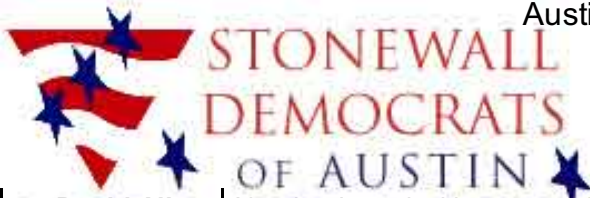


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<p>Question 1</p>	<p>Please tell us why you are seeking the endorsement of SDA. Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat? Do you have a history of involvement in Democratic politics and/or LGBTQIA+ issues? If so please briefly describe this history.</p>
<p>Damian Pantoja</p>	<p>As a Mexican, gay, college educated man, my role and purpose has always been to redirect the stigma. Although it was not always easy. After I graduated from a Title IX district, I was always seen as <i>that</i> student. It was a label that was prescribed to me, because I came from <i>that</i> side of Austin and went to <i>that</i> school district. My parents taught to never allow my demographic or people of unimportance dictate the path to my success. But most importantly, to remember the lessons from our community Therefore, I had to prove these people and stigmas wrong. I proved them wrong by not being a statistic and by not meeting <i>their</i> prescribed stereotype. I worked hard and long to ensure that I was no longer labeled as a deficit. I do consider myself as a Democrat because we believe in putting the interests of others ahead of our own and that is why I am here today. I want to continue to serve a historically neglect community and affirm them that we can have representation in elected seats.</p>
<p>David Albert</p>	<p>I have been an active progressive Democrat for decades. I spent many years working on issue of promoting a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I traveled to Iowa in 2004 to work for Howard Dean in the run-up to the caucus. I spent 10 years working as a Democratic Election Judge in southeast Austin. I served as President of LAD and helped co-found SEDA. I am currently a Precinct Chair in the Montopolis area. I have been an advocate for civil rights broadly and inclusively. I have been increasingly supportive and an advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights over the years as I've come to better understand the issues. As a Government professor I have been teaching about the movement as part of my curriculum on social movements and civil rights for over a decade. As an educator, I think it is very important to incorporate this struggle within the broader framework of civil rights.</p>

<p>Question 2</p>	<p>Do you believe LGBTQIA+ individuals should be protected against discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression?</p>
<p>Damian Pantoja</p>	<p>Yes, I do believe that LGBTQIA+ individuals should have protection against discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.</p>



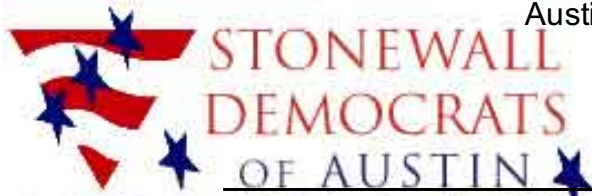
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David Albert Absolutely and without question. With the recent SCOTUS decision in Bostock v. Clayton County (2020), I don't even think this is question is legally debatable any more. The only question is assuring that all jurisdictions actually follow the law. I do not get to do a lot of hiring, but two of the students that I employed in recent years as Supplemental Instructors have been LGBTQIA+ identified students. (One was inexplicably also a Republican for reasons I was never able to completely comprehend.) I believe that Del Valle is already pretty good on this issue, but as a trustee I would certainly review their policies to be sure that they are entirely non-discriminatory. I'd work to strengthen them as needed.

Question 3 Do you believe that public schools should institute rules and policies to prohibit harassment and discrimination against LGBTQIA+ students?

Damian Pantoja Yes, public schools should institute rules and policies to prohibit harassment and discrimination against LGBTQIA+ students. Prior to the Court's ruling that Title IX protection included sexual orientation, Del Valle's board took action to include sexual orientation as a protected class for both students and staff. This was brought to our attention by the students and staff of the Gay Straight Alliance organization at the high school. I am proof that Del Valle ISD institutes rules and policies that prohibit harassment and discrimination against LGBTQIA+ students. While a student in the district, I had the confidence and support to come out my freshman year of high school. I was a student-athlete who participated in Tennis and Cheerleading and had fear of what the other students (mainly boys) would initially think of me. During my time in athletic facilities, there was never a concern for my safety or discrimination. The Coaches and my teammates saw me as a student-athlete and never judged me for who I am. In the classroom, I also did not experience discrimination because my classmates and teachers saw me as a student and peer. The district offers direct help should a student require the need; such as the Gay-Straight Alliance, counselors and therapists. Therefore, I thank the district for the resources allocated to me while I was a student to ensure my safety as an out gay student-athlete.

