

Lorie Masters for Attorney General

Record, Positions and Commitments

I thank GLAA for posting my statement on your blog. I especially thank GLAA for your leadership in advocating for an elected Attorney General. Thanks, in part, to your efforts, we now have the ballot box as a tool to insure that the Attorney General responds to the needs of everyone in DC, not just the most powerful and influential.

My Record

As a practicing attorney in Washington, DC for more than 30 years, I have fought for the best interests of both my clients and District residents. In my private practice, I have represented individuals, families and businesses seeking fair treatment from insurance companies and protected the rights of policyholders. I have done extensive pro bono work, championing those among the most vulnerable in DC. Committed to ending dishonest and unfair business practices, I helped Anacostia homeowners who bought redeveloped homes that turned out to have significant construction defects get much needed repairs and renegotiated high-interest loans for families who were taken advantage of by predatory lenders. An advocate for women and children, I have fought for victims of human trafficking and secured justice for them. I have sued on behalf of the District government to ensure transparent elections and represented disenfranchised voters against discriminatory election practices.

Particularly because members of DC's transgender community face challenges in receiving the medical care they need, it is significant that I have been able to obtain health insurance for individuals diagnosed with cancer, multiple myeloma, and other life threatening diseases. In doing so, I have been able to guarantee that the clients get the insurance they need in order to proceed with the treatments recommended by their doctors.

Because members of DC's LGBT community, particularly young people, are vulnerable to sex trafficking, it also is significant that I have worked on many cases representing victims of human trafficking here in the United States. I filed groundbreaking federal lawsuits under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act seeking to recover back wages, statutory damages and other damages for my clients. I have succeeded in obtaining significant monetary settlements and two million-dollar judgments in the human trafficking cases I have handled.

In addition to pro bono cases, I have been very involved in increasing access to justice for people across DC. I have served on the Boards of the Legal Aid Society of DC, the DC Bar Foundation, and the Women's Bar Association Foundation; groups which provide direct pro bono legal services or grant necessary funds to such organizations. In addition, I chaired the Women of Color Research Initiative of the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, and as president of the DC Women's Bar Association in 2008, I planned and presided over the WBA's Diversity Summit, held at the Howard University Law School. The summit provided a forum for discussion of issues facing women of color in the legal profession and featured speakers from around the country, while also providing a place where lawyers in DC could discuss issues of concern in a confidential and safe setting. The summit resulted in publication of the WBAs second report from its *Initiative for Advancement of Women, Creating Pathways to Success for All*, which the WBA provided free to firms and lawyers interested in its reporting on the summit and recommendations of best practices for advancing diversity and inclusion. I currently serve on the ABAs Gender Equity Task Force. These efforts show my commitment to, and recognition of, the interrelated challenges of equity vis-à-vis race, gender and sexual orientation.

My Positions

As the people's lawyer, not only must I oversee the case work of the Office, but I also must advocate for the people's interests. For example, I will continue to fight for fair pay and equal pay for equal work regardless of gender, race, or sexual orientation. I will fight to protect our elders, our children, and the most vulnerable among us. I am particularly sensitive to the plight of elderly LGBT individuals whose sexual orientation may further isolate them from society and thus make them more vulnerable to mistreatment. Similarly, the particular vulnerabilities of LGBTQ youth demand that they receive every bit of protection and advocacy that the Attorney General provides.

One priority for me is protecting victims of sex trafficking, particularly young people. As stated above, I have handled, tried, and settled many pro bono cases work representing victims of human trafficking, and I am, sadly, all too aware of the plight of trafficking victims. Coerced individuals should never be tried for prostitution. As Attorney General, I would make sure that the Office of the Attorney General exercises maximum prosecutorial discretion, in cases where it may play a role, in ensuring that victims do not get charged as criminals. I would argue for increased training of prosecutors and public defenders so that victims are provided with counseling and services and not prosecuted as criminals. The force of our criminal justice system should fall on the traffickers and pimps, and not the victims. I would support legislation in the District to provide for vacatur and expungement of convictions entered against trafficking victims and exploited children. Fifteen states have enacted such legislation, and I would support enactment of such legislation in DC.

Another priority for me will be assuring that all organizations operating in DC obey the law with respect to the rights of LGBT individuals. Whether it is a charter school, a bar or a nightclub, a counseling organization, or an employer, virtually every organization operates in DC under a license issued by the DC Government. As your Attorney General, I will move quickly and surely to end the licenses of any organization that violates the rights of LGBT individuals or any other group protected by law.

In all of my duties, I will enlist the involvement of Police Chief Cathy Lanier and all of the Metropolitan Police Department. Police enforcement and prosecution must go hand in hand; the MPD is an important ally. Nevertheless, I also am committed to assuring that MPD officers are culturally competent and that they respect the rights of everyone they encounter.

My Commitment to the LGBT Community

I note with distress GLAA's determination that DC's appointed Attorneys General and, before that, DC's Corporation Counsel "had a long history of trampling on the rights and interests of the District's LGBT community." This will not be the case in my administration.

As an early step towards assuring proper treatment of members of the LGBT community, I will establish an LGBT Advisory Panel to help me

- identify instances where Office of the Attorney General fails to uphold the rights of LGBT individuals,
- set priorities for litigation that is responsive to LGBT interests, and
- propose legislation to further protect LGBT rights and interests.

I will appoint Panel members after receiving the recommendations of GLAA leaders as well as other LGBT advocates and service providers. Furthermore, an individual who reports directly to me will

provide staff support to the Panel and facilitate ongoing communications between me, the Office of the Attorney General and the LGBT community.