

2026 Steel City Stonewall Democrats Endorsement Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions in detail. Your answers will be shared with the membership and the public; please use language that is as accessible as possible so that the broad community can understand.

Name: Rob Francis

Office: State Representative (PA-HD 57)

Website: voterobfrancis.com

1. Let us get to know you:

a. Please briefly share your biography and photo.

Bio: Rob was born and raised in Westmoreland County and currently lives in Greensburg. He has a B.A. in English with a minor in Political Science from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, and has dedicated his adult life to human services, social justice, and civil rights advocacy. From a working-class background to a working-class reality, Rob has experienced the same struggles as many of us: low wages, high costs, unaffordable healthcare, and the growing frustration of the shrinking middle class while those we send to Harrisburg seem to only care about their own status rather than our livelihood and future.

[photo attached]

b. Please outline your policy priorities, e.g economic inequality, education, reproductive rights, transportation, infrastructure, health care, climate change, immigration, child care and the environment

My top three policy priorities are (1) Healthcare, (2) Affordability, and (3) Community Safety. These three main topics also represent the intersectionality of other priorities of mine, including public education, mental health, LGBTQIA+ rights, voting rights, DEI initiatives, environmental justice, expanding social safety nets, and a close look at tax reform.

c. If possible, kindly provide a 60 second video of yourself to share with voters and social media, or alternatively a video link to your campaign material.

[attached]

2. Please describe in detail your experience with the LGBTQ+ Community. What have you done to be a.) a vocal ally or b.) to fight for your fellow Pennsylvanians in the LGBTQ+ Community?

I am a gay person who was born and raised in southwestern Pennsylvania, and that has been a lifetime experience that shaped my views. Experiencing firsthand from a young age the isolation, discrimination, and existential bigotry that comes with that, I also discovered individuality, profound and open love for people I may never know, and the insatiable need to see life made easier for people not only like me, but also those who are not. An outspoken advocate for (and lifetime member of) the LGBTQIA+

community, I served as president of my community college's Gay-Straight Alliance, and during my time as a counselor for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, one of the areas I specialized in was LGBTQIA+ and often had to fiercely advocate for the rights and privacy of my gay/lesbian and transgender clients. I've done a number of mental health outreach and sexual literacy programs focused on LGBTQIA+ youth, and have been a longtime supporter of the HRC, The Trevor Project, and occasionally work with the president of our local PFLAG chapter (Greensburg).

3. Why is the endorsement of the Steel City Stonewall Democrats important to you?

I am from the Greater Pittsburgh area and am a staunch advocate for equal rights and the safety of all people. I feel a personal alignment with the mission of Steel City Stonewall Democrats.

4. If you are an incumbent office holder, what is the proudest achievement in your elected career? If you are a challenger, in your professional career? We would particularly like to hear of achievements or efforts that relate to the LGBTQ+ community.

In my professional career, I have counseled and mentored many LGBTQIA+ youth, and I am proud of having had some small part in their miraculous accomplishments in life. One of my proudest was when I strongly advocated for a transgender client to be admitted to our domestic violence shelter against the wishes of our director (based on his own biases).

5. How do you intend to protect the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, its LGBTQ+ Community, and people peacefully protesting in support, from Federal over-reach?

I would support or introduce legislation that would expand hate crime statutes to include sexual orientation and gender identity, eliminate the "panic" defense (specifically regarding transgender and gay people), ban conversion therapy, amend name change laws to remove public notification and cut the red tape for changing on legal documentation. I also strongly support The Fairness Act, codifying same-sex marriage, public education efforts to end stigmas against the LGBTQ+ community (particularly regarding ability to be parents, substance abuse, living with HIV, and other outdated prejudices), and would support pursuing legal action against the federal government when necessary.

6. What actions would you take to lobby your fellow elected officials to vote in favor of bills that advance LGBTQ+ rights and against bills that would harm the community? E.G., Equality Act and PA Fairness Act, a ban of the LGBTQ+ "panic" defense, a ban on the misnomered "Conversion" Therapy. How would your race help change the political dynamics in order to achieve passage of these?

If appealing to their humanity and using statistics and data won't work, then I would call for public hearings and bring in people afflicted by policies (or lack of) and advocacy groups to show the real-world effects of those policies on people. The Republican incumbent I am challenging has been in office for ten years; replacing him would put a

progressive gay voice where a conservative heteronormative one sat for a decade.