David Albert Again, absolutely, and unequivocally. These issues are exceedingly difficult ones for young people who are still coming to terms with their own sexual and gender identity. There is no room for harassment, bullying or discrimination against students or, for that matter, against employees. There does need to be space in an academic environment for students to discuss their views about difficult issues, but such discussions must occur in an entirely civil and respectful manner. I have always emphasized the need for civility and respect in my classroom.



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Question 4	Do you think the school district is doing enough to ensure equality for its LGBTQIA+ employees? For example, how would you address organizational issues such as transgender employees transitioning on the job?
Damian Pantoja	School districts should be doing more than just enough that they ensure equality for its LGBTQIA+ employees. Del Valle ISD does not discriminate against sex, gender, gender identity and gender expression. This was placed by the board to ensure the protection of all students and staff in the district.
David Albert	As far as I know, the district is addressing these issues properly, but I would investigate these policies if I become a trustee to ensure that they are both clearly written and being followed properly. There are often gaps between the policy as written on paper and how it is being enforced. I would also want to make sure that employees are aware of these policies and that have been trained properly on how to deal with this situation. While I think that my employer (ACC) has such policies, I don't believe they have gone out of their way to educate their employees on how to address this issue (as they have, for example, with sexual harassment). I felt a bit unprepared on how to deal with this issue when a student informed me that she was transitioning about 5 years ago. I believe I am better prepared to deal with this if it reoccurs in my classroom. I recently changed the student information sheet that I use from listing a binary choice after gender to simply having a blank for students to list gender as they choose to do so.
Question 5	Are you familiar with the organization Out Youth? If elected, what would you do to help this organization and others that provide services to LGBTQIA+ youth?



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<p>Damian Pantoja</p>	<p>I am familiar with Out Youth. When I was coming out, my parents had a difficult time processing this information. Not because of our conservative Catholic values but because they were unsure on to educate the family. My mom took it upon herself and reached out to Out Youth and spoke to a counselors on how she can help me at that time. Soon after, my parents spoke to me about being aware of my health. They showed me that there are additional resources, should I ever need them aside from what they directly can offer. They also used this time to re-educate the family on the importance of mental health. Out Youth allowed a conversation to be had with positive approaches in my family. How I would help the organization and others provide services to our LGBTQIA+ youth is, invite them to our current resources. We currently have an organization at the high school. I want to ensure that the students are aware they have a support system outside of the district.</p>
<p>David Albert</p>	<p>I am familiar with Out Youth and supportive of their work. I donated to them several years ago in memory of a colleague and close friend of mine, Rob Fyrst, who passed away and had been a supportive of their work. I believe decisions on these issues are likely to be made below the level of the Board of Trustees by teachers, counsellors, and administrators; however, I would do what I could to encourage them to create opportunities for Out Youth and similar organizations to operate at Del Valle. I think setting up and supporting opportunities – such as student clubs and organizations - for mentoring and allyship would be appropriate.</p>

<p>Question 6</p>	<p>Describe a step you would take, or have taken, or a proposal you would make, or have made as a member of the Board of Trustees that would specifically benefit LGBTQIA+ students.</p>
<p>Damian Pantoja</p>	<p>I have very thankful of the support system I had growing up. However, this is not the case for everyone. We currently have a strong support group at the high school, the next step could be to expand into other campuses. As an educational leader, my role is to promote opportunities for students to reach their highest potential. That means having a conversation that promotes empowerment regardless of identify or expression. As a graduate of DVISD, I would also commit to speaking with teachers, coaches, families and/or students to share my personal experiences. As one who is representative of the community, I believe there could be a greater sense from the audience of empathy and an learning experience.</p>

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David Albert

My platform specifically includes that our curriculum should include "scientifically-based age-appropriate sex education." Austin ISD has been in the process overhauling and modernizing its sex education program. They have been trying to modernize the curriculum to make it much more inclusive. This is an issue that also needs to be engaged at Del Valle ISD. It will also require lobbying at the State Board of Education which plays a significant role in restricting what can and can not be taught in the area of sex education. Texas is behind much of the rest of the country in this area and I am determined to do my best to bring our curriculum into the 21st century. I believe that better educating our students about issues of sexual orientation, gender identity, birth control, sexual health, and STD prevention will benefit all of our students. Many of their parents are simply not prepared to teach them about these issues.