

Politicians started communicating with LGBT community

For the first time in the history of presidential elections in Serbia, status of lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) citizens was made an issue on which presidential candidates were called to make a public opinion. Besides that crucial fact, Serbia has finally come out with a candidate who, without any doubts, is about to fully support LGBT community.

Four of nine presidential candidates filled the form given by Gay – Straight Alliance (GSA) about LGBT citizen's status : Milanka Karić (Force of Serbia Movement - PSS), Ištvan Pastor (Hungarians in Vojvodina Alliance - SVM), Jugoslav Dobričanin (Reformist Party - RS) and Čedomir Jovanović (Liberal Democratic Party - LDP).

This activity was based on public pressure, instrumented by LGBT activists and public media.

On Friday , 11th January 2008, GSA organized and fulfilled its activity called “Presidential Hot-Line” during which (12pm - 3pm) many activists called presidential candidates through their headquarters, and asked about the form given two weeks ago. Activists made great success, and their feedback from the parties was that the candidates are about to respond on the form given, or already have made a response. The only ones to refuse to make a response were the headquarters of Serbian Radical Party – SRS (Tomislav Nikolić) and Nova Srbija (Velimir Ilić).

We would like to thank all the media for bringing the matter to the public, making it an issue for the candidates and their programs. GSA is pleased with the campaign and its results.

Also we would like to thank all LGBT persons for their massive response during the campaign.

Assigned favorites of the electoral run, Tomislav Nikolić (SRS) and Boris Tadić (Democratic Party - DS) made no response on the form. We only hope that Marija Šerifović's arrangement with SRS (Marija is held as a controversial gay icon by Serbian LGBT population) is the way to show support for LGBT population by Mr. Nikolić and his party.

Speaking of Boris Tadić, GSA is not quite assured how his party is about to gain European future for Serbia, since his headquarters and Boris Tadić himself have made no effort responding to the form. Considering the messages in Boris Tadić's campaign to be pro European, we found his lack of response in high contrast to European standards on anti discriminatory legislations, promotion of the LGBT rights, and same sex partnership legislations.

Answers :

Anti discriminatory Law

We stated the issue of discrimination and promotion of anti discriminatory legislations in Serbia to be the most important one. We insist on adopting proposed anti discrimination law made by “The anti discriminatory coalition” (KPD), which has several members of citizen's organizations, one of which is GSA as well.

Čedomir Jovanović's (LDP) answer was the only one that could be accepted by GSA. The answers of other three candidates stated no certain model of the anti discriminatory legislations to be favored by their establishments, but at ground level, they all agreed to be in favor for the legislations promoting anti discriminatory policies and laws, based on any issue for the discrimination itself.

Besides to be totally in favor for the recommended proposal of anti discriminatory law by KPD,

Jovanović insisted on abolishment of discriminatory amendments in present laws, as well as promotion the “hate crime” into Serbian crime law, so the prosecutors could ask for higher punishments due to the fact that hate crime could be staked as a motive.

Social distance to LGBT persons

All of candidates which responded to the form know several LGBT persons, or in case of candidate of Reformist party – suspects to have some of LGBT persons in his encirclement. **Milanka Karić** though **has stated to know not only one, rather many LGBT persons.**

Mrs. Karić also states that for the business occasions she is not measuring anything else but competence, creativity, knowledge, responsibility, reliability, and that **BK company had lots of LGBT personnel at responsible duties**, and that she or her company had no problems in communication or cooperation to the personnel.

Čedomir Jovanović says that he daily in cooperates to LGBT persons.

Ištvan Pastor and Jugoslav Dobričanin virtually agreed at the point that they would have no problems cooperation to LGBT persons, but the also would like to underline that anyone is free to do whatever they are pleased to, as long as they are not undermining the rights of the others involved.

Violence and discrimination

Answering the question about has she heard or has she came across violence or discrimination against LGBT persons, Mrs. Karić responded that in her encirclement there is no discrimination, or violence. She also said that there was no violence or discrimination, and that there will not be any of those categories, and that she is by all means held to be a rather tolerant person.

Mr. Pastor and Mr. Dobričanin also responded that they themselves haven't ever came across violence or discrimination of LGBT population.

Mr. Jovanović though had no reservations admitting the violence and discrimination of LGBT population is very broadly incorporated into the society, **Mr. Jovanović also had some experience with the matter of violence and discrimination, and he highly assured us that he is going to make some moves promoting legislation improvements and to be in favor of punishments of deeds such as violence and discrimination against LGBT population.**

LGBT population status in Serbia and activity agenda of presidential candidates for solving the current problems on the matter presented

Milanka Karić has no special view for the LGBT population status improvement, rather taking the fact that LGBT population is layered trough other social groups – she stands at the point that LGBT population rights have to be improved by improving status and rights of those other groups.

Ištvan Pastor responded that population that made a choice to be within LGBT social group made it by themselves, though he also said that if he is to be elected president he would have the obligation to follow the Constitution of Republic of Serbia with all its guaranteed rights. On the other hand, he would never promote either initiate any law proposal that would positively discriminate of LGBT population.

Jugoslav Dobričanin responded that LGBT population is rather invisible in public, and left to

several individuals and some NVO's that are violating their status in the society.

Čedomir Jovanović said that hard social position of LGBT population in Serbia is a residue of a politics from times past; also absence of reaction by the state establishment and justice system to violence and discrimination cases made that position only harder. New Constitution had a chance of regulating the position of LGBT population, but the Constitution had no space for common people and their real lives. **Besides standard criteria on fighting discrimination, Mr. Jovanović suggested that in favor of making the position of LGBT population easier there has got to be a thorough reform of educational system, in manner that young population has to be thought to believe and foster pro European values.**

Same sex marriage/partnership

Mrs. Karić had made no actual answer to the question is she in favor of legislating same sex marriage/partnership, though she said that every human has its own right to choose the ones to live with, the ones to love and that partnership has to be in line to human rights conventions.

Mr. Pastor declined to be in favor to any same sex partnership promotion.

Mr. Dobričanin stated that he neither his Reformist party have anything against same sex partnerships, as long as they are held as non marital partnerships.

Mr. Jovanović once again gave his full support to same sex marriages/partnerships, favoring the promotion and full equalization of same sex partnerships with the traditional marriage or non marital partnership. GSA was not surprised by the point of view of LDP's presidential candidate, but had to honor him for the courage to fully support to the LGBT population.

All of above candidates stated that, if any of them is elected president, they are going to cooperate to the NVO sector and LGBT organizations in order to improve LGBT population position and general status of human rights.

The presence of presidential candidates of eventual PRIDE day of LGBT population should be expected only of Čedomir Jovanović. Mr. Jovanović stakes that a president should be a president of national unity, meaning that equality of all the citizens is of high importance. That is the main reason for him to support all the people to live freely and he would be glad to oblige to that common ambition.

We highly appreciate the time given by all responding candidates to fill in our questionnaire.

GSA would also like to underline that this action is not to opt in for any of candidates to be the prime ones for LGBT population. This questionnaire was a way for us to gain a clearer look and to give the points of standing of all the candidates to the public. As we said before, four candidates responded to our questionnaire, and their answers were given in this report. We would like to call upon all the electors to include candidate's positions on LGBT population, as they are about to make a choice this Sunday.