7. How do you intend to advocate for equitable and respectful treatment for trans citizens and youth in (as applicable):

a. Healthcare, e.g., accessibility of gender affirming treatment

I would support or introduce legislation modeled after the Transgender Health Care Access Act so that rural and other underserved areas are properly trained and funded to provide appropriate care. I would block or oppose any attempts to limit gender affirming care or discriminatory healthcare restrictions that would disproportionately and negatively impact the lives of people within the LGBTQIA+ community and their families.

b. Fair jobs and housing

Introduce or support legislation that protect individuals from discrimination based on gender identity/expression, remove barriers to changing names and gender identifiers on legal documentation, and block or oppose legislation that would cause harm or prejudicial treatment of transgender individuals, particularly youth. I would support the action or formation of committees or commissions that are dedicated to the protection of LGBTQIA+ rights and holding accountable those who would violate them.

c. Education and the school system, e.g., the right to use gender affirming facilities, fair participation in school sports

All students at any public school have the right to feel safe while freely expressing themselves. I strongly support the use of gender affirming facilities and will always advocate for equitable treatment of transgender students in their education, health, and community participation. I would advocate for funds and resource allocations that would allow our public education system to provide a more rounded understanding of gender identity/expression, support for the students and faculty who need it, and stand firmly behind the youths and families that these issues affect daily.

d. The justice system, the prison system, & LGBTQ+ safe rehabilitation

I would introduce or support legislation that explicitly prohibits discrimination against individuals in the justice or prison systems (including misgendering or using non-preferred names or identifying pronouns, retaliatory action based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, or forcing medications, harmful therapeutic treatments, or isolation on LGBTQIA+ individuals), and ending mandatory prison sentences. I would also provide oversight and site inspections/visits to local prisons, and regular checks for human rights violations.

e. The military, veterans affairs, and federal jobs

I would coordinate with and advocate for state and local VA offices to ensure optimal and equitable care is being provided for all of our veterans. I would also support House resolutions that reject discriminatory practices by the DOD, advocate regularly for the fair treatment of our National Guard and other service members, and work with advocacy groups and local National Guard and VA sites to ensure fair and equitable treatment of our veterans and the dispersing of their benefits.

f. Collecting Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) demographic data

As long as SOGI data is voluntary, secured, and the purpose of collecting the data is to understand and address inequalities or disparities in our health, economic, judicial, housing, education, employment and other systems, I support it. If, however, there are not clear limitations on what data is collected, why, how, and with whom it is shared, this creates a human rights issue. I would support or introduce legislation and/or oversight to ensure data is collected ethically, kept private and secure, and utilized responsibly.

8. LGBTQ+ people face intersectional challenges accessing mental health care: what policies can you advocate for that ensure programs addressing mental health are trans-affirming, accessible in Spanish and other languages, and address the institutional discrimination people face in daily life? E.g., Medicaid, Medicare, and the Exchange (as applicable)

I would introduce or support legislation that would remove barriers and add protections not only for transgender individuals and other members of the LGBTQIA+ community seeking healthcare, but also the providers who give it. By providing bilingual signage and materials, interpreters, and advocating for professional development training for all healthcare providers.

9. Currently, LGBTQ+ citizens are underrepresented on boards and commissions at the local, state, and federal level. How would you work to increase the number LGBTQ+ citizens who receive appointments and confirmations to these positions?

I would explicitly seek out members of the LGBTQIA+ community to step forward into leadership roles. This would not be an exclusionary effort to heterosexual or cisgender individuals, but a conscious attempt to bring in voices that have long been under-represented and gravely affected by people in the rooms where it happens.

10. The Steel City Stonewall Democrats believe Black Lives Matter.
a. What are your intentional steps to amplify Black and BIPOC voices within the community through your office?

I would work with local organizations and community activists to see what they need and how I can help with the capacity of my office, in addition to public engagement efforts.

- b. How will you work within your jurisdiction to ensure that black people and all persons of color will be treated fairly, especially by law enforcement? Please list specific actions you will take to meet this goal.

Oversight committees of law enforcement, human rights commissions or other watchdog groups, community engagement and public education efforts, and maintaining a working relationship with local law enforcement through my office.

- c. What are your plans for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in your office?

I am committed to hiring a diverse staff that reflects all of the population I will serve in office, not just some of it. I will make deliberate efforts to hire individuals to my staff/office from a variety of racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds, particularly the Black, Hispanic, Latinx, LGBTQIA+, and differently abled communities.

11. What actions do you intend to take to defend Voting Rights and expand Voter participation, either on the Federal or State Level? How will you advocate for legislation like the John Lewis Bill, the Freedom to Vote Act, or the K Leroy Irvis Voting Rights Protection Act? (as applicable)

I support automatic voter registration upon becoming legal age, automatic mail-in ballot applications, and would support or introduce legislation that emulated federal voting right protections at a state and local level.

12. Between 2010 and 2020, the Latin/Hispanic population in PA grew by 46%: what will you do to ensure that government services are linguistically and culturally accessible, and ensure the community adopts them?

I would support or introduce legislation requiring all public offices, transit, health facilities, and other publicly available services to have bilingual signage, interpreters available, and offer incentives for public service employees to learn Spanish as it relates to their job/role. I would also support and advocate for public education initiatives to incorporate the community in learning about the culture and language of all of our neighbors.

13. All of us come from different walks of life and understanding each other's issues isn't always easy. That is why it's important for the answers to this questionnaire to truly reflect the values and commitments of the candidate. We recognize that some candidates may rely on members of their campaign team for guidance and assistance in completing this questionnaire. If applicable, please list the members of your campaign team that contributed to the completion of the questionnaire and their role(s) on your campaign.

14. Please list any other endorsements you have received to date.

PA AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations)

GWCLC (Greater Westmoreland County Labor Council)

Please submit completed questionnaires and candidate's contribution stonewallpgh@gmail.com