Queer the Vote: Vote LGBT Equality 2012
Voter Guide

Founded almost forty years ago, The Task Force was the first national LGBT advocacy organization working to build the grassroots political power of the LGBT community. Over the years, we’ve witnessed pivotal moments in our movement’s history that were defined by the push and pull of the electorate. And November 2012 is no exception for there is much at stake for the progressive LGBT community. We work to build a real progressive culture for our country – and to do that we know it’s absolutely vital to get involved in more than “just” LGBT issues. How do we know a multi-issue agenda mirrors our own lives? Because we’re LGBT and we come from every racial background, economic class, work in every field possible, and we’re members of unions, immigrants, and in need of decent health care just like everyone else. Like any other community, the LGBT community includes many different identities. So until oppression ends for people of ALL colors, faiths, origins, ages, and abilities, our fight isn’t over. Stand with us as the progressive LGBT community and Queer the Vote in 2012!

Pledge to Vote

- YOUR VOTE is powerful. Everyone should be registered to vote! Many states have changed their voter registration guidelines so it’s important to make sure you’re registered to vote. If you are ineligible to vote (because you’re too young or you’re not a citizen, etc.) you can still be involved in the democratic process by working with others on issues that you care about and know are important. Take our Pledge to Vote now.

Learn About the Issues!

- As a voter, it’s essential that you educate yourself by researching the issues that you care about. That’s why we’ve written this guide -- to give LGBT people and allies information about some of the issues that progressive-minded voters may encounter at the polls. Take this guide, read it and share it with others at school, home, work, civic groups, places of worship, etc.

Use Early Voting or Go to the Polls on Election Day!

- When it’s time to cast your ballot whether at the polls or through the mail, remember that this is about making YOUR choices known. As voters, we’re participating in the hiring of the people who’ll be elected to represent us. It’s vital that they hear from us and know our views on the issues. We each have the responsibility to use the ballot and hire (vote for) or fire (vote against) candidates and/or issues that will impact our lives.

Key Points to Remember:

- Confirm that you’re registered to vote under your current name and address.
- If someone in your household is going to turn 18 before November 6th, help them register to vote.
- Know your rights about voting BEFORE you go to ballot box. If someone attempts to turn you away, then ask for a provisional ballot. And after you’ve voted, call [insert hotline number] to report the incident and get assistance to make sure your vote counts.
- Vote EARLY! Contact your Board of Elections to find out if you can vote early in the election. These are just some of the benefits of voting early:
  - It gives you time to consider and research the issues while the ballot’s in front of you (voting in the ballot box can sometimes make you feel pressured).
  - It means not risking something getting in your way on Election Day.
  - It frees you up on Election Day to volunteer!
- If you’re voting in person, make a plan to get to the polls, especially if transportation is an issue. Many groups provide free rides to the polls.
We’re in a fight, coast to coast, for a country that values the rights of workers, quality education, affordable health care, safe housing, and much more, and how YOU vote matters. Here are a few issues that are at stake in the 2012 elections:

Data Collection
Without data that identifies the needs of the LGBT community, LGBT people and their families remain invisible in the eyes of taxpayer funded programs like crime victim support and veterans’ health. This issue is very important not just for LGBT people, but everyone in the country who believes tax dollars should be spent in the best way possible to help build stronger communities.

Death Penalty
The Task Force opposes the death penalty for three reasons: 1) It’s disproportionately and unjustly applied to poor people and people of color; 2) It doesn’t improve our criminal justice system that is plagued with inequities and 3) It doesn’t deter crime or reduce the number or severity of hate crimes against members of the LGBT community.

Harassment and Violence
LGBT people suffer extensive discrimination and need legal protection from identity-based discrimination. There are several bills in Congress that current elected officials have not passed that protect LGBT people from harassment and violence. Legislation is also still pending for LGBT students, women, and people of color, and until we elect a fair-minded Congress, that legislation could stay in limbo.

Economic Security
The Task Force believes that every person deserves the opportunity to earn a living wage that’ll allow them to care for themselves and their families. We know that even in better economic times, LGBT people are likely to be economically insecure and face income inequalities. We need a congress that will finally pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) to mandate protections for LGBT workers. And there are continuing attacks on labor unions both in the public and private sectors across the country. We need to fight back and stand with labor on issues affecting working people.

Health Care
Health care is under attack, especially women’s health and we cannot let conservatives make decisions about who has access to health care. The Task Force believes that access to quality, culturally competent, and affordable health care is a human right. LGBT people face poorer health outcomes across the board, including in substance abuse rates, mental health needs, obesity, HIV/AIDS, and cervical and breast cancer. In addition to those negative health outcomes, LGBT people are twice as likely not to have health insurance. This election will be a deciding factor as to whether the Affordable Care Act will continue to expand coverage that helps LGBT people.

Immigration
The Task Force has long held a strong commitment to family unification and a path to citizenship for the many undocumented people who are working hard to build their lives in the United States. Behind the hysterical, anti-immigrant rhetoric that gets tossed around far too often are real stories of real people who simply yearn to work hard and be part of the American dream; who want to take care of their families; who want to create the brightest futures possible for their children; who want to contribute their skills and talents to their communities; who only want to live peacefully and out of harm’s way. There is progressive legislation pending in Congress right now, leaving the security of immigrants and binational families hanging in the balance.

Relationship Recognition
The Task Force believes that relationship recognition is a key component of breaking down homophobia. We invest in the fight for full relationship recognition because we’ve learned that people’s discomfort about LGBT people comes from a fear of our love and commitment. Some conservative candidates support a federal constitutional marriage amendment that could outlaw same-sex marriages.

Religion and Spirituality
The Task Force’s Institute for Welcoming Resources is a terrific resource for LGBT-inclusive religious and spiritual work that’s happening around the country within and outside of faith traditions. Our Faith Partner Organizing Project is on the front lines, working to bridge the religious and political gap. As LGBT people and allies of faith, we must bring our voices to the polls.

Reproductive Justice
Disturbingly, women’s health and reproductive choices are still under attack in 2012, both in federal and state legislatures, and at the ballot box. The Task Force unequivocally supports reproductive justice and freedom for all people to control their bodies. The ongoing struggle for LGBT rights and reproductive freedom is a shared struggle that ultimately comes down to people’s fundamental right to control their own bodies and lives. Your body, your choice.

Voter Suppression
The Task Force believes that the right to vote should not be hampered. Attempts to prevent members of disadvantaged groups from voting is nothing new – the requirement to own property, pay a poll tax or pass literacy tests are all practices that the United States has had to overcome when safeguarding the right to vote. Since early 2011, many states are passing Voter ID laws requiring voters to prove their identity before they are allowed to vote. Voter suppression laws are always spun as attempts to prevent voter fraud. Investigations into voter fraud have found that the practice is isolated and reports of its prevalence are overblown.