



ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2022

Roberta Walton Johnson

**Running for
Orange County Board of Commissioners
District 6**

Candidate Information

Website: VoteRoberta.com
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ElectRobertaWalton>
Twitter: @Famulawgrad
Instagram: @Famulawgrad

1. What motivated you to run for this position?

Orange County, Florida is a thriving community that is home to an array of diverse cultures, flourishing businesses and people who desire smart growth and competent leadership. We are a community that fosters neighborly relations while remaining devoted to building a safer, cleaner, and more prosperous District. I want to serve the residents of Orange County to help identify and implement policies aligned with our growing culture.

2. What does being an ally or advocate for the LGBTQ+ community mean to you?

An advocate and supporter of issues impacting the LGBTQ community means creating an environment of understanding so that our LGBTQ+ family members and friends can live in a world that is safe and inclusive.

3. Please summarize your history of community involvement. This may include city boards, civic associations, non-profits, etc.

I am a member of the Orange County Bar Association, Paul C. Perkins Chapter of the Virgil Hawkins Bar Association, the Central Florida Family Law Inns of Court, Vice-Chairman of the Florida Bar Family Law Rules Committee, the Florida 9th Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee, the Florida A&M College of Law Dean's Advisory Council, ex-officio Board Member to the Downtown Orlando MLK Holiday Parade Committee, Past President and Charter Member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Psi Theta Omega Chapter, and Mayor Jerry Deming's appointment to the Orange County Government Board of Zoning and Adjustment Board. Additionally, I served as past President of the Southwest Orlando Junior Chamber of Commerce and Former Chairman of the Downtown Orlando MLK Holiday Parade Committee, Former District 6 Representative on the Orange County Housing and Development Advisory Board, Former Member of the Orange County Citizen's Commission for Children and Co-Founder and Former Chairman of the Orange County Government African American Employee Network.

- 4. Please summarize any work you have performed in the past five years to further LGBTQ+ rights. This may include paid positions, volunteer work, and donations.**

As the Orange County District 6 Aide from 2006—2014, I provided diligence and both technical and physical support to endorse a joint Amicus Brief to the Florida Supreme Court in support of the Same Sex Marriage Equality lawsuits, the approval of the Orange County Human Rights Ordinance; and various resources to support the LGBTQ community and their families. In addition to providing support and assistance while working with the County, I have also extended technical assistance with Legal Aid Society of OCBA on Transgender Name Change clinics.

Questions

- 5. The rise in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation barreling down from Tallahassee has caused a sharp increase in discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Orange County. How would you go about reducing discrimination in your district or local community? How would you measure your progress?**

I will commit to supporting advocacy in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ. I would measure my progress through the reflections of local advocacy groups.

- 6. Elected officials and office staff are still woefully under-educated on the transgender community. This means that the services their offices provide are often ignorant of the needs of the transgender community. What actions would you take to ensure that the services your office will provide will be educated on and cognizant of the needs of the transgender community?**

I commit to maintaining ongoing communication with service organizations and advocacy groups throughout the community to ensure I am properly educated about the needs and priorities of all District 6 residents.

- 7. The Florida Republican Party is leading the country in stripping away LGBTQ+ rights, starting with our children. Students are having their lives and livelihoods placed at risk by laws such as the Transgender Sports Ban, the so-called Parental Bill of Rights, and now Don't Say Gay. These shamelessly discriminatory bills are forcing LGBTQ+ families to reconsider their future in Florida. What would you tell the parents of LGBTQ+ children in your district who feel they need to leave Florida in order to protect their children?**

I would encourage families to remain engaged in the community and to work intimately with advocacy groups to replace legislators and policy makers at the ballot box.

- 8. The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health found that 45% of LGBTQ+ students seriously considered attempting suicide and 1-in-5 LGBTQ+ attempt it. How would you lead on this issue and work to decrease these statistics over the course of your term in office?**

I commit to maintaining ongoing communication with service organizations and advocacy groups throughout the community to ensure I am properly educated about the needs and priorities of all District 6 residents.

