



## Candidate Questionnaire 2017

**Instructions:** Please return questionnaire via email, fax, or mail:

Email: JamesParrish@EVAdvocates.org

Fax: 804-643-1554

Mail: 530 East Main St Suite 600

Richmond, VA 23219

**Purpose:** Thank you for taking the time to fill out the Equality Virginia Advocates candidate questionnaire. The questionnaire will help our supporters, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, and its allies know where candidates stand on issues important to them. Your returned questionnaire will also serve as part of the evaluation process for EVPAC's Board in regards to endorsements.

**Publication:** Your answers are "on the record" and will be circulated to all members of the EVPAC Board, and may be shared outside the organization and published to the EV Advocates website.

### **Candidate and Campaign Information:**

Name: Danica Roem

Address: P.O. Box 726, Manassas, VA 20113

Phone: (703) 380-6616

Email: danica@danicafordelegate.com

Campaign Website: [www.danicafordelegate.com](http://www.danicafordelegate.com)

Campaign Manager: Ethan Damon

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### **Race and Election Information**

Office Sought: House of Delegates

City, County or District of office: 13<sup>th</sup> District (City of Manassas Park, parts of Prince William County)

Select One: Challenger

## Positions

- A. Equality Virginia asks all General Assembly members to sign a [statement](#) that they do not discriminate in their office based on sexual orientation or gender identity. If you are an incumbent, have you signed EV's nondiscrimination statement [[check here](#)]? If you are not, will you sign the nondiscrimination statement if elected? Please include other actions you and your office take to create an open and inclusive workplace for gay and transgender employees.

Yes, I will sign the nondiscrimination statement if elected, publicly post it on my social media and put up signs stating that everyone is welcome in my office and welcome to serve in my office regardless of how they look, where they're from, how they worship or who they love.

In my campaign, I have a number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender volunteers. As the first transgender person to run for the Virginia General Assembly, I want to make a point that our voters are willing to hire a transgender person who thoroughly understands the public policy issues affecting the district and that someone's sexual orientation or gender identity should never be a reason for discrimination.

- B. Please describe your level of support for the following issues that are legislative priorities for Equality Virginia.

Blanket statement: I will ask the author of any pro-LGBTQ bill supported by Equality Virginia to sign on as the chief co-patron or I will introduce the bills myself.

- 1. Protecting public employees from discrimination based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.** Sen. Adam Ebbin and Del. Mark Levine this year both introduced bills to update the Human Rights Act to try to bar discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Assuming they introduce the same bills next year, I would ask to sign on as the chief co-patron to both bills.
- 2. Protecting LGBT Virginians from discrimination in housing.** I would ask Sen. Jennifer Wexton (D-33) if I could sign on to be a chief co-patron of her bill (SB 822) which cleared the Senate but died in the House to bar discrimination in housing based on sexual orientation and gender identity. I would introduce the bill in the House of Delegates as the chief patron if necessary to pass it. As Sen. Wexton has spent the last two years working on this bill, I would work with her every step of the way possible to ensure its passage.
- 3. Protecting LGBT Virginians from discrimination in public accommodations.** I would use the updated Massachusetts public accommodation law ([M.G.L c. 272, §§ 92A, 98 and 98A](#)), which went into [effect](#) Oct. 1, 2016, as a template for including gender identity in Virginia's laws to make sure all LGBTQ Virginians are protected from discrimination in public accommodations.

**C. Please describe your level of support for the following issues that are important to EV and Virginia's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and allied community.**

- 1. Banning "conversion therapy" practiced on LGBT minors.** Several attempts at banning conversion therapy failed in 2016 that need to pass, including Del. Patrick Hope's HB 427, Sens. Rosalyn Dance's and Donald McEachin's SB 267 and Sen. Scott Surovell's SB 262. I will work with Del. Hope and Sens. Dance and Surovell to pass a bill banning conversion therapy and would sign on as a chief co-patron.
- 2. Protecting all LGBT Virginians from discrimination in the workplace.** I've said on the campaign trail that if we want to retain and recruit the best teachers, we have to pay them a competitive salary and we can't discriminate against them for being LGBTQ. The same goes for the workplace in general. I will work to update the Virginia Human Rights Act to include gender identity and sexual orientation as protected classes so it is illegal to fire or refuse to hire someone based on their LGBTQ status.
- 3. Removing the Marshall Newman Marriage Amendment from the Virginia Constitution.** I'm running against Del. Bob Marshall (R-13) and would work with Sens. Ebbin and Mamie Locke and Del. Mark Sickles and on their efforts to repeal the sections of state code and the Constitution of Virginia barring all legal recognition for same-sex couples, including marriage. I would also sign on to co-sponsor bills to protect LGBTQ people from hate crimes as supported by Sen. Barbara Favola and Dels. Rip Sullivan and Ken Plum.
- 4. Support for policies in Virginia's public schools protecting students, teachers, and staff from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.**

I worked throughout 2016 to encourage members of the Prince William County School Board to include gender identity and sexual orientation in the PWCS nondiscrimination policy, meeting six of the School Board members one-on-one, face-to-face to ask for their votes to support that inclusion. I drafted research papers, provided legal precedent, and used the Virginia High School League's existing policy as templates for showing how we can successfully implement policies that protect students, teachers and staff from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

I then spoke out in front of the Prince William County School Board four times in person, on camera to make the case for updating the nondiscrimination policy and rebutted Del. Bob Marshall's (R-13) speeches in opposition to the change twice. This is a heart issue for me and something I've devoted much of the last 1.5 years to bringing to fruition.

