

Candidate Information

1. First name * Tom
2. Last name* Keen
3. Campaign Website*www.keenforfl.com
4. Campaign Facebook * @keenforFL
5. Campaign Twitter* @keenforFL
6. Campaign Instagram * @KeenForFL
7. Please list the LGBTQ+ organizations you are affiliated with and any donations you have given. *
Provided monetary donations to Zebra Coalition.
8. Please summarize your history of community involvement. This may include city boards, civic associations, non-profits, etc. *

I am the former elected Treasurer of the Orange County DEC.

I currently serve on the City of Orlando Citizen's Police Review Board (CPRB) and the Mayor's Veteran's Advisory Council (MVAC).

I serve on the board of the Friends of Fisher House.

I am a founding member of American Legion Post 412 in Lake Nona and member of other local veteran service organizations.

9. Please summarize the work you have performed in the past five years to further LGBTQ+ rights.*
Attended forums and events, marched with the CTA in Pride Parade, and will continue to use my voice to be an advocate to advance the rights of the LGBTQ+ rights.. There are many issues where we need to work; teen bullying, family rejection, homelessness, counseling, hate crime, and creating policies that will be inclusive to meet the needs of the community.
 10. Please list other endorsements you have received. *
Current endorsements, with more to come, include Ironworkers Local 806, VoteVets, Moms Demand Action (Gun Sense Candidate - not an endorsement), State Senator Vic Torres, and SunCoast NORML.
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About Your Campaign and LGBTQ Issues

11. What motivated you to run for this position?*

I have been a resident of District 35, City of Orlando and Central Florida , and a Florida resident for nearly 30 years. As a Naval Officer I had the opportunity to live and work in multiple states and overseas, and I value diversity and multi-cultural communities. I want to continue to serve our community so that all Floridians can be happy, safe, and prosperous.

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

Providing a voice for the community in Tallahassee and in Orange/Osceola Counties. Actively consult with LBTQ+ leaders and organizations. Attend and be present at events focused on LBGTO+ community (not just once a year at Pride).

Introduce/co-sponsor/advocate to pass legislation that would prohibit discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and gender under the Florida Civil Rights Act.

13. Have you attended an LGBTQ+ Pride Month celebration or Orlando's Come Out With Pride? *

Yes

14. Have you attended or supported a drag show or drag performance in our community? *

Yes

15. How would you ensure that your office acknowledges and celebrates the LGBTQ+ community?*

Once elected, I will continue to actively participate in LGBTQ+ events, collaborate with local LGBTQ+ organizations, and elevate LGBTQ+ voices through my platform as a State Representative. I would seek opportunities to recruit members of the LGBTQ+ community as part of my team. I would also support inclusive education initiatives and work on advancing legislation that protects LGBTQ+ rights. Additionally, my office would promote a culture of inclusivity, ensuring that LGBTQ+ constituents concerns are heard and addressed promptly.

16. Will you ensure that you and your staff receive competency training on the LGBTQ+ community, emphasizing unconscious bias?*

Yes

17. Would you condemn instances of hate speech in your organization and the community at large? *

Yes

18. Legislation 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? *

Work with the City of Orlando/Orange/Osceola Counties (for example the City of Orlando Board on Multicultural Affairs) and with Business Leaders (Gay Chamber, etc) to establish metrics based solutions. And specifically as a member of the Florida House, fight to repeal changes made last session to the Florida Civil Rights Act.

19. There is a lack of knowledge when it comes to the transgender community. Sometimes, the services offered in public offices are often unfamiliar with the needs of the transgender community. What actions would you take to ensure that the services your office provides will be cognizant of the needs of the transgender community? *

First, educate myself, make sure I have engaged with leaders in the transgender community, second make sure my staff is well trained and knowledgeable. This training would cover topics such as gender identity, pronoun usage, and respectful communication. I would also work to establish partnerships with local LGBTQ+ organizations and advocacy groups to gather input and feedback on how our services can be more inclusive and supportive of transgender individuals. Additionally, I would actively seek out and hire diverse staff, including transgender individuals, to ensure that the office reflects the community it serves and can better address their unique needs.

