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Question 1	Why are you seeking this public office? (Please be brief)
<p><b>Linda O'Neal</b></p> <p><b>Danielle Skidmore</b></p> <p><b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>I want to keep the working and creative classes in Austin.</p> <p>I've been living in Austin and working on public sector projects for the past 24 years. But the reason I'm running really stems from a personal place... the most personal, seeing the world through the eyes of my son Peter, who's in a wheelchair. We used to live in Clarksville until he got too big for us to lift up the stairs, so we moved downtown which was the most accessible option we found for our family. We are still very involved in our West Austin community, but the experience made me think about housing and who has access—physical, and financial—to our neighborhoods and the resources Austin has to offer. In terms of solving some of these problems for my son and families like ours, our family spent a lot of time together at the Capitol together to increase newborn screening. If we had known when was born that he had this disorder, we could have avoided the brain injury that landed him in his chair in the first place, and we wanted other families to avoid that same fate. I spent even more time back at the Capitol last year to fight the bathroom bill, which—as a trans woman—hit very close to home. That's why I'm running; in this constant onslaught of attacks at the state and federal level, it's time to stick up for what we believe and defend Austin values.</p> <p>This year's election is crucial. With Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, and Greg Abbott in power, we must elect committed progressives with the experience and skills to be successful. I have a record of standing up against the conservative agenda and leading on progressive policies on climate change, worker protections, civil rights, affordability, homelessness, women's health, mobility, gun control, immigration, and more. I first ran for office because I wanted to lead on enacting more progressive policies as a City Council – and that is what still drives me today.</p>

Question 2	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 LGBTQ issues? If so please briefly describe this history.
<p><b>Linda O'Neal</b></p> <p><b>Danielle Skidmore</b></p>	<p>I am a long time Democrat and a supporter of LBGTQ issues. I contribute to AIDS services in Austin and my friends have competed in the Unite the Fight Drag contest that services four non-profits. I have also been a teacher for 15 years and I have supported my students who are LGBTQ. We have a thriving community of students who are out and proud at Akins High School.</p> <p>Our local Precinct Chair first got my family engaged in the Democratic Party in Philadelphia. From there, I worked with our student chapter at University of Wisconsin on Bill Clinton's first campaign—and continued to stand with Wisconsin Democrats from Texas when we held a solidarity rally in 2011 to protest Scott Walker's work to destroy collective bargaining rights. Here in Austin, I've remained a loyal member—from helping to improve children's healthcare alongside March of Dimes in 2005, to fighting discriminatory bathroom legislation as part of a coalition of businesses, organizations and transgender people in 2017. I also currently serve as the appointment for District 9 to the City's LGBTQ+ Quality of Life Commission.</p>



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<p><b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>I have been proud to have received the Stonewall Democrats' endorsement in the past due to my advocacy on issues of importance to our LGBTQ residents. I am a lifelong Democrat who has spent the past 7 years fighting successfully for progressive policies on Austin City Council – and the decade before that working as a community advocate. Over the years, I have been a member of numerous Democratic clubs, including Stonewall Democrats, and I have publicly supported progressive Democratic candidates. In this re-election, I've already been endorsed by numerous Democratic clubs, including the Capitol Area Progressive Democrats, Central Austin Democrats, Tejano Democrats, Austin Environmental Democrats, South Austin Democrats, and NxNW Democrats.</p>
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<p><b>Question 3</b></p>	<p><b>Do you believe LGBTQ individuals should be protected against discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression?</b></p>
<p><b>Linda O'Neal</b>  <b>Danielle Skidmore</b>  <b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Yes. We are lucky in Austin to have a non-discrimination ordinance; I hear horror stories from places where this is not the case, such as Stacy Bailey's story—twice teacher of the year, then fired in Dallas county for showing students a photo with her wife. We need to protect our ordinance from co-opting by the state... I will go to the Capitol to fight that fight, among others, for our community.</p> <p>Yes, and I have worked to ensure equity and protections for our employees by leading on and supporting initiatives to require companies that receive City incentives to provide partner benefits, strengthening the City's non-discrimination policies, creating a third-party appeals process for discrimination, adopting a Municipal Civil Service system and "just cause" rules that protect workers against retaliation, and providing transgender-inclusive health care benefits, among other efforts. Due to these and other pro-labor efforts, I have been endorsed by every labor organization that has endorsed in my race to date, including the Austin Central Labor Council, Workers Defense Action Fund, Education Austin, AFSCME Local 1624, Austin Firefighters Association PAC, Austin/Travis County EMS Employees Association PAC, LIUNA Local 1094, and UNITE HERE Local 23.</p>

<p><b>Question 4</b></p>	<p><b>If elected would you commit to appointing LGBTQ individuals to City Boards and Commissions.</b></p>
<p><b>Linda O'Neal</b>  <b>Danielle Skidmore</b>  <b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Absolutely. As the current District 9 Commissioner for the LGBTQ+ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, I understand the importance of these boards, and also the importance of representation of diverse voices in all seats of appointed and elected government.</p> <p>Yes. Representation and inclusivity in policymaking is a key value for me. I have already appointed and employed several LGBTQ individuals, and I will continue to look for more opportunities to do so in the future.</p>



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<b>Question 5</b>	<b>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 LGBTQ citizens?</b>
<p><b>Linda O’Neal</b></p> <p><b>Danielle Skidmore</b></p> <p><b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>No.</p> <p>I know APD does a better job than most on sensitivity training for our officers, though I’m sure we can always do better. The way in which the 2016 murder of Monica Loera, a transgender woman, was handled by APD and the court system shows that serious deficiencies remain when reconciling individual names and the legal process I also know that there is work can be done within the criminal justice system in our city, in general, to protect our queer residents and avoid travesties like “gay panic” holding up in court.</p> <p>I believe that the Austin Police Department has made some strides in improving its policies and training curriculum, but that there is still much work to be done to move us forward. It is important to me that our officers treat all members of our community, especially those who have historically been marginalized, with dignity, respect, and professionalism. As a Council Member, I co-sponsored a measure to to ensure that our reporting system does not misgender individuals and to train our officers on LGBTQ history, gender identity language, and on the relationship between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community. I am committed to continuing to working with the community to improve APD’s efforts going forward. I served on the Hate Crimes Task Force and am very supportive of the work those stakeholders are doing to make sure that our community is working to prevent hate and discrimination and holding perpetrators accountable when such acts occur.</p>

<b>Question 6</b>	<b>If elected, would you act to increase recruitment of LGBTQ employees for the police, fire, and emergency medical services? What proposals would you suggest to make coming out on the job safer for LGBTQ employees?</b>
<p><b>Linda O’Neal</b></p> <p><b>Danielle Skidmore</b></p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>I think one of the biggest steps we can take for LGBTQIA+ individuals being safer in any work environment is normalizing our presence in all public and private sector offices across Austin. Our city has a rich legacy of LGBTQ representation both in elected office and in city departments. I applaud the work of councilmember Flannigan to help relaunch the City of Austin LGBTQ Employee Resource Group, and will be honored to build upon his efforts. Electing the first openly trans person in the state of Texas would send a powerful message in that regard, and would lead to years of sustained visibility of our community in a position of prominence. Having people see us—not just in movies, but on the dias in City Hall—is critical to queer individuals being accepted in all parts of society.</p>



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<p><b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>Yes. I believe it is a foundational value that our City workforce – and especially those who work in public safety – should reflect the diversity of our community. I have worked on progressive labor initiatives designed to meet our employees’ needs and protect them against discrimination and harassment, including by strengthening our non-discrimination policies, creating a third-party appeals process for discrimination, and providing transgender-inclusive health care benefits. Going forward, I believe we need to continue working to establish an inclusive work environment and culture that attracts all members of our community, ensure our recruitment efforts are reaching into all communities, and ensure that our core values of inclusion are built into our policies in a way that is measurable, meaningful, and effective.</p>
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<p><b>Question 7</b></p>	<p><b>Do you think the City of Austin is doing enough to ensure equality for its LGBTQ employees? For example, how would you address organizational issues such as transgender employees transitioning on the job?</b></p>
<p><b>Linda O’Neal</b>  <b>Danielle Skidmore</b>  <b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Though we have an ordinance, the office charged with its enforcement (Austin’s City of Austin Equal Employment &amp; Fair Housing Office) is ill-equipped to handle the task that will only increase in scope as the state and federal governments continue their attacks on our rights. I propose we organize a coalition of advocacy organizations and related City Commissions to jointly review the enforcement mechanism to support the City of Austin Equal Employment &amp; Fair Housing Office. This will ensure the office has the capacity to enforce new ordinances like paid sick leave, implement ordinances to establish meaningful protections for Austin residents, and defends us— knowing what awaits us at the state legislature in 2019. From my work on the LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, leading our Transgender Working Group, I also know that transgender individuals in Austin working for the City of Austin are still suffering gender-based discrimination. More training about our existing ordinance is clearly necessary.</p> <p>Together, we have made significant strides towards equity for our LGBTQ employees in this City. However, truly ensuring equity is an ongoing endeavor. Earlier in my Council tenure, the City of Austin received a nearly perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign’s “Municipal Equality Index”; in response, my colleagues and I passed a resolution directing the City Manager to engage with the community and take the steps needed to achieve an index score of 100, which we have today. Much of the progress we have made has been on things like departmental policies and health care benefits – but equity goes beyond just these actions and requires us to ensure that we are meeting our employees’ needs and are fostering a welcoming and inclusive work environment that values people of all backgrounds. I have advocated for progress on these issues during my tenure on Council and will continue to do so going forward. The LGBTQ Quality of Life Commission and the City’s Stonewall Employee Equality Network (both relatively new city groups) can assist in identifying additional areas of opportunity.</p>



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<b>Question 8</b>	<b>If elected, would you continue to uphold the current requirement that a company that receives economic incentives from the City not discriminate against its LBGQT employees?</b>
<b>Linda O'Neal</b>	Yes.
<b>Danielle Skidmore</b>	Of course.
<b>Kathie Tovo</b>	Yes. I helped lead the initiative to enact these progressive requirements and will fight to protect them. The City needs to be a moral leader in our community, and one of the ways it can serve in that role is by ensuring that those who receive City funding meet our community values. When I first ran for office, I committed to strengthening our policies and requiring companies that receive City incentives to provide partner benefits to their employees. As a Council Member, I took action and worked with my colleagues to follow through on this promise.

<b>Question 9</b>	<b>How familiar are you with organizations, such as Out Youth, the Austin Gay &amp; Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, and AIDS Services of Austin that serve the LBGQT community? If elected, would you support increased funding for the services organizations like these provide? What services do you think are crucial for LBGQT residents?</b>
<b>Linda O'Neal</b>	Very familiar.
<b>Danielle Skidmore</b>	My Campaign Manager is on the board of OutYouth, we attended the Austin Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce's annual gala and frequent other events, and are hugely supportive of AIDS Services of Austin— among other amazing groups such as the Kind Clinic. I believe services that warrant increased support are provision of PrEP, not just through clinics traditionally viewed as LGBTQIA+, but also in partnership with organizations like Planned Parenthood and Whole Women's Health.
<b>Kathie Tovo</b>	I am very familiar with these organizations and have supported them as a Council Member and, in the cases of ASA and ALLGO, as an individual prior to my service. Whenever I can, I have attended events that organizations serving the LGBTQ community have organized, from the opening of ASA's dental clinic in District 9 and their major renovation of the medical clinic on Cameron to the opening of the Kind Clinic and AGLCC's offices on Lamar. Each of these organizations provides indispensable services for our community. Many of our partnerships with local nonprofits occur through our social services contracts – and I have been a strong and consistent advocate for increasing funding for these contracts. Over the past four years alone, I have worked with my colleagues to increase Austin Public Health's budget – 40 percent of which goes to social services contracts – by more than \$20 million. I have also sponsored presentations about PrEP at the Council Public Health Committee and advocated in the Fiscal Year 2017-18 budget for a specific allocation for PrEP funding. I look forward to continuing to work on efforts through which the City c partner effectively with the private and nonprofit sectors to serve the needs of our residents.



