



April 3, 2012

Question 1	Do you wish to receive the endorsement of the Stonewall Democrats of Austin (SDA)?
Sheryl Cole	Yes it is important to me to have the endorsement of the Stonewall Democrats of Austin.
Lee Leffingwell	Yes.
Mike Martinez	Yes.
Bill Spelman	YES, please.
Question 2	Should you receive this endorsement, would you publicize our endorsement in your campaign advertisements and campaign literature?
Sheryl Cole	It would be an honor to use your endorsement.
Lee Leffingwell	Yes.
Mike Martinez	Absolutely.
Bill Spelman	YES, proudly.
Question 3	Please tell us why you are seeking the endorsement of SDA. Do you have a history of involvement in Democratic politics? If so please briefly describe this history.
Sheryl Cole	As Mayor Pro Tem, I have worked hard to unite Austin and show that there is truly a place at the table for everybody regardless of race, color, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation. I believe in civil rights and personal liberty for all people and actively supported Proposition 2 giving domestic partner benefits to city employees.
Lee Leffingwell	I would be honored to receive the SDA endorsement. I believe that I share many values with the SDA and I will continue to stand up for them. As a life long Democrat and a long time sustaining member to the Travis County Democratic Party I know the importance of strong democratic voices and institutions and I believe SDA are a critical voice. I was honored to be able to welcome President Obama to Austin and made my decision to run for mayor following his election in 2008.
Mike Martinez	I have been a Democrat all my life and my voting history bears that out. I have been intimately involved with union/labor politics since entering the Fire Department in the early 1990's.
Bill Spelman	I would be proud and honored to receive the endorsement of Stonewall Democrats. I have been a Democrat since I was old enough to vote, voting in every primary, as well as local and general elections. I have supported and given money to various LGBT organizations, such as the Human Rights Campaign, and have supported and given money to many Democratic organizations, such as Annie's List and the Travis County Democratic Party. I was also Democratic chair of precinct 275 for several years.

Question 4 Why are you seeking this public office? (Please be brief)	
Sheryl Cole	I'm running for re-election to the Austin City Council because I'm proud of the things we've achieved together over the past six years. As Mayor Pro Tem, I am most proud of my efforts to bring a diversity of perspectives, opinions, and experiences together to build an even stronger community. As a city, we are protecting our environment, supporting social services, improving public safety, and investing in infrastructure, all while being fiscally responsible and accountable to taxpayers. I'm pleased with the progress we've made on transforming Waller Creek, building a trails network, and improving the general infrastructure of Austin.
Lee Leffingwell	My entire time in public office has been about public service and helping to leave Austin better than I found it. After a career in the Navy and as an airline pilot I wanted to give back to my hometown and public service has been how I know to help best. I want future generations to look back on the time while I was in office and know that our city council made the right choices to the difficult questions of our day. Serving as Austin's mayor has been the greatest honor of my life and I believe there is still more work I would like to finish.
Mike Martinez	I believe how we address these challenges is the barometer for the health of a community. While we should all celebrate in what makes this city great, the measuring stick for me is how we, as a community, rise together to address all of the areas where Austin could, and should, be better. I've tried to approach every day of the last six years doing just that. I believe my record speaks to that, and that's what I pledge to continue to do for another three years if the voters choose to keep me at City Hall.
Bill Spelman	I loved this city from the moment I first landed (in March 1988) because it's different from anywhere else I've ever lived. Austin doesn't just tolerate differences among people, it celebrates them. This helps us attract talented and creative people – people like us. It also helps us innovate and adapt to changing circumstances, permit helpful mistakes and learn from them, and ultimately solve our common problems. I've lived in a lot of generic places, and I don't want Austin to become just another one.

Question 5 In your view, do the words "homosexual" and "heterosexual" describe a deep-seated, possibly genetically determined orientation of an individual or only the kind of sexual activities in which an individual engages?	
Sheryl Cole	I believe that there are deep-seated, perhaps a generic trait, which determine sexual orientation.
Lee Leffingwell	I believe the words "homosexual" and "heterosexual" do describe a deep-seated, possibly genetically determined orientation.
Mike Martinez	I believe sexuality to be an intensely deep-seated, possible genetically determined orientation of an individual. It is centered around who a person is, not what they do behind closed doors.
Bill Spelman	I think that homosexuality and heterosexuality may very well be genetically determined. Sexual and gender identities are not a choice.