20. During a town hall in your District, a constituent describes being gay or transgender disparagingly. How would you constructively respond in this situation? *

First I would not accept the constituent's remarks and I would state that specifically in the moment. I do not believe being gay or transgender is a lifestyle choice, but that is a common perception. I would state that I believe that there are biological/genetic factors that determine sexual orientation. Choice has nothing to do with who does and does not become gay or transgender.

21. How would you respond to a person intentionally misgendering a transgender or non-binary person? *

Assuming this is in a private conversation, specifically state that comment is unacceptable to me. In a more public conversation, I would firmly, but respectfully correct the individual. I would emphasize the significance of treating everyone with dignity and kindness, regardless of their gender identity. If the misgendering continues or escalates into harassment, I would take appropriate measures to address the situation, which may include involving relevant authorities or organizations to ensure the safety and well-being of the individual being targeted.

22. 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?*

Create and follow a comprehensive long term plan that address these issues. Many Floridians bemoan growth in an area they chose to move to AND at the same time, they desire more commercial services near them - which drives more growth. We need more dense housing options that allow for more efficient public transportation and access to more green space/parks. It's all about balance.

23. To expand upon the prior statement, what could Orange County do regarding development that would better serve the communities in your District? *

Stay engaged, continue to work on implantation and revision of growth plans. Work across multi counties to ensure a regional approach to traffic and infrastructure issues. Orange County should prioritize affordable housing initiatives, invest in transportation infrastructure to reduce traffic congestion, and implement environmental conservation measures in new developments. It is crucial to engage the community in decision-making processes, support local small businesses, and ensure that infrastructure planning aligns with population growth. Additionally, access to affordable healthcare, social services, and disaster preparedness should be integral parts of development planning to meet the diverse needs of residents.

State House Questions

24. Will you support/co-sponsor legislation to make it illegal to fire someone, deny them housing, or reject their access to public accommodations because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression? *

Yes

25. Will you support legislation requiring fair and equal access to essential healthcare for transgender persons? *

Yes

26. Would you oppose any and all legislation that criminalizes the medical treatment of transgender youth? If not, why?*

Yes

27. Will you oppose using taxpayer dollars to subsidize private and charter schools that discriminate against LGBTQ+ students and families? *

Yes

28. Do you support teaching comprehensive, LGBTQ-inclusive, age-appropriate sex education and HIV/STD prevention programs in our public schools? *

Yes

29. Would you support/co-sponsor legislation creating a non-binary gender marker option on state licenses? *

Yes

30. What kind of gun safety measures do you support that would reduce potential violence against the LGBTQ+ community and general gun violence? *

I support comprehensive gun safety measures that aim to reduce potential violence against the LGBTQ+ community and address general gun violence. These measures include implementing universal background checks for all gun sales, closing the gun show loophole, and enacting waiting periods to allow for thorough vetting of buyers.

Additionally, I advocate for the implementation of extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) to temporarily restrict access to firearms for individuals who pose a danger to themselves or others.

Furthermore, I support efforts to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, which are often used in mass shootings and can cause significant harm. It is essential to promote responsible gun ownership by providing education and training on safe storage practices and the risks associated with firearms. These measures, combined with increased mental health support and community outreach programs, can contribute to reducing gun violence and creating a safer environment for all, including the LGBTQ+ community.

I am proud to be a Moms Demand Action Gun Sense Candidate.

31. What gun safety measures would you advocate for within the State Legislature?*

First priority will be bring back the requirement for a concealed weapon permit. Also to mandate annual training to maintain currency. Furthermore, I support efforts to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, which are often used in mass shootings and can cause significant harm. It is essential to promote responsible gun ownership by providing education and training on safe storage practices and the risks associated with firearms. These measures, combined with increased mental health support and community outreach programs, can contribute to reducing gun violence and creating a safer environment for all, including the LGBTQ+ community. I am proud to be a Moms Demand Action Gun Sense Candidate.