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<b>Question 10</b>	<b>Describe a step you would take, or have taken, or a proposal you would make, or have made as a member of Austin’s City Council that would <u>specifically</u> benefit Austin’s LGBTQ community.</b>
<p><b>Linda O’Neal</b></p> <p><b>Danielle Skidmore</b></p> <p><b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>Where is our damn sidewalk? The community wanted the sidewalk, but the city sided with the businesses who did not want a rainbow sidewalk on fourth street. The community said that they would pay to paint it and pay for the upkeep. The city said no. Yet, when Pride happens, those same business (The Hangar and Trulucks’s) fly the rainbow flag because they want LBGTQ business, but they will not return the support.</p> <p>Austin is fortunate to have a rich, vibrant LGBTQ+ community, but we have long lacked a quality data about our community. As a Commissioner on the LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission I advocated for the first quality of life survey of our community. This is a critical first step towards identifying the most critical needs in the community. I am happy to see it receive funding th in the 2018-2019 budget and will work to see the survey completed.</p> <p>I have consistently led on and supported initiatives that have benefitted Austin’s LGBTQ community. I co-sponsored measures to: • require companies receiving City incentives to provide partner benefits • strengthen our police department’s policies and training related to properly identifying transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals in communications • provide transgender-inclusive health care to City employees. I sponsored the resolution that led to strengthening our non-discrimination policies and creating a third-party appeals process for discrimination cases, and I have supported other measures, such as requi businesses to use gender-neutral signage for single-occupancy restrooms and creating the LGBTQ Quality of Life Commission. I also served for approximately three years on the Hate Crimes Task Force. Today, the City holds a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign’s “Municipal Equality Index.” I look forward to both supporting the progress we have made but also working with the community to continue to move us ahead.</p>

<b>Question 11</b>	<b>In the 85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session, legislation was filed that would prohibit people from using bathrooms based on their preferred gender identity. Similar legislation is certain to be filed in the 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session. Would you be</b>
<p><b>Linda O’Neal</b></p> <p><b>Danielle Skidmore</b></p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>I was there during last year’s legislative session, and subsequent special session. I will be there again in 2019, however many times are necessary. It will be no greater honor than to return as an elected representative from the City of Austin.</p>



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<b>Kathie Tovo</b>	Yes. I spoke out against the “bathroom bill” last session and am ready to do whatever I need to in order to fight it next session – and every session after that. Our legislative team makes determinations about when and which Council Members will testify on behalf of the City of Austin; during the last session I worked with our legislative team to respond to media queries on the “bathroom bill” (and many others); though I was not called upon to testify on any issues during this last session, I would have been glad to do so and stand ready to do so in the future. As an individual prior to Council and as a Council Member, I have testified at committee hearings and have attended multiple rallies and marches to challenge the state government on a range of issues, from educating funding to equal rights to gun control to immigrant rights. With Donald Trump in the White House, Ted Cruz in the Senate, and Greg Abbott in the Governor’s Mansion, it is critical that we have experienced and effective local leaders who will stand up and fight for our progressive Austin values. I look forward to continuing to do so.
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<b>Question 12</b>	<b>In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court, in the case of <i>Obergefell vs. Hodges</i>, ruled that all marriages be treated equally. In 2017, the Texas Supreme Court threw out a lower court ruling that said spouses of gay and lesbian public employees are entitled to government-subsidized same-sex marriage benefits. Do you agree or disagree with this ruling and would you maintain the City of Austin’s policy to provide employee benefits to all married employees?</b>
<b>Linda O’Neal</b>	I complete disagree with this ruling and I would lobby to take this case to the highest court.
<b>Danielle Skidmore</b>	My family directly benefits from the Obergefell decision, as I was able to get health insurance through my partner, Melissa while I am working on our campaign full time ! Of course I would maintain Austin’s policy, and will be showing up alongside Equality Texas and others to fight the repeal of protections guaranteed by marriage equality, as part of conservative legislators’ 2018 platform which will attempt to shield Texas business owners who don’t want to provide cakes, flowers, or other goods or services for same-sex couples.
<b>Kathie Tovo</b>	I believe that all employees, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, are entitled to equal marriage benefits. I disagree with the 2017 Texas Supreme Court ruling, believe marriage benefits should be provided to all public employees, and will vigorously maintain and defend the City of Austin’s policy to provide employee benefits to all married employees. Not only have I supported providing partner benefits to our public employees, but I have also led on ways to extend those values to the private sector as well, by requiring companies that receive City incentives to provide partner benefits. I will fight to protect the progress we have made and to look for ways in which the City can continue to be a moral leader in our community on these issues.

