

# Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club

## Questionnaire for Candidates for November 2014

Dear Candidate,

Congratulations on declaring your candidacy. The Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club invites you to get to know us better as we seek to learn more about you. As we plan our endorsements for the 2014 election cycle, your participation in our club questionnaire allows our membership to better understand you as a candidate: who you are, what you stand for, and what you plan to accomplish in office.

There are two parts to our questionnaire. Part 1 is a series of short-answer questions. We invite you to be descriptive in this section, however, please keep your responses to under 5 sentences. Part 2 is a simple Yes/No questionnaire that covers a broader set of issues than Part 1. You may expand upon Part 2 answers on a separate sheet of paper. Please return the completed questionnaire by **11:59 PM Thursday, August 14th**. E-mail all questionnaires to PAC Chair Alex Walker at [pac@milkclub.org](mailto:pac@milkclub.org). Please bring at least 5 copies (printed front and back) of your questionnaire to our PAC interviews on **Saturday, August 16**. If you are unable to do so, please let Alex know ASAP. Please do not print this cover sheet.

We will be having our candidate interviews on **Saturday, August 16** from **9:30 AM to 4:30 PM** at the **LGBT Center's Ceremonial Room** (1800 Market at Octavia). Alex should be in touch to schedule a 10-minute slot (5 minute speech and the rest for questions and wrap-up). If you have any questions or to reschedule, email him at [pac@milkclub.org](mailto:pac@milkclub.org) or call him at 415-876-8254.

Good Luck,

The Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club

## Required Information

**Full Name: Stevon Randall Cook**

**Office Sought: San Francisco Board of Education**

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**Phone: 415-531-2732**

**Email: stevon.cook@gmail.com**

**Website: stevoncook.com**

**Are you a member of the Harvey Milk Club?**

**If so, when did you first join?**

**Are you lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ)? No, but I consider myself an ally to the LGBT community**

## PART 1: Short-Answer Questionnaire

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 am a graduate of San Francisco public schools and have committed my career to these schools. With that unique perspective, I know what students need to succeed in our schools and have built a track record of success in accomplishing those outcomes. Since beginning my professional career working to improve the quality of public education, I have served as Co-Chair of the Proposition H Public Education Enrichment Fund (PEEF) Citizen Advisory Committee providing oversight for \$30M in public education funding and built a scholarship organization that sends African American males that graduate from San Francisco public schools to college. Through my work at the San Francisco Education Fund, I have worked shoulder to shoulder with principals, teachers, para-professionals and families to send more students to college. I firmly believe that in a thriving city like San Francisco, with the right leadership and a clear understanding of what works in education policy, we can make significant increases in student achievement, attract more teachers to the professions and make our public schools a national model for effective community schools. Having overcome significant adversity through a troubled home life and attending many schools that were considered underperforming, my candidacy represents what's possible through our public schools. I am running to ensure more students experience those opportunities and to champion the causes of educators, families and our most disenfranchised communities.

This includes fighting on behalf of our LGBT youth. Through my work with San Francisco Achievers, I have led workshops to address issues of homophobia and hyper-masculinity in efforts to end the destructive talk that happens far too often in our schools toward LGBT youth. We won't be able to consider our schools or our communities safe until homophobic comments are eradicated from our speech. Leading these discussions were the right thing to do and it's something I plan to take district-wide through a series of initiatives I'd like to work on alongside the members of Harvey Milk. Having a sister that is LGBT, I saw up close the pain she dealt with being who she was in a community within a community that wasn't accepting of that. Even in San Francisco, that still happens to far too many of our youth and I believe through diligent policy efforts.

Current endorsements:

United Educators of San Francisco  
Tom Ammiano - California State Assemblyman  
Jeff Adachi - Public Defender  
David Campos – Supervisor  
John Avalos - San Francisco Supervisor  
Eric Mar - San Francisco Supervisor  
London Breed - San Francisco Supervisor  
Kim-Shree Maufas - Commissioner, San Francisco Board of Education  
Matt Haney - Commissioner, San Francisco Board of Education  
Rafael Mandelman - Trustee, City College San Francisco  
Louise Renne - Former City Attorney, San Francisco  
San Francisco Young Democrats  
Black Young Democrats of San Francisco

2) If you are running for College Board, tell us about what you have done to support CCSF during its accreditation crisis and what you plan to do to keep it open and funded. Even if you aren't running for College Board, if you have been a part of the fight to save CCSF, feel free to tell us about what you have done to help.

Many of my family members and peers have graduated from or are currently attending CCSF, so as soon as the institution started facing these challenges it became very personal for me. In addition to supporting Prop A, I have attended forums about the closure, spoken out against the accreditation board, met with the leaders of the CCSF's teachers union to find out how I could be helpful through my work in education and as a school board candidate. As a result, my goal became reaching out to our public school teachers and administrators to let them know that City College was a viable and crucial option for students, and as a longtime San Francisco institution, must be defended to remain open and accessible for all. Given the huge drop in enrollment as a result of the accreditation board, it became my charge to reassure our schools that CCSF was still an option students should consider moving forward.

3) Do you support repeal or reform of the Ellis Act? Locally, what specifically would you do to fight for housing affordability in San Francisco?

I am firmly of the belief that housing is a human right, and we should categorically repeal the Ellis Act, as these evictions are displacing our seniors, low-income families, long-time San Franciscans, and LGBT communities at unprecedented rates. I was proud to participate in the tenants convention hosted last year to discuss actions that could be taken locally combat the evictions. I support the bill Supervisor David Campos put forward provide more protections for tenants who are Ellis Act evicted. We need to ensure new construction developments include adequate affordable housing units that are accessible to San Francisco residents, and I fully support the Harvey Milk Anti-Speculation tax proposal. As a school board candidate, this issue is integral to my candidacy, as teachers, families, and SFUSD staff are struggling to secure housing to stay in San Francisco, and I am committed to fighting ensure displacement is not tolerated, and adequate housing solutions are identified to protect residents of our city.

4) In your opinion, what kind of reform of Prop 13 is needed, if any? Would you support a split-roll property tax system?

Proposition 13 desperately needs to be reformed. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, if Prop 13 would be reformed to require commercial property owners to actually pay taxes on the present-day value of these properties, state tax revenue could be increased to \$5-6 billion per year. I feel a major reform would come in the form of revising the 2% maximum annual cap on assessment of commercial properties and corrected to reflect the present-day value. A split-roll tax system may lead

to a fair solution to this issue, as applying different tax rates to residential and commercial properties respectively would create a structure in which corporations would pay a fairer share. Education funding could be increased significantly to provide crucial monies to adequately fund our schools and improve the academic experience for students statewide, and as a candidate for school board, I would be excited for the additional funding that would support us locally in the SFUSD.

- 5) LGBTQ elders and older people living with HIV face a number of challenges, including finding affordable housing, accessing health care and a general lack of services. Many are being evicted. If you were elected, what would you do in your power to help address these challenges?

These trends are disturbing and egregious on many levels, and beyond this as a pressing San Francisco issue, it is unacceptable that these are national trends as well. A recent city report found that nearly one-third of the San Francisco homeless population are LGBT, and buyouts and evictions are disproportionately displacing our city's LGBT residents. I support Supervisor Campos' leadership in presenting recent legislation for national developers to disclose if they have anti-discrimination policies in place. I applaud the work of agencies leading advocacy efforts to protect our city's LGBT residents through critical services to meet community needs, and we must find collaborative solutions to defend our LGBT residents through long-term, sustainable strategies. We should identify increased resources and reposition our funding priorities to ensure our city's LGBT communities are no longer the target of housing trends that are supporting in the removal of LGBT residents from SF.

- 6) Similarly, LGBTQ youth face challenges including bullying and a high rate of homelessness if ostracized by their families. If you are elected, what would you do in your power to help these youth? For School Board candidates, what would you do on the SFUSD board to help LGBTQ students who are bullied?

We must create learning environments that prioritize safety, inclusion, and wellness of all students, and particularly for students who have historically been targeted by bullying and discrimination, such as our LGBT youth. According to the 2013 SFUSD Youth Risk Behavior Survey, over 58% of students reported hearing harassment statements based on sexual orientation at school. This speaks to the hostilities our LGBT students face regularly, which leaves damaging effects on the self-esteem and development of our students into adulthood. We need increased cultural competency training for educators and school staff (with training specifically on the needs of LGBT youth), ongoing dialogs and working groups to invite organizations like LYRIC and the Harvey Milk Dem Club to partner with us to create safe spaces for students. By working with the district, policy makers, community leaders, families, and students, we can create a learning climate which supports the academic and personal development of all youth, and celebrates and protects our LGBT students.

- 7) Supervised injection facilities or drug consumption facilities have been shown to reduce new HIV and hepatitis infections, overdose deaths, and public drug use, and to increase linkage to medical care and substance use treatment and save money, yet they remain controversial and illegal. If you are elected, what would you do to advocate for supervised injection sites?

I would advocate for highly trained, culturally competent personnel to staff these sites, with ongoing professional development opportunities to ensure the highest quality services and oversight are provided to support client safety. In addition, wrap around services are needed to provide treatment, employment, housing, health, and other services to our residents. We must use data to continue to inform the operations of these sites, and revisit opportunities to improve these services.

## **PART 2: Yes/No Questionnaire**

Please check **Yes** or **No** for each question.

**GENERAL**

|  | <b>YES</b>  | <b>NO</b> |
|--|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Are you registered to vote as a Democrat?                   | Yes         |           |
| 1. Have you ever run for elected office before?                |             | No        |
| 1. Do you have a campaign consultant? If so, who:              | Glenn Davis |           |
| 1. Have you ever sought the Milk Club endorsement in the past? |             | No        |

**LGBTQ ISSUES**

|  |     |  |
|--|-----|--|
| 1. Do you support including full transgender health benefits in Covered California health plans? | Yes |  |
| 1. Do you support public funding for employment development for transgender individuals?         | Yes |  |

**TENANT, HOUSING, AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

|   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Do you support rent control?   | Yes |    |
| 1. Have you ever been involved as homeowner, buyer or agent in the eviction of a tenant? If so, please explain: |     | No |

**RACIAL AND IMMIGRATION JUSTICE ISSUES**

|  |     |  |
|--|-----|--|
| 1. Do you support driver's licenses for undocumented persons?  | Yes |  |
| 1. Do you support localities allowing noncitizens to vote in local elections, including but not limited to school board? | Yes |  |
| 1. Do you support the protection of due process for immigrant youth accused of crime?                                    | Yes |  |
| 1. Do you support the DREAM Act?   | Yes |  |

**SOCIAL JUSTICE, HEALTH, NIGHTLIFE AND LABOR ISSUES**

|   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Do you support capital punishment (death penalty)?   |     | No |
| 1. Do you support the decriminalization of sex work?  | Yes |    |
| 1. Did you support Prop 35 in November 2012?  |     | No |
| 1. Did you support Sen. Leno's 2013 bill (or at least the concept) to allow localities to allow some bars to serve liquor until 4 AM? | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support the legalization, taxation, and regulation of adult recreational use of marijuana?                                  | Yes |    |
| 1. Have you ever crossed a union picket line or violated a union boycott? If so, explain:   |     | No |
| 1. Do you support the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights?   | Yes |    |

**EDUCATION AND YOUTH ISSUES**

|   | <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Did you support Assemblymember Ammiano's AB 1266 (rights for transgender students)?    | Yes        |           |
| 1. Do you support the Common Core education standards?                                    | Yes        |           |
| 1. Do you support lowering the threshold to pass a local parcel tax for education to 55%? | Yes        |           |

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRANSPORTATION ISSUES**

|  |     |  |
|--|-----|--|
| 1. Do you support California's high speed rail plans?  | Yes |  |
| 1. Do you support Governor Brown's Delta Tunnels plan? |     |  |

**LOCAL BALLOT MEASURES**

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Do you support Prop A (Transportation and Road Improvement Bond)?   | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop B (Population-Based Adjustment to General Fund Appropriation to Transportation Fund)?       | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop C (Children and Youth Fund)?  | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop D (Retiree Health Benefits for Former Redevelopment Agency and Successor Agency Employees)? | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop E (Tax on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages)?   | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop F (Pier 70 Development Height Limit Increase)?  | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop G (Harvey Milk Anti-Speculation Tax)?   | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop H (Maintaining Athletic Fields in Golden Gate Park as Natural Grass)?                       | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop I (Park Code – Children's Playgrounds, Walking Trails, Athletic Fields)?                    |     | No |
| 1. Do you support Prop J (Administrative Code – Minimum Wage)?   | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop K (Affordable Housing Goals)?   | Yes |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop L (Transportation Priorities)?  |     | No |

**STATE BALLOT MEASURES**

|   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| 1. Do you support Prop 43 (Water Bond)? <b>Note: this may not end up being on the ballot this year.</b> | Yes  |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop 44 (Rainy Day Fund)?   | Yes  |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop 45 (Health Insurers Justify Rate Increases)?                                     | Yes  |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop 46 (Drug Testing Doctors; Raising Medical Malpractice Awards Cap)?               |  | No |
| 1. Do you support Prop 47 (Reducing Some Crimes From Felonies to Misdemeanors)?                         | Yes  |    |
| 1. Do you support Prop 48 (Indian Gaming Compacts Referendum)?  |  | No |
| 1. Do you support Prop 49 (Constitutional Amendment Opposing Citizens United)?                          | Yes (it should still be on the ballot this Nov.) |    |