Question 6	How familiar are you with Out Youth Austin? If elected, would you support increased funding for this program?
Sheryl Cole	I have not worked directly with Out Youth Austin, but I understand that the organization serves an important function in the mental health and wellbeing of our teens as they come to terms with their sexual orientation and supports them in their decisions. Given the financial constraints of the current fiscal year I am uncertain how much funding we can offer through the Community Action Network, but I would definitely include OutYouth Austin if there is funding available.
Lee Leffingwell	I am familiar with Out Youth Austin and I will work hard to find increased funding for this important program.
Mike Martinez	I am very familiar with Out Youth Austin and know they provide a vital service to this community. I would be happy to lead an exploration into how we can help identify and increase funding.
Bill Spelman	YES, I am familiar with the work of Out Youth. I am particularly supportive of the safe space they provide for LGBT youth, including programs in art, as well as their public health programs, such as sex education and HIV testing. Yes, I would consider increasing funding for Out Youth during the City's social services contract process.

Question 7	If elected, would you support increased funding for the work of AIDS Services of Austin?
Sheryl Cole	AIDS and HIV significantly affect the African American population and I am very committed to funding AIDS Services. In my six years of office, I have a track record of increasing funding of the Wright House Wellness Center, which directly serves many clients with AIDS.
Lee Leffingwell	Yes.
Mike Martinez	Yes.
Bill Spelman	YES, I would consider increasing funding for AIDS Services of Austin during the City's social services contract process.

Question 8	If elected, would you act to increase recruitment of LGBT employees for the police, fire and emergency medical services?
Sheryl Cole	I would certainly make sure that there was no exclusion or discrimination and do what I can to increase the number of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgender employees in our public safety departments. I absolutely want to make sure that all of our public safety departments are diverse in every way.
Lee Leffingwell	I believe diversity is critical in all aspect of city government and public safety. I will support increasing diversity wherever possible following the law.



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Mike Martinez	Absolutely.
Bill Spelman	Absolutely. Public safety departments work their best when they reflect the community they serve and when the views and cultures of the community they serve are represented within the departments. The City has been working hard to improve the racial and gender diversity of the fire department, and we can take similar steps to address the underrepresentation of LGBT employees in Austin's public safety departments.

Question 9	Do you think that the Austin Police Department is doing everything it can to make its officers aware of and sensitive to the rights and dignity of Austin's LGBT citizens?
Sheryl Cole	Although I believe that the Austin Police Department is a very effective organization that values every citizen, I believe that there is always more work to be done in ensuring we treat all people with dignity and respect.
Lee Leffingwell	I believe APD has been doing a good job so far. But there is always room for improvement. I strongly believe good public safety is critical for all residents of Austin and I believe every step should be taken to ensure our officers are aware of and sensitive to the rights and dignity of Austin's LGBT citizens.
Mike Martinez	I think we can always do more. Sensitivity training and awareness are ongoing processes that we should work to maintain for all minority communities, whether they be LGBT or communities of color.
Bill Spelman	Austin Police Department could take more proactive steps to build awareness and understanding of the public safety problems Austin's LGBT community faces every day. Partly this is resolved through increasing the number of LGBT police officers, promoting the Lesbian & Gay Police Officers' Association of Austin, and encouraging closeted officers that it is safe and honorable for them to come out to their colleagues. Partly we can solve this problem by enhancing services APD provides to the LGBT community through actions like forming a specialized LGBT victim services unit or appointing a LGBT point of contact high in the department's chain of command (for instance designating the Violent Crimes Commander as the LGBT point of contact would help ensure that violent hate crimes are effectively investigated using the proper techniques). Another very important way to address the issue is by cross-training APD's detectives in hate crime investigation, paying particular attention to hate crimes committed against LGBT Austinites.

Question 10	Describe a step you would take, or proposal you would make as a member of Austin's City Council that would specifically benefit Austin's LGBT community.
Sheryl Cole	I am concerned with how we shelter transient and homeless people. I want to make sure that no citizen is denied service or unable to find shelter based on sexual orientation and want to create more SRO housing to serve especially the transgender community that may not find shelters welcoming.
Lee Leffingwell	Please see my answer to question number 13. Additionally I voted to extend same sex couple right during my time on council. When I learn of opportunities to pursue similar initiatives based on the input of the LGBT community, I will do so.



