

Candidate Name: **Tom Keen**

Email address: **Tom@keenforfl.com**

Phone Number: **(407) 436-9656**

**Please list the LGBTQ+ organizations you are affiliated with and any donations you have given.**

A: Provided monetary donations to Zebra Coalition annually via my employer's annual giving campaign.

**Please summarize your history of community involvement. This may include city boards, civic associations, non-profits, etc.**

A:

Former State Representative HD-35

Former elected Treasurer of the Orange County DEC.

Served on the City of Orlando Citizen's Police Review Board (CPRB) and the Mayor's Veteran's Advisory Council (MVAC).

Current Treasurer and Board Member Friends of Fisher House.

Founding member of American Legion Post 412 in Lake Nona and member of other local veteran service organizations.

**Please summarize the work you have performed in the past five years to further LGBTQ+ rights.**

A: Attended forums and events, marched with the CTA in Pride Parade, and will continue to use my voice to be an advocate to advance the rights of the LGBTQ+ rights. There are many issues where we need to work -- teen bullying, family rejection, homelessness, counseling, hate crimes, and creating policies that will be inclusive to meet the needs of the community.

**Please list other endorsements you have received.**

A: Currently: SEIU Florida, Democratic Municipal Officials (DMO), VoteVets, State Senators Senator Lori Berman, Carlos Guillermo Smith, & Kristen Arrington, State Representative LaVon Bracy Davis, Leonard Spencer, Rita Harris, Johanna Lopez, & Jose Alvarez, State Attorney Monique Worrell, Public Defender Melissa Vickers, Commissioners Kelly Semrad & George

Oliver, School Board Members Stephanie Vanos, Maria Salmaneca, Anne Douglas, Terry Castillo, & Joe Geller, Honorable Debbie Murasel Powell, Victor Torres, Ricardo Rangel, Tim Ayers.

**What motivated you to run for this position?**

A: I have been a resident of District 35, City of Orlando and Central Florida , and a Florida resident for nearly 30 years. As a Naval Officer I had the opportunity to live and work in multiple states and overseas, and I value diversity and multi-cultural communities. I want to continue to serve our community so that all Floridians can be happy, safe, and prosperous.

**What does being an ally or advocate for the LGBTQ+ community mean to you?**

A: Providing a voice for the community in Tallahassee and in Orange/Osceola Counties. Actively consult with LGBTQ+ leaders and organizations. Attend and be present at events focused on LGBTQ+ community (not just once a year at Pride).

Introduce/co-sponsor/advocate to pass ordinances that would prohibit discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and gender under the Florida Civil Rights Act.

**Have you attended an LGBTQ+ Pride Month celebration or Orlando's Come Out With Pride?**

Yes / No **YES**

**Have you attended or supported a drag show or drag performance in our community?**

Yes / No **YES**

**How would you ensure that your office acknowledges and celebrates the LGBTQ+ community?**

A: Once elected, I will continue to actively participate in LGBTQ+ events, collaborate with local LGBTQ+ organizations, and elevate LGBTQ+ voices through my platform as a Commissioner. I will seek opportunities to recruit members of the LGBTQ+ community as part of my team. I would also support inclusive education initiatives and work on advancing legislation that protects LGBTQ+ rights. Additionally, my office would promote a culture of inclusivity, ensuring that LGBTQ+ constituents' concerns are heard and addressed promptly.

**Will you ensure that you and your staff receive competency training on the LGBTQ+ community, emphasizing unconscious bias?**

Yes / No **YES**

**Would you condemn instances of hate speech in your organization and the community at large?**

Yes / NO **YES**

**Legislation from Tallahassee has caused a sharp increase in discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Orange County. How would you go about reducing discrimination in your District**

A: Work with the City of Orlando/Orange/Osceola Counties (for example the City of Orlando Board on Multicultural Affairs) and with Business Leaders (Gay Chamber, etc) to establish metrics-based solutions. And advocate our legislature fight to repeal changes made to the Florida Civil Rights Act.

**Sometimes, the services offered in public offices are often unfamiliar with the needs of the transgender community. What action would you take to make your office sensitive to these needs?**

A: Educate myself, make sure I have engaged with leaders in the transgender community, second make sure my staff is well trained and knowledgeable. This training would cover topics such as gender identity, pronoun usage, and respectful communication. I would also work to establish partnerships with local LGBTQ+ organizations and advocacy groups to gather input and feedback on how our services can be more inclusive and supportive of transgender individuals. Additionally, I would actively seek out and hire diverse staff, including transgender individuals, to ensure that the office reflects the community it serves and can better address their unique needs.

**During a town hall in your District, a constituent describes being gay or transgender disparagingly. How would you constructively respond in this situation?**

A: I would not accept the constituent's remarks and I would state that specifically in the moment. I do not believe being gay or transgender is a lifestyle choice, but that is a common perception. I would state that I believe that there are biological/genetic factors that determine sexual orientation. Choice has nothing to do with who does and does not become gay or transgender.

**How would you respond to a person intentionally misgendering a transgender or non-binary person?**

A: Assuming this is in a private conversation, specifically state that comment is unacceptable to me. In a more public conversation, I would firmly, but respectfully correct the individual. I would emphasize the significance of treating everyone with dignity and kindness, regardless of their gender identity. If the misgendering continues or escalates into harassment, I would take appropriate measures to address the situation, which may include involving relevant authorities or organizations to ensure the safety and well-being of the individual being targeted.

