

Answers by Manuel Rivera, Candidate for D.C. Attorney General

Fight for Home Rule. To protect DC's LGBTQ+ communities, will you oppose every single effort to infringe on DC's autonomy?

- 1) Yes. I will oppose every effort to infringe on the District's autonomy and its right to govern itself. Home Rule is essential to protecting the rights and dignity of all DC residents, including our LGBTQ+ communities. When Congress interferes with local laws, it undermines the District's ability to enact and enforce protections that reflect the values and needs of its residents. As Attorney General, I will defend DC's Home Rule authority and use every available legal tool to resist unlawful federal overreach and safeguard the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Stop Enabling Federal Overreach. Will you refuse to cooperate with the Federal Government in its undemocratic use of power, including the authoritarian deployment of National Guard troops?

- 2) Yes. I will not support or facilitate unlawful or undemocratic federal overreach. The use of federal power—especially the deployment of National Guard troops in the District—must be lawful, necessary, and respectful of the rights of our residents. When federal actions undermine civil liberties, target vulnerable communities, or bypass the District's elected leadership, I will use the full authority of the Office of the Attorney General to challenge those actions in court and to protect the people of the District. At the same time, I will continue to cooperate with federal partners where coordination is lawful, transparent, and serves the safety and well-being of our communities.

Invest In a Just Legal System. To support LGBTQ+ people involved in the legal system, do you support limiting pre-trial detention at a minimum to the evidence-based laws in place before 2023 and investing more resources into civil legal help?

- 3) Yes. I support strengthening and fully enforcing existing laws while investing the District's resources to end homelessness in DC. LGBTQ+ residents—especially youth and seniors—are disproportionately impacted by housing instability, and that demands a focused, equity-driven response.

Safe and Warm Homes. In light of disproportionate representation of LGBTQ+ among people without stable housing, do you support strengthening and enforcing the existing laws and investing the District's resources to end homelessness in DC?

- 4) As Attorney General, I would prioritize enforcement against discrimination in housing, protect tenants from unlawful evictions, and hold bad actors accountable. I will go after slum landlords without mercy. At the same time, I support expanding access to safe shelter, permanent supportive housing, and legal services that help

people remain housed or quickly regain stability. Ending homelessness requires both strong legal protections and sustained investment—and I am committed to both.

Abundant and Nutritious Food. Do you support increasing the nutrition assistance program benefits to fill the gap created by the federal government?

- 5) Yes. I support increasing local nutrition assistance to help fill gaps left by the federal government. No one in the District should go hungry, and when federal benefits fall short, we have a responsibility to act.

As Attorney General, I would support policies that expand access to nutritious food, ensure eligible residents receive the benefits they are entitled to, and enforce laws against fraud, price gouging, and barriers to access. Food security is a basic necessity, and strengthening these programs is essential to protecting the health and dignity of our communities.

Power to the People. Do you commit to providing economic relief to DC's LGBTQ+ residents and businesses by investing in energy and water infrastructure that prioritizes the people of DC over corporate profits?

- 6) Yes. I support investing in energy and water infrastructure in a way that prioritizes the people of the District over excessive corporate profits and delivers real economic relief—especially for communities that have been disproportionately burdened, including LGBTQ+ residents and small businesses.

As Attorney General, I would enforce consumer protection laws, challenge unfair rate increases, and ensure transparency and accountability from utilities. I also support policies that expand access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable services, so that essential resources like energy and water remain accessible to all residents while promoting long-term economic stability.

Health Care is Human Right. Will you use every tool within your power to ensure transgender youth and adults have access to healthcare in DC?

- 7) Yes. This is a question that hits home for me. My niece's daughter, whom I have seen grow from a baby to a child, from a child to a teenager, and from a teenager to an adult, is an openly gay lesbian. I could not be prouder of her for having the courage to live openly without hiding her identity, especially given that she grew up in a Catholic conservative family. To everyone's surprise, we all embraced her, felt proud of her, and our love for her remains as strong as ever.

I will use every lawful tool within my authority to protect and expand access to healthcare for transgender youth and adults in the District. Health care is a fundamental

right, and no one should face discrimination or barriers to medically necessary care because of who they are.

As Attorney General, I will enforce DC's anti-discrimination laws, challenge unlawful restrictions, and work to ensure that providers, insurers, and institutions comply with the law. I will also support policies that make care accessible, affordable, and respectful—because every resident deserves dignity, safety, and equal protection under the law.