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Mike Martinez	I was a big proponent of extending domestic partner benefits at the city - including pushing city staff and my Council colleagues to take a proactive stance on the issue. I will continue to look for those opportunities. I think the most important thing I can do is lead by example, continue to publicly maintain a good relationship with the LGBT community, and support the issues and events as they come forward.
Bill Spelman	As a Council Member, I co-sponsored a resolution that required companies the City does business with to have an anti-discrimination policy that protects LGBT individuals. I was responsible for getting City Human Resources to provide COBRA benefits to partners of city employees because the partner of a former employee from my first term contacted my office during this term. I have pushed companies receiving incentives from the City to include domestic partner benefits for their employees. I believe wholeheartedly in equal rights for all LGBT individuals, under every aspect of the law, and I have fought for these rights as an elected official. Going forward, I will propose that APD add a liaison officer to the LGBT community who would be available to assist individuals who have interactions with APD, and who would be an advocate for the LGBT community within the department.

Question 11	Do you believe LGBT people should have the same rights to be foster and adoptive parents as heterosexuals?
Sheryl Cole	With out a doubt the answer is YES, there are far too many children who need loving families.
Lee Leffingwell	Yes.
Mike Martinez	Yes.
Bill Spelman	YES.

Question 12	Do you believe LGBT individuals should be protected against discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity?
Sheryl Cole	I believe that all people should be protected against discrimination in employment especially based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
Lee Leffingwell	Yes.
Mike Martinez	Absolutely.
Bill Spelman	YES, and I have insisted on requiring protection of LGBT people from the companies that the City of Austin does business with.

Question 13	Do you support or oppose government recognition of same-gender marriage?
Sheryl Cole	I believe the government should recognize same-gender marriage.



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Lee Leffingwell	I support government recognition of same-gender marriage. I was proud to sign the Mayor's Freedom to Marry Pledge and stand with Mayor Parker of Houston and other mayors around the nation in support of this important effort.
Mike Martinez	I am a huge supporter of same-gender marriage. I have been lucky to know couples who have made that commitment without the benefit of legal protections or who have had to travel to other states to memorialize their committed relationships. The fact that my friends have had to do that is a travesty, in my mind.
Bill Spelman	SUPPORT, fully.

Question 14	Do you believe that public schools should institute rules and policies to prohibit harassment and discrimination against LGBT students?
Sheryl Cole	Public schools should be a safe place for our children to learn and grow and there should be policies to prohibit harassment and discrimination of all kinds, including harassment based on sexual orientation.
Lee Leffingwell	Yes.
Mike Martinez	Absolutely.
Bill Spelman	YES. Bullying, harassment and discrimination are a severe and persistent problem, and our LGBT kids are at real risk. We will all need to engage within our community to address this problem.

Question 15	If elected, how would you stay informed of the concerns and interests of your LGBT constituents?
Sheryl Cole	I'd remain vigilant in the protection of civil rights and hope that the gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender community would come to me if they had a concern or need an advocate.
Lee Leffingwell	My door is open to all the citizens of Austin including my LGBT constituents. I have many close friends who are deeply involved in LGBT issues who keep me up to speed and I have made a point of appointing a diverse set of people, including members of the LGBT community to our cities Human Rights Commission.
Mike Martinez	I have been fortunate to maintain a great relationship with members of the LGBT community, many of whom I consider to be close friends. Because that is my reality, it is not hard for me to stay informed about concerns and interests.
Bill Spelman	I have an open door policy, and will talk to anyone who contacts my office. Further, I will actively reach out to LGBT organizations to solicit their input. During both of my terms on the Council, I have had employees working with me in my office who are part of the LGBT community. These employees have helped me to understand the issues facing the community.



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Question 16	Have you attended functions in Austin's LGBT community and, if so, which?
Sheryl Cole	As an active supporter of Proposition 2, I began attending functions of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. In addition, I have attended the Human Rights Campaign Gala, the Gay Pride Parade, and an event in honor of Betty Naylor.
Lee Leffingwell	My wife and I have regularly attended many of Austin LGBT's community function, most recently we attended the Human Right Coalition gala.
Mike Martinez	Yes, I've been happy to be a part of the PRIDE parade for the last several years.
Bill Spelman	YES, I have attended functions in the community. I have attended the Human Rights Campaign Gala for several years. I also have participated in PRIDE parade every year during my time in office.