**Orange County continues to embrace urban sprawl despite a plethora of data that links urban sprawl to severe strains on our housing, employment, healthcare, and public transit systems (to name a few). To expand upon the prior statement, what could Orange County do regarding development that would better serve the communities in your District?**

A: Create and follow a comprehensive long term plan that addresses these issues. Many Floridians bemoan growth in an area they chose to move to AND at the same time, they desire more commercial services near them - which drives more growth. We need more dense housing options that allow for more efficient public transportation and access to more green space/parks. It's all about balance.

**Please choose the position you are running for.** Orlando City Commissioner District 1

**As a City of Orlando Commissioner, how would you support creating an LGBTQ+ Advisory Board that would directly link the City of Orlando and the LGBTQ+ community?**

A: Work with the Mayor and other Commissioners to advocate for creation of a board. Establish a "kitchen" cabinet with members of Equality Florida, Rainbow Democrats, The Pride Chamber. Among others to provide advice and feedback.

**According to research, 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ+ (Source True Colors United). What immediate actions would you take as a City of Orlando Commissioner to reduce and prevent homelessness amongst LGBTQ+ youth?**

A: Homelessness affects all parts of our community, it is a global issue. Locally we need to increase awareness, build and operate shelters, and partner with local community organizations (like Zebra) to reach those that affected by homelessness.

**Where do you believe the focus should be for Orlando in preparing for and preventing the damaging effects of climate change?**

A: Continue to support and fund efforts by the City of Orlando, specifically to become more “green”. Orlando has a comprehensive Climate Action Plan with the goal of achieving 100% renewable energy for the entire community by 2050. This ambitious plan includes targets for both city operations and the broader community. For city operations, the goal is 100% renewable energy by 2030.

**A 2021 study found that the Orlando metropolitan area has the 8th highest wage gap in the nation. The estimated hourly wage is \$12.94, but the wage required to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Orlando. What would you do to make things more affordable?**

A: I supported the increase of the minimum wage in Florida. I also support expanding access to affordable housing through incentives for developers and community land trusts, and improving public transportation to reduce commuting costs. Additionally, I will champion investments in education and job training programs to empower individuals with the skills they need to secure higher-paying jobs.

**As a City of Orlando Commissioner, what actions would you take to help struggling parent(s) and make Orange County an affordable place for families?**

A: See above, rent is just part of the affordability problem. Improving public transportation is also part to the solution. We will need a holistic approach. As a City Commissioner we have to look at land use and zoning to make sure we can accommodate affordable housing in all parts of the City - including in District 1.

**Despite mental illness among adults and children being at an all-time high, Florida ranks next to last on per capita spending on mental health programs. What are your immediate and long-term plans for providing services to this population?**

A: Advocate for state legislation to increase spending on Mental Health and expand Medicaid to include mental health as a priority. I would also work to improve access to mental healthcare, particularly in underserved communities, expanding telehealth options and incentivizing mental health professionals to work in these areas. Long term, I would push for comprehensive mental health reform that includes destigmatization campaigns, increased mental health education in schools, and early intervention programs.

**The Florida Republican Party is passing legislation that strips away LGBTQ+ rights, starting with our children. These shamelessly discriminatory bills force LGBTQ+ families to reconsider their future The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health**

**found that 45% of LGBTQ+ students seriously considered suicide, and 1-in-5 LGBTQ+ attempted it. How would you lead on this issue?**

A: This is a nationwide issue, and we need to start here at home, in Florida. Make our state a leading light for LGBTQ+ rights. This starts locally and moves up to Tallahassee. Elect more State Representatives that share our values to start undoing the harmful legislation created in the last few years. I will campaign across Florida for State Reps. By staying engaged, joining local LGBTQ+ support networks, and participating in advocacy efforts, we can work towards a more inclusive and accepting Florida for all our families.

**The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health found that 45% of LGBTQ+ students seriously considered suicide, and 1-in-5 LGBTQ+ attempted it. How would you lead on this issue?**

A: Suicide prevention and access to mental health resources have to be given priority across the board, not just for LGBTQ+ youth. I have seen similar statistics for returning Veterans, and understand it is not an easy issue to solve - it will take building a coalition of groups to bring about real change and progress. I support securing funding for accessible and culturally competent mental health services tailored to LGBTQ+ youth. I will advocate for anti-bullying initiatives in schools and the implementation of comprehensive, LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education programs. Additionally, I will support legislation protecting LGBTQ+ youth from discrimination and harmful practices while promoting community outreach and inclusivity.

**What are the top environmental concerns you are seeing in your District, and what solutions do you plan to bring forward if you were elected?**

A: Split Oak Forest is in District 1, it will be my top priority to hold developers to account for agreements promised. Clean water is also a top environmental concern. Loss of habitat is also a top priority. We need to ensure the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has resources and teeth to enforce existing state law - and that they are aggressively working to restore and protect the environment. I will also support measures to transition to clean and renewable energy sources, reduce carbon emissions, and promote energy efficiency.

**Is there anything else you want us to know about why the Rainbow Democrats should support your candidacy**

A: Absolutely, I want the Rainbow Democrats to know that my 21-year service in the United States Navy has instilled in me a deep sense of duty, integrity, and a commitment to justice and equality for all Americans. These values are at the core of who I am, and they guide my actions every day, not just during Pride Month. I firmly believe that every member of the LGBTQ+ community deserves equal rights and protections under the law, and I am dedicated to using my voice and my position to advocate for those rights, 365 days a year.