Health Care is a Smart Investment. Do you commit to opposing cuts to the Health Care Alliance and Medicaid health insurance programs to balance DC's budget?

8) Yes. I oppose cutting the Health Care Alliance and Medicaid to balance the District's budget. These programs are essential lifelines for thousands of DC residents, including LGBTQ+ individuals who often face barriers to stable coverage and care.

I will go even further. As part of that commitment, I support reallocating resources to where they are truly needed—toward healthcare, housing, and essential services that protect our most vulnerable communities. One example is the so-called Fair Elections Program, which uses public funds to finance political campaigns. In practice, this program disadvantages small parties and individuals who cannot meet the thresholds to qualify, while directing millions of dollars away from urgent community needs.

That is why I made the decision to opt out of the Fair Elections Program and run a traditionally financed campaign. I am committed to raising my own funds because I do not believe taxpayer dollars should be diverted from critical services to subsidize political campaigns. At a time when essential programs are under pressure, it is simply not justifiable to allocate millions to politicians.

For example, my opponent raised approximately \$250,000 and then received five times that amount in public funds. In my view, \$250,000 is more than sufficient to run an effective campaign. It is difficult to justify why the city should sacrifice vital services to further fund political campaigns at that level. Those resources should be redirected to programs that directly serve the people—especially those most in need.

As Attorney General, I will advocate responsible budgeting that prioritizes healthcare, protects vulnerable communities, and ensures public funds are used where they make the greatest impact.

Access to Public Benefits. Do you commit to creating the most accessible system for program beneficiaries possible to minimize LGBTQ+ people not being able to access benefits due to bureaucracy?

9) Yes. I am committed to making access to public benefits as simple, fair, and accessible as possible so that no one—especially LGBTQ+ residents—is denied support because of bureaucracy.

Fight Crime At The Source. Do you support decriminalizing sex work and making better investments in violence prevention activities?

10) I support addressing crime at its source by investing in effective violence prevention, community-based safety strategies, and services that reduce vulnerability and harm. That includes expanding access to housing, mental health care, substance use treatment, job opportunities, and legal services—investments that are proven to improve safety outcomes for everyone, including LGBTQ+ residents.

With respect to sex work, I believe this is a complex issue that requires a careful, evidence-based approach focused on public safety, reducing exploitation and trafficking, and protecting the health and dignity of those involved. I am open to policies that shift the focus away from criminalizing individuals and toward harm reduction, while ensuring strong enforcement against coercion, trafficking, and violence.

Throughout my career as a criminal defense attorney, I have represented many women and men charged with prostitution-related offenses. That experience has given me a direct understanding of the issue from the ground level. I have seen how often individuals are caught in a vicious cycle tied to poverty, trauma, and substance dependency. For that reason, I strongly support the development and expansion of programs that provide meaningful pathways out—through treatment, rehabilitation, and support services—so that people are not simply cycled through the system but given a real opportunity to rebuild their lives.

I believe the law should be applied with compassion, while never losing sight of the need for accountability. Justice requires both—holding people responsible for their actions and recognizing the human circumstances that often underlie them. A fair legal system balances consequences with opportunities for rehabilitation, ensuring that accountability leads not only to punishment, but also to the possibility of change and restoration.

As Attorney General, my priority will be to pursue policies that are grounded in data, protect vulnerable populations, and make our communities safer.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT MY BACKGROUND

As a preliminary matter, I will be the People’s Attorney General. I will hold regular weekly office hours to meet with residents and hear their concerns directly. This will no longer feel like a distant bureaucracy. It will no longer be called the Office of the Attorney General; it will be called the People’s Office of the Attorney General.

My commitment to justice began early. At 17, I joined the Puerto Rican Independence Party, driven by a belief that dignity and self-determination matter. That sense of justice deepened after the devastating loss of my older sister, who died from polio and cerebral palsy. Watching her struggle and suffering shaped my lifelong commitment to defending the vulnerable and the forgotten.

I earned my Bachelor's degree from Rhode Island College in 1979, majoring in political science, public administration, and Spanish literature, followed by a Master's degree in Educational Administration in 1980. That same year, I ran in a three-way Democratic primary for Rhode Island's 19th District, campaigning on a conservative platform that defended the rights of people with disabilities, the vulnerable and the unprotected, promoted small business growth through tax incentives, and advocated for mediation structures conflicts resolutions, among other things. At the same time, the Rhode Island League of Women Voters partnered in organizing a voter registration drive, further exposing me to grassroots civic engagement and the importance of expanding access to democratic participation. I finished second — but the experience confirmed that public service was my calling.

