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Kerin's Platform

Many folks in the queer community do not know me, but I am the first openly transsexual person in the United States to run for national office. I am challenging Bernie Sanders for his seat in the House of Representatives. I am a native Vermonter, a 1971 graduate of the University of Vermont with a B.S. in civil engineering, and a 1997 graduate of Vermont Law School. I am also a long-time member of the Republican party.

I survived an unusual cancer that resulted in the loss of my left lung, chronic upper back pain, and a change of plumbing that some people seem to think was the wrong choice, but that was far better than the alternatives at the time.

Hence I am perceived by many heