



VOTER GUIDE
STATE REP. - DISTRICT 66
FALL, 2018



SHARON HIRSCH

DEMOCRAT

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Residence: Plano

Current Job/Profession: Retired

Education: Associate of Arts, General Studies - Collin College
Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences, University of North Texas

Highlight of Current Civic Involvement/Accomplishments:

Leadership Plano Board of Directors
Plano Cultural Affairs Commission
Specialty volunteer for Vitas Hospice
Established and fully fund annual Hirsch-Collin College Scholarship
League of Women Voters
Volunteer Deputy Registrar
Graduate of Plano Citizens Government Academy
Texas PTA Lifetime Membership (awarded twice)
Volunteer for Girls on the Run
Founding member and past president of Women Organizing Women Democrats
State Democratic Executive Committeewoman
Democratic Party Precinct Chair
Election Clerk
Ballot Board
School Health Advisory Committee (PISD)
Site Based Improvement Committee (PISD)
Board member of League of Women Voters of Collin County

Why are you running for office?

After following the 85th Legislative Session and the expensive special session, it was clear to me that we need to restore balance and integrity in Austin. Last session, too much time was spent focusing on divisive and petty issues; we must demand that our representatives spend their limited time in session focusing on issues that are important to the people they are elected to serve. One party rule has put a stranglehold on important state responsibilities, such as meaningful school finance reform.

The people of House District 66 value education and so do I. My family and I have made significant contributions and investments in our public schools through our service as advocates, volunteers, students, and school district employees. Our community deserves to have a representative who will be a champion for our students, staff, and families. I intend to be that kind of representative.



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The 2017 legislative session was dominated by the “bathroom bill” debate. Do you believe the state should require people to use the bathroom designated for the biological sex listed on their birth certificate?

As a woman and a mother, I see no good argument in favor of the bathroom bill. The proposed legislation is unenforceable, unnecessary, and fundamentally discriminatory. I agree with the law enforcement and business communities when they voice their opposition. While I believe it is enough to oppose the bill on its lack of merit, it is important to note that it would also prove costly to the state’s economy. Businesses understand the repercussions of an unfriendly climate when attempting to attract new employees and clients, as well as the threat to tourism.

Why should voters choose you over your opponent?

The people of House District 66 deserve a legislator who is responsive to their concerns. Since announcing my candidacy, I have received numerous calls from constituents who want a representative intent on solving problems rather than polarizing people. They want someone with an open mind and an open door. My opponent supports the bathroom bill, diversion of public education funding through private school vouchers, and permitless carry. As I’ve knocked on doors and talked to voters, I’ve heard that these positions do not align with the views of many of the people in House District 66, nor do they align with mine. Our community is more concerned with sustaining our great public schools while overhauling the school funding system, solving infrastructure problems, and ensuring a vibrant economy. Many also support common sense gun regulations that address the uniquely American problem of gun violence and offer a step forward in making our communities safer.

Furthermore, it is time to bring fiscal responsibility back to our legislature. The current leadership’s lack of attention to the revenue side of the state’s balance sheet has resulted in cuts to critical programs and services. Being fiscally responsible means ensuring that we have the revenue necessary to fulfill our mandated and agreed upon obligations. I will also be a strong voice for full transparency throughout the budget process.

We must elect a leader who is intentional, focused, and open-minded – I will be that kind of leader.



GALA CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

During the last legislative session, Texas passed the Freedom to Serve Children Act which allows foster homes and adoption agencies, including those that receive public funds, to choose to only place children in homes with a mother and father. This coming session we anticipate once again seeing “Religious Liberty” bills which offer protection to businesses that deny services such as counseling, wedding planning, etc. to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Texans when based on “sincerely held religious beliefs.” Would you support such legislation? If so, please explain your justification of the expenditure of state funds defending such a law, as several similar laws are already actively involved in court cases and have been found to be discriminatory and unconstitutional? If you do not support such a proposal, please explain how you would justify your decision to a business that doesn’t wish to provide a specific service, such as baking a wedding cake, to an LGBT individual.

I do not support legislation that results in the denial of services to LGBT Texans based on “sincerely held religious beliefs.” Freedom of religion is defined as both the right to hold and express your beliefs as well as the provision that one religion is not given preference over another. It is not meant to be used as a cudgel to deny others equal footing in society. In our country’s past, we have recognized the error of exclusion in the public arena and have corrected those practices through legislation prohibiting racial discrimination. It is long past time to prohibit discrimination based on other criteria as well, including sexual orientation and gender identity. I believe it is unwise to provide cover for those who wish to withhold services to marginalized communities.

A recent study by the National Center of Transgender Equality found that 82% of transgender youth feel unsafe at school and 44% report having been physically abused. This coming legislative session, we anticipate that we will once again see the introduction of a “Bathroom Bill” which requires transgender students use the bathroom that matches their sex assigned at birth. Would you support such legislation? If you support such legislation, what steps would you include to ensure that transgender children are not bullied or physically attacked when they enter a bathroom? If you oppose such legislation, how would you explain your stance to a constituent concerned about their child’s right to privacy in the school bathroom?

I strongly oppose the “Bathroom Bill.” As a woman and a mother, I see no good argument in favor of it. The proposed legislation is unenforceable, unnecessary, and fundamentally discriminatory. As this relates to schools, I believe all students should be treated with dignity and respect. As a result, it is incumbent upon school districts to create an inclusive environment that takes each individual’s privacy and safety into consideration. After all, schools are one of the few institutions remaining that are open to all. Education is the conduit for helping our students understand the world they live in, and schools are a place where all children should feel accepted.

During the last legislative session, the State Legislature attempted to pass a record number of bills considered anti-LGBT. Several states that have passed similar anti-LGBT laws have faced business boycotts. Conversely, cities/municipalities wanting to be more attractive to business relocations, have passed Equal Rights Ordinances (EROs). These ordinances typically prohibit discrimination in city employment and city services, city contracts, public accommodations, private employment, and housing based on an individual’s sex, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, familial status, marital status, military status, religion, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity/expression or pregnancy. Do you support the right of local governments to pass EROs? Please explain your position.

I appreciate and support the right of local governments to pass and update their Equal Rights Ordinances to reflect the diverse nature of our communities and workforce. As it pertains to House District 66, I want our region to be one that welcomes and respects everyone. One of the most unique things about Texas is the broad diversity of its people. Making sure everyone has the ability to participate fully in the public space without the threat of discrimination is imperative to the well-being of our society.



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What would you like LGBT constituents and our families and friends to know about you as a candidate? Why should this large voting community support your candidacy?

As a candidate, I have made it a point to adopt an outward-facing mindset where I consider how my behavior and decisions affect all of my potential constituents regardless of their background. I am open-minded and committed to creating an atmosphere of fairness and equality. I believe that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect, and I am proud to have raised my four children with those same values. As your representative, I will support policies that reflect these ideals and send a message to the nation that Texas is a caring and inclusive community.



MATT SHAHEEN

REPUBLICAN

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Residence: Plano, Texas

Current Job/Profession: Technology Executive

Education: Bachelor's Degree in Business Economics – Randolph-Macon College
Master of Liberal Arts – Southern Methodist University

Highlight of Current Civic Involvement/Accomplishments:

I am currently honored to serve in the Texas House of Representatives serving the citizens of West Plano and North Dallas. During the 85th legislative session, I was appointed to the House Government Transparency and Operations and International Trade and Intergovernmental Affairs Committees. My family and I currently attend Prestonwood Baptist Church where I serve the Lord as a Deacon, an Usher and on the church's pregnancy center board.

Before serving in the legislature, I served five years on the Collin County Commissioners Court, where I served on the Conference of Urban Counties Policy Committee, the Texas Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee and on the Criminal Justice Committee. Before entering politics, I was appointed by then Governor Rick Perry to the State Board of Social Workers where I chaired the board's Professional Development Committee and also served on the Ethics Committee. Before holding office I was a volunteer for multiple campaigns that included the President/Vice President ticket, County Commissioner, City Council and ISD Trustee. Additionally, I was the founding Chairman of the Reagan Conservative Society, a delegate to Republican state conventions, a former Precinct Chair, former Election Judge and a past board member of the Collin County Republican Men's Club.

Why are you running for office?

I am a fiscal conservative, pro-life grassroots conservative who believes in limited government. I had never held public office before until I was elected to the Collin County Commissioners Court. Now as a proven legislator in the Texas House of Representatives, I recognize there is still much more that needs to be done. Property tax relief is a must and a more efficient government. We must reform healthcare and school finance, including the repeal of Robin Hood. We must do all we can to protect the unborn and support the family values that make Texas the shining example to the rest of the nation.

The 2017 legislative session was dominated by the "bathroom bill" debate. Do you believe the state should require people to use the bathroom designated for the biological sex listed on their birth certificate?

This is a problem created by liberal Democrats that serve as ISD trustees or on city councils that pass bathroom policies that would violate the safety and privacy of women and little girls in Texas. The legislature should pass legislation forbidding local governments from telling people where to go to the bathroom. Local governments were not created for that purpose.



Legislative History on LGBT Issues:

Equality Texas Statement Regarding Rep. Shaheen, Ranked Ninth Most Anti-LGBT Legislator in 2016

Rep. Shaheen was part of the cabal of Collin County lawmakers so incensed by the Plano Equal Rights Ordinance that they decided to sign onto everyone else's anti-LGBT bills. In total, Rep. Shaheen co-sponsored seven anti-LGBT bills.

Representative Shaheen co-sponsored the following bills in 2016:

HB 623 would amend the Texas Family Code to prohibit the use of taxpayer funds for the "the licensing or support of same-sex marriage." It would also bar government employees from recognizing, granting or enforcing same-sex marriage licenses. Any government employee who violates the provision would be barred from collecting "a salary, pension, or other employee benefit."

HB 1745 would ban the use of state or local tax money to license, register or support a same-sex marriage — nor could that money be used to follow a court order requiring state recognition of gay unions.

HB 4105 would prohibit state or local funds from being used for an activity that includes the licensing or support of a same-sex marriage. State or local funds could also not be used to enforce an order requiring the issuance or recognition of a same-sex marriage license.

HB 3602 would permit a "conscientious objector" to freely act or refuse to act in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief without the threat of a person or government agency taking any adverse action against them. The bill defines "conscientious objector" to include a person with a sincerely held religious belief that: marriage is or should be recognized as only the union of one man and one woman;

HB 3864 would allow child welfare providers that contract with the state to discriminate based on sincerely held religious beliefs.

HB 3567 would allow religious organizations and clergy to not celebrate same-sex marriages, including providing goods and services related to a marriage

HB1911 would outlaw non-discrimination ordinances.

GALA CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate did not respond.