- 9. The same survey by The Trevor Project found that nearly all transgender and non-binary students have had to worry about their access to gender-affirming healthcare, bathrooms, and sports teams being taken away from them. How would you work to take this fear off their shoulders so that they can go back to just being kids?**

I would encourage families to remain engaged in the community and to work intimately with advocacy groups to replace legislators and policy makers at the ballot box.

- 10. Far-right groups are pushing to ban books on any topic they find disagreeable, such as books on Black history and experiences, immigration, the LGBTQ+ community, climate change, etc. Do you support these book bans? If not, what is your plan to counter them and ensure students have access to a full array of age-appropriate knowledge and experiences?**

No, I do not support book bans or the very negative "don't say gay" proposal. I would encourage families to remain engaged in the community and to work intimately with advocacy groups to replace legislators and policy makers at the ballot box.

- 11. During a town hall in your district, a constituent describes being gay or transgender as a "lifestyle choice." What is incorrect about their description? How would you constructively respond in this situation?**

The comment was inconsiderate and inappropriate.

- 12. During a board meeting, the board chair purposely refers to a transgender woman as "he" and "him" as the woman attempts to give her public comment. The woman corrects the board chair each time, insisting that her pronouns are "she" and "her." The board chair continues to misgender the woman until she eventually leaves the chamber in tears. How would you respond in this situation?**

As a point of privilege, I deem it paramount to address the insensitive behavior for the record.

- 13. A parent approaches you at an event, insisting that her son's teachers have "groomed" him into liking boys. Her son is at her side when she says this. How do respond to the parent's statement such that the young boy leaves feeling better about himself?**

I do not think it would be appropriate to respond.

- 14. Orange County continues to embrace urban sprawl, despite a plethora of data that links urban sprawl to severe strains on our housing, employment, healthcare, and public transit systems (to name a few). What are your thoughts on Orange County's growth? What could Orange County in terms of development that would better serve the communities in your district?**

Orange County is experiencing record growth in population every day. Other cities and towns across the country are re-examining and changing comprehensive plans, zoning, and other building regulations to make smart growth affordable and we should be doing the same. When elected my plan includes working towards expanding tax credits and development incentives, establishing a dedicated property acquisition fund, encouraging smart growth zoning policies that align with our rapidly increasing population, and, lobbying to revise the Florida Landlord and Tenant Act to remove eviction from being a summary proceeding and offering sealing and expungement criteria for residential evictions.

15. Do you support the idea of constructing more multi-family homes in neighborhoods traditionally zoned for single-family homes? What impact would this have on your district?

I support smart and affordable growth for families.

16. Homeowner Associations often prevent homeowners from transitioning their lawns away from non-functional grasses such as turf and towards sustainable options such as native Florida plants and edible landscapes. HOAs insist that moving away from the traditional pristine green lawn would lower housing prices. What is your opinion on this issue?

I believe private HOA's carry authority on this matter.

17. What are the top environmental concerns you are seeing in your District and what are the solutions you plan to bring forward if you were elected?

Poverty and dated infrastructure are my major concerns. I will work to establish collaborative partnerships to address measures like sustaining a living wage and affordable rental housing. When elected I will also advocate for Community Improvement Caucuses to Address Blight, Median/Right Away Beautification projects, Enhanced Infrastructure to prevent flooding, Sewer/Septic Retrofit Opportunities, Security Cameras in the right-away and on county surplus lots to monitor crime and improve safety.

18. Contributions are typically linked to poor environmental policies being passed. Are you pledging to stay away from any particular contributions?

Campaign contributions received to operate my campaign are not connected to my ability to make independent, informed decisions once elected.

19. Understanding our economic position, how do you plan to localize and strengthen our food system?

I support local community gardens and farmer markets to support the distribution of healthy, fresh produce.