do you feel you can win this race? It is my hope and goal that the groups and persons that endorsed me in my 2012 campaign will support me again, this time for re-election; I have renewed my relationship with the best campaign consultant for judicial races in Alameda County (Doug Linney, The Next Generation), I have retained a top-notch campaign finance accountant for managing my campaign funds and FPPC filings; I am a tireless candidate and will leave no stone unturned in campaigning. I am the incumbent and hope that the love and support shown to me when I won my race in the June primary in 2012 can be attained again.

Respectfully Submitted,
JUDGE TARA M. FLANAGAN