Likewise, at the state level, making the Virginia Human Rights Act more inclusive needs to be one of our core focuses for proactive, positive changes to Virginia law instead of just having to constantly play defense. Del. Marshall routinely uses the lack of LGBTQ protections in the VHRA as reason to block school boards from including sexual orientation and gender identity in their nondiscrimination policies despite Article 8, Section 7 of the Constitution of Virginia authorizing school boards to supervise the schools, which Attorney General Mark Herring opined means they have the implied power to make their own decisions on hiring, firing and safety.

We know that we have the votes in the Senate to pass inclusive nondiscrimination bills, often by a 24-16 majority. However, pro-LGBTQ measures frequently die in the House of Delegates General Laws Subcommittee 4. After I defeat Del. Marshall and Democrats hopefully pick up enough seats to narrow the subcommittee gap from 5-2 to 4-3 (or win a majority outright), I will ask the Speaker of the House to place me on that subcommittee so I can work with the Republican members of the committee to at least allow pro-equality bills to make it to the full committee.

- 5. Opposition to religious exemption bills that exceed the constitutional protection of freedom of religion and provide a license to discriminate against LGBT people.** I commended Gov. Terry McAuliffe for vetoing the two so-called “religious freedom” bills that cleared the General Assembly in 2016 and 2017 and will fight any such bill as hard as I can in 2018 if one is to be reintroduced, just like I did in person at the General Assembly in 2016.

**D. Provide any additional information regarding your involvement in or support for the LGBT community.**

On Jan. 14, 2016, I made the first of four trips from Manassas to the General Assembly to fight nine anti-LGBTQ bills. I contacted Equality Virginia executive director James Parrish about my efforts on Jan. 21, 2016 and stayed in contact throughout the duration of the General Assembly session until we killed seven of those bills in committee, ran out the clock on another one and Gov. Terry McAuliffe vetoed the last one.

During my first two trips to the General Assembly alone, I talked to six legislators (three Democrats, three Republicans) and staff members for six members to fight those bills. After spending a decade covering the news as a neutral, disinterested, third-party observer, I could no longer stay neutral; I had to get involved and actively work to defeat as many of those bills as possible before the governor even had a chance to veto them because I wanted to send a clear message that discriminatory, anti-LGBTQ bills are dead-on-arrival in the General Assembly and legislators should know that from the get-go so they know they would be wasting their time and our tax dollars if they introduced them.

After crossover, I began focusing on updating the Prince William County Schools nondiscrimination policy so we could include gender identity and sexual orientation and I’ve stayed active in fighting for our rights ever since. As a transgender woman who has been Del. Bob Marshall’s constituent for 25 years, I had enough of him singling out and stigmatizing his own LGBTQ constituents at the cost of failing the adequately address the core quality-of-

life issues we have here in the district: traffic, jobs and schools. By defeating Del. Marshall, my election will send a message throughout the commonwealth and the country alike that anti-LGBTQ discrimination is not okay in Prince William County and it is not okay in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There has never been an out transgender person seated in a state legislature anywhere in the country and, as we in the LGBTQ community know well, representation matters. We need transgender voices at the table in order to influence public policy proposals that affect our lives.

When Del. Marshall introduced his four anti-LGBTQ bills this year (HB 1612, HB 1667, HB 2011 and HJ 685), I traveled back down to the General Assembly to fight them. I attended Del. Marshall's press conference for HB 1612 and offered the perspective of a transgender woman to counter his misleading and outright false claims while my friend Theo Kahn did the same from the perspective of a transgender man. Our presence at that news conference made a difference as we both ended up on various television news reports and were quoted in national media outlets like the Washington Post.

Transgender people have to step up and we have to be present. We have to be visible. Our presence does change the debate. When we think back to the marriage equality debate in Massachusetts in 2003-2004, it was gay couples meeting with their state legislators that made the difference. The same goes for transgender people who have to be active and engaged.

If I'm elected, I will be a champion for the needs of the people of the 13<sup>th</sup> District while also working every single day to make Virginia a more inclusive commonwealth.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. If you have any questions, please contact Equality Virginia Advocates at 804-643-4816 or [JamesParrish@EAdvocates.org](mailto:JamesParrish@EAdvocates.org).