I also served as Membership Director of the Knights of Columbus, where I learned the power of structured service, ethical leadership, and civic responsibility rooted in faith and patriotism. After the election, I worked at the John Hope Community Center, managing a furniture bank that helped families obtain basic necessities — stoves, refrigerators, clothing, and household essentials — things many people take for granted. Around the same time, then-Governor J. Joseph Garrahy appointed me to a state study commission on bilingual education in Rhode Island.

Law became my tool to turn compassion into action. I graduated from Antioch School of Law in 1985. While studying for the bar, I supported myself by raising funds for Defenders of Wildlife and became a salesman, selling \$1,000.00 memberships for the New York Metropolitan Opera — learning persistence, discipline, and business skills that would later shape my practice.

In 1987, I founded The Law Office of Manuel Rivera, Esq. & Associates, P.C. in Washington, D.C. Over the years, I have trained and mentored lawyers who went on to serve in federal agencies, private practice, and even the judiciary, including an attorney who was appointed as an immigration judge in Sterling, Virginia. Watching others grow into leaders has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my career.

I am admitted to practice before multiple federal and appellate courts, including the United States Supreme Court, where I have taken two cases on certiorari. My work has helped protect immigrant rights, workers' rights protections, and families harmed by negligence. In one case, *Matter of Gutierrez*, Interim Decision #3286 (1996), I defended the rights of asylum seekers under the historic American Baptist Churches settlement. In another, *Asylum Co. and Insurance Designers of Maryland v. Palemon Casarrubia Gonzalez*, aka *Armando Casarrubia Gonzalez*, 10 A.3d619 (D.C 2010), the ruling solidified that the D.C. Workers Compensation Act covers

undocumented workers, ensuring they receive medical and wage-loss benefits if injured, rejecting the employer and insurance's argument that unauthorized status invalidated the employment contract. In a vaccine injury case, *Vivian Morales v. Secretary of Health and Human Services*, I secured a settlement of nearly \$1 million for a seriously injured client who suffered Encephalomyelitis after the influenza vaccine. I have stood up for individuals harmed by abuse of authority, successfully resolving a civil rights case involving excessive force through a confidential settlement that delivered justice and accountability for my client.

Until recently, before suffering an injury, I was an active competitive runner and a regular participant in the weekly Parkrun 5K events held every Saturday at Fletcher Cove along the C&O Canal. I consistently placed first in my age group and often competed successfully against younger runners. As a master runner, I achieved a personal best time of 19:20 in the 5K. Running reinforced lessons I have carried throughout my life—discipline, perseverance, resilience, and the importance of showing up consistently.

For more than 44 years, I have made the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area my home, and for the past 30 years, I have lived in the same area. This community is not just where I work — it is where I raised my family, built my businesses, served my clients, and invested my life. I understand this region not as a visitor, but as a neighbor who has shared in its growth, challenges, and hopes, giving me deep, firsthand understanding of the communities I seek to serve.

Philanthropy and service remain central to who I am. I have been recognized for community leadership, supporting civil rights organizations, and devoted countless hours to pro bono legal work. I have helped incorporate churches that serve immigrant and working-class communities, believing that institutions of faith and service remain pillars of stability and hope.

When Hurricane María devastated Puerto Rico, I could not stand by as my homeland suffered. Working through the churches I had incorporated as part of my pro bono service, I organized a massive relief effort that collected more than 70,000 pounds of food, medical supplies, clothing, and emergency materials. I personally, together with my son, coordinated the transportation of these supplies to Puerto Rico.

Upon arrival, the Bible Society of Puerto Rico secured the shipment in its warehouse and partnered with local community churches to distribute the aid directly to families in need across the island. What began as a grassroots effort became a lifeline for hundreds of residents who had been left without power, clean water, or reliable access to food. It was not charity — it was solidarity with my people when they needed it most.

That experience reaffirmed my belief that leadership is not measured by titles, but by what you do when your community is hurting.

My journey began in a struggling neighborhood in Puerto Rico. It carried me across states, courtrooms, communities, and causes. Everything I have done — as a lawyer, advocate, mentor,

animal lover, and community servant — flows from one simple belief:

If you are given opportunities, you have a responsibility to lift others with you.

That belief continues to guide my life and my work — and it is the same belief I will bring to the Office of the D.C. Attorney General if you elect me.