<b>Question 13</b>	<b>Do you believe that public schools should institute rules and policies to prohibit harassment and discrimination against LGBTQ students?</b>
<b>Linda O’Neal</b>	Yes.



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<p><b>Danielle Skidmore</b></p>	<p>Yes. As you can see, I've spoken at various press conferences alongside trans children in this regard, and will continue to fight for their rights and wellbeing: <a href="https://www.texasobserver.org/there-is-no-middle-ground-for-human-rights-bathroom-bill-critics-say/">https://www.texasobserver.org/there-is-no-middle-ground-for-human-rights-bathroom-bill-critics-say/</a></p>
<p><b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>Yes. I am a longtime advocate for a quality public school system and believe that our schools need to be safe spaces where our children can learn without fear of harassment or discrimination. Even before being elected to Council, I was active in ensuring that Austin has thriving and vibrant public schools, by serving on boards and task forces such as the Austin Independent School District's Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools. I have also worked on Council to make key investments into the parent support specialist program, which conducts outreach and connects families with social services and other needed resources and academic services.</p>

<p><b>Question 14</b></p>	<p><b>If elected, how would you stay informed of the concerns and interests of your LGBTQ constituents?</b></p>
<p><b>Linda O'Neal</b></p>	<p>My closest friends are involved in the community and I go to the meetings.</p>
<p><b>Danielle Skidmore</b></p>	<p>From the fact that my Campaign Manager, who happens to be a close personal friend, is an intersex activist that does work locally and nationally on behalf of her own and the broader LGBTQIA+ community—to my own personal presence as a member of a variety of organizations, and personally as a mentor and ally to friends represented by each letter of our rainbow acronym... The question for me is less how will I stay informed, and more how can I prioritize the multitude of needs facing our communities in the context of my broader responsibilities on Council.</p>
<p><b>Kathie Tovo</b></p>	<p>I believe it is important for policymakers to engage with and hear directly from all of our communities. Personally, I have participated in LGBTQ community events, maintained close relationships with leaders in the LGBTQ community, and served on bodies that have highlighted issues of importance to the LGBTQ community, such as the Hate Crimes Task Force. I have fought to ensure that our LGBTQ community has a seat at the table and a voice in our policies – and will continue to do so going forward.</p>

<p><b>Question 15</b></p>	<p><b>Have you attended functions in Austin's LGBTQ community and, if so, which?</b></p>
<p><b>Linda O'Neal</b></p>	<p>Most recently Unite the Fight, others have included AIDS services of Austin HH.</p>
<p><b>Danielle Skidmore</b></p>	<p>We had a booth at QueerBomb, marched with the LGBTQ+ Quality of Life Commission at Austin Pride, and have attended more LGBTQIA+ events—hosted by national and local orgs, from HRC to Austin Black Pride—than we could possibly attempt to count. Regardless of my election to Council, I have been, and will remain, an active member of the queer community here in this city.</p>



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Yes. I regularly attend LGBTQ community events as described above and have participated in the Austin PRIDE parade most of my years on Council. I am a member of St. Johns United Methodist Church, which is a reconciling congregation working for full inclusion of LGBTQ members within the Methodist Church. I was also honored to present the official proclamation on behalf of the City of Austin recognizing Texas' first same-sex marriage.