

Name: **Buffy Wicks**

Office you are seeking: **California State Assembly, District 15**

**East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club
Candidate Questionnaire**

Thank you for your interest in obtaining an endorsement from the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club.

Per the Club's bylaws, to be eligible for endorsement, a candidate must be a registered Democrat. All candidates must also complete this candidate questionnaire to be considered for an endorsement. Endorsements are decided by the general membership, and candidates must receive at least 60% of votes cast to be endorsed.

The deadline to return your completed questionnaire to jbauters@gmail.com is Monday, September 10th at 5:00pm for the September 13th East Bay Stonewall endorsement meeting for the November 2018 general election.

1. *Are you a registered Democrat? If so, how long have you been registered as a Democrat? Have you ever been registered with another party and if so, when and for how long?*

Yes- I have been a registered Democrat since I became eligible to vote at age 18, and I have proudly voted as a Democrat in every election ever since.

2. *Are you a member of the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club? If so, for how long? If not, have you participated in club activities, supported or contributed to the Club in some other way? What other lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organizations are you affiliated with and in what capacity? What other non-LGBT Democratic clubs are you affiliated with?*

Yes, I have been a member of the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club for the past year.

I have tremendous respect for the mission and work of the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club and of our district's other LGBT organizations, and have often participated in club activities and fundraisers, such as the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club's recent "Brunch N' Bowl" at Albany Bowl, or El Cerrito Mayor Gabriel Quinto's most recent Meet & Greet event that was co-sponsored by the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA.)

I am also a member of the following clubs:

- Albany Democratic Club
- East Bay Women's Political Caucus
- Black Woman Organized for Political Action
- John George Democratic Club
- El Cerrito Democratic Club
- Berkeley Democratic Club
- Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club
- Metropolitan Greater Oakland Democratic Club

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3. *Using specific examples, please identify the causes you have advocated for and the ways you have helped advance LGBT rights or otherwise helped foster a community of inclusivity for LGBT individuals and families.*

I grew up in rural California, in the Sierra Nevada foothills. My dad worked for the U.S. Forest Service fighting wildfires. He drives a Chevy truck, hunts and drinks Coors. My mom was a stay-at-home mom until she decided, with two little kids, to be the first person in her family to go to college. It took her 8 years, but she got there. Our community was very conservative. Growing up, it was me and my brother, Devin, who is gay. I was the first person in my family my brother came out to; we were unsure how our parents would react. I told him that if they abandoned him, then they would abandon me too. Fortunately, and fairly quickly, they came to accept my brother and the whole process softened my family. This was my first of many personal experiences with loved ones from the LGBTQ community.

In 2002, I traveled with my water polo team, San Francisco Tsunami, to play in the Gay Games in Sydney, Australia, where we received a bronze medal. I did the AIDS ride with this same group of people, many of whom are some of my closest friends.

In 2003, I was organizing in the anti-war movement, when I got a call from my roommate and dear friend. He had just tested positive for HIV and he wanted me to pick him up from the clinic. I drove to the Mission District and sat down with him and the nurse and learned about T-cell counts and viral loads. When he got into my car, he turned to me and said "I don't have any health insurance." This was the week we started the war in Iraq. Our nation's leaders could find the money to fund an unjust foreign war but not basic health care for American citizens. I couldn't sit idly by in the face of such lopsided policy priorities. If I was going to help people like my friend, I had to roll up my sleeves and get to work. That set me on a path to change this country-- I joined Governor Howard Dean's presidential campaign, then joined the Labor movement fighting for better health care for Walmart workers. After this, I became one of the early hires on President Obama's campaign in early 2007. After helping to develop his community organizing model that propelled him into the White House, he took me with him. I worked on a number of policy priorities, but I primarily worked on the Affordable Care Act. I'll never forget sitting in the Roosevelt room with the President of the United States, on a Sunday night in March of 2010, watching those votes coming in. When that last vote came in, and we passed the Affordable Care Act, the whole room erupted into applause. At that moment, I realized two things; one, my friend would no longer be considered a pre-existing condition and he would get the health care that is his right; and two, we actually have the ability to pass progressive public policy that helps people. That is why I'm running for office. I am deeply shaped by these experiences and they define my values and my priorities as a potential state legislator.

In my role on the senior leadership team of President Obama's reelection campaign, I oversaw our mobilization and communication programs aimed at turning out our base voters, including the LGBTQ community. This was the most coordinated and financed LGBTQ vote push in Presidential politics history.

Currently, I am on the board of advisors for Beyond Differences, an organization dedicated to ending social isolationism and bullying in schools, which LGBT youth experience at disproportionately high rates, and which I believe both our state government and local communities have a responsibility to address.

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And today in my own campaign, I am incredibly proud that I have built a diverse and inclusive campaign team. Of my six paid campaign staffers, we have five women in leadership roles, one of whom identifies as LGBTQ, and three of whom are women of color. We have multiple campaign fellows who identify as queer and non-white. If elected as Assemblywoman, I will be equally committed to prioritizing inclusion in my work, and getting more seats at the table for people from traditionally-marginalized groups.

4. *Have you previously supported LGBT candidates for office and if yes, did that include financial support?*

I have supported numerous LGBTQ candidates and have made contributions for elected officials and appointees over the course of my career, including but not limited to:

Current and Former Elected Officials and Candidates:

- U.S. Senator **Tammy Baldwin**
- Congressional candidate (and former Ambassador) **Rufus Gifford**
- Former Assembly Speaker **John Perez**
- State Senator **Scott Wiener**
- Former New Hampshire State Representative and Vice Chair of the Democratic National Committee **Raymond Buckley**
- El Cerrito Mayor **Gabriel Quinto**
- Richmond City Council Candidate **Cesar Zepeda**
- Oakland City Council candidate **Peggy Moore**

5. *Who are your LGBT endorsers? Who are your LGBT supporters?*

I am honored to have the endorsement and support of many LGBT leaders up and down the district, including:

- State Senator **Scott Wiener**
- Emeryville Mayor **John Bauters** (East Bay Stonewall PAC chair)
- El Cerrito Mayor **Gabriel Quinto**
- Berkeley Police Commissioner **George Perezvelez** (East Bay Stonewall Treasurer)
- Berkeley City Council Member **Lori Droste**
- Richmond City Council Candidate **Cesar Zepeda**
- CEO and Founder of Lesbians Who Tech, Tech Jobs Tour, and include.io **Leanne Pittsford**
- Right to Marry Supreme Court Defendants **Kris Perry** and **Sandy Stier**
- Former Berkeley City Council Member **Darryl Moore**

I have strong relationships with all of these people and consistently seek their advice and expertise on community and policy issues. If elected, I would continue to rely on these relationships to be fully informed on and champion the rights and priorities of the LGBT community in California.

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6. *What do you hope to accomplish if you are elected? Please outline your top three policy goals or objectives and how you intend to achieve them.*

I believe we are at a critical moment in our history. Our political discourse feels broken in many ways, and the hateful rhetoric and attacks coming out of our national politics on the rights of LGBTQ communities, women, people of color, and other historically marginalized communities, is heartbreaking. But I am hopeful that we can find our way out of the wilderness. I am hopeful that California can lead the way--and I want to be one of these leaders.

If elected, I will work closely with community leaders to push a bold, unapologetically progressive agenda that enacts equity-based reforms and empowers the people that our structures and systems tend to leave behind. I want to work with a broad-based coalition to create an equitable social safety net that allows all of our communities to have access to our public resources – good schools, affordable housing, quality health care, great public transportation and clean air and water for our children.

Moreover, California should lead the country in creating the most progressive public policy framework to protect LGBT citizens, residents and visitors. While we have come a long way, we still have far to go. As an Assemblymember, I would use all of these skills to move the needle on LGBT rights and issues, such as: pushing to update local hate crimes policies and create a hate crimes hotline, fighting to ensure diversity in the insurance industry, and working to end bullying in schools. I would be honored to work with Equality California in these efforts to advance the rights of LGBTQ people.

My top policy objectives include:

1. Tackling the housing and homelessness crisis head on:

Our East Bay community faces a severe shortage of homes. Too many members of our diverse community—from artists and teachers to service workers and seniors who've contributed to our community—are being displaced, and we need to provide as much protection as possible to those facing wrongful evictions and skyrocketing rents. Nationally and statewide, LGBT community members experience significantly greater rates of homelessness and housing discrimination. This is especially true for LGBT youth--currently, 56% of San Francisco's LGBT youth are homeless or have unstable housing situations. This is unacceptable and a clear social justice crisis. As your Assemblymember, I would champion three key approaches to address our community's shortage of homes: one, build more transit-oriented affordable homes for low-income people more quickly; two, protect existing tenants from displacement, especially seniors and people with disabilities; and three, grow in a smart way by building more homes in walkable, transit-oriented neighborhoods, so we can share our community while protecting our East Bay way of life. And to support our currently homeless community members in finding and sustaining permanent housing, I would push for better collaboration between state, counties, and cities; bolster our social safety net; improve our mental health & substance abuse treatment services; and improve our whole-care system to increase exits to housing.

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We must also recognize that the shortage of homes in our community cuts across other issues: exacerbating homelessness, contributing to more greenhouse gas emissions from workers forced into long car commutes, and denying low-income families and hardworking young people equal access to the world-class educational and professional opportunities of the Bay Area. I believe in—and am committed to fighting for—an East Bay that is sustainable and accessible to all.

2. Boosting funding for public education:

I am a product of California public schools – from kindergarten through community college. It helped propel me from a single-wide trailer in a small town in northern California to working for President Barack Obama in the White House. I believe everyone has a right to quality public education and I will support legislation to reduce teacher shortages, increase funding for K-12 public schools, invest in community colleges, and ensure our public universities are accessible and affordable for California residents. We cannot let access to safe schools and a good education be determined by where you live, the color of your skin, your gender or sexual identity, or how much your parents make. Our legislature must be a champion for educational equity through specific funding increases for resource-starved schools and by giving teachers the tools they need to lead disadvantaged students on the path to success. And because we know learning in the classroom is significantly impacted by circumstances outside of the classroom, it's critical we look at the whole child and address their social, emotional, and behavioral growth in addition to their academic needs. Children living in pervasive poverty and experiencing trauma need schools with resources to address their social and emotional needs--and that takes increased investment from the state. We need to provide funding to bolster staffing of school psychologists, nurses, librarian, and counselors in our schools--and this is especially important for our LGBT community, where we see disproportionately high rates of youth bullying, depression, and suicide. We can and must do better for our students, and I will use every tool I have to enact tangible change in our schools. To fund this work, I will champion the push to closing the corporate loophole under Prop 13, among other strategies.

3. Fighting For Single Payer: Start with a Public Medi-Cal Option

I will fight tirelessly to bring single-payer health care to California as soon as possible, and I fully support Medicare for All federally. A single- payer system has the potential to lower cost, confusion, and uncertainty for our citizens. It would ensure health care security for working people and health equity for all communities, make our companies more competitive, and free Californians from being tethered to their employer for health care, thereby allowing them to do what they do best — take risks, innovate, and change the world. This is the vision we should all be striving for, and as someone who has spent her career bringing people together to pass progressive policy, I believe I'm uniquely suited to push us towards a single-payer health care system in Sacramento.

I believe I am the strongest healthcare candidate in this race--I have been endorsed by leading health care organizations including Planned Parenthood and CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates, which champions community clinics like LifeLong Medical throughout our state. If elected, I will bolster the capacity of safety net hospitals and community clinics to serve vulnerable populations, tackle tough spending questions, and champion

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creative policy solutions to keep moving us towards a full single-payer system where every Californian has access to quality health care.

While we work towards this goal, there is an intermediate and immediate step I believe we must take now to ensure our citizens are protected from Trump's disastrous policies- we should immediately create a "Medi-Cal public option" to ensure affordable and quality care open to all state residents. This could serve as an important and necessary next step on our way toward a single payer plan, while at the same time stabilizing our exchanges and protecting us from the President Trump's power grab aimed at helping the wealthy at the expense of the poor.

7. What makes you uniquely qualified for the office and how are you different or unique from the other candidates in your race?

My opponent and I are both progressive women who care deeply about our district. I respect her advocacy for her constituents at the local level and believe that she has done important work. However, working in Sacramento requires knowledge and experience of how to build coalitions, whip votes, and work across ideological lines. There is a different skill set needed to get legislation passed in Sacramento, and I believe that I possess the unique experience and capabilities to get the hard jobs done in Sacramento and achieve tangible lasting progressive change for this district and the state.

The people of District 15 need a representative who will do more than just agree with the voters on progressive ideas -- we need someone will turn ideas into concrete policy, someone who knows how to pass progressive legislation that will actually improve people's lives and that will counteract systematic oppressions. I have both served in the White House and organized at the most local grassroots level. I know how to identify key players and bring advocacy groups together to find commonality and create political momentum to pass legislation in Sacramento.

I'm ready to build coalitions in our community from Oakland to Hercules. I'm ready to fight with and for my community to give everyone in this district the best future possible.

Please return you completed questionnaire to John J. Bauters, East Bay Stonewall PAC Chair, by email at jbauters@gmail.com. If you have questions, please contact Mr. Bauters at 415-999-7932.