32. Which steps would you take to ensure the safety of patients, doctors, and staff of reproductive healthcare facilities such as Planned Parenthood? *

To ensure the safety of patients, staff, and doctors at reproductive healthcare facilities, I would collaborate with law enforcement to implement tailored security measures, including enhanced patrols and access control. Community engagement would be encouraged to raise awareness and report suspicious activities.

Additionally, I would advocate for legal protections, uphold patient privacy, and work closely with advocacy groups to support reproductive rights and provide resources for crisis response.

33. How would you respond to instances of hate crimes in Orange County (antisemitism, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-immigrant, etc.)?*

Work with and encourage Law Enforcement to take action to enforce law and bring to justice those that engage in these types of criminal activity. Be outspoken and immediately condemn hate crime as it occurs. I will advocate for legislation that strengthens hate crime laws and ensures that victims receive the support and resources they need to recover and rebuild.

34. How would you work to decrease income inequality and promote affordable living in Florida? *

I supported the increase of the minimum wage in Florida. I also support expanding access to affordable housing through incentives for developers and community land trusts, and improving public transportation to reduce commuting costs.

Additionally, I will champion investments in education and job training programs to empower individuals with the skills they need to secure higher-paying jobs. I will work to ensure that healthcare is accessible and affordable for all, reducing a significant financial burden on families.

35. Despite mental illness among adults and children being at an all-time high, Florida ranks next to last on per capita spending on mental health programs. What are your immediate and long-term plans for addressing this epidemic in Florida? *

Sponsor/Co-Sponsor legislation for increased spending on Mental Health. Vote to expand Medicaid and include mental health as a priority. I would also work to improve access to mental healthcare, particularly in underserved communities, by expanding telehealth options and incentivizing mental health professionals to work in these areas. Long term, I will push for comprehensive mental health reform that includes destigmatization campaigns, increased mental health education in schools, and early intervention programs.

36. The Florida Republican Party is passing legislation that strips away LGBTQ+ rights, starting with our children. These shamelessly discriminatory bills force LGBTQ+ families to reconsider their future in Florida. What would you tell the parents of LGBTQ+ children in your District who feel they must leave Florida to protect their children? *

This is a nationwide issue, we need to start here at home in Florida. Make our state a leading light for LGBTQ+ rights. This starts locally and moves up to Tallahassee. Elect more State Representatives that share our values to start undoing the harmful legislation created in the last few years. By staying engaged, joining local LGBTQ+ support networks, and participating in advocacy efforts, we can work towards a more inclusive and accepting Florida for all our families.

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

Suicide prevention and access to mental health resources have to be given priority across the board, not just for LGBTQ+ youth. I have seen similar statistics for returning Veterans, and understand it is not an easy issue to solve - it will take building a coalition of groups to bring about real change and progress. I support securing funding for accessible and culturally competent mental health services tailored to LGBTQ+ youth. I will advocate for anti-bullying initiatives in schools and the implementation of comprehensive, LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education programs. Additionally, I will support legislation protecting LGBTQ+ youth from discrimination and harmful practices while promoting community outreach and inclusivity.

38. What are the top environmental concerns you feel should be addressed, and what solutions do you plan to bring forward if you were elected? *

Clean water is my number one environmental concern. Loss of habitat is also a top priority. We need to ensure the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has resources and teeth to enforce existing state law - and that they are aggressively working to restore and protect the environment. I will also support measures to transition to clean and renewable energy sources, reduce carbon emissions, and promote energy efficiency.

Additional Questions

39. Is there anything else you want us to know about why the Rainbow Democrats should support your candidacy?

Absolutely, I want the Rainbow Democrats to know that my 21-year service in the United States Navy has instilled in me a deep sense of duty, integrity, and a commitment to justice and equality for all Americans. These values are at the core of who I am, and they guide my actions every day, not just during Pride Month. I firmly believe that every member of the LGBTQ+ community deserves equal rights and protections under the law, and I am dedicated to using my voice and my position to advocate for those rights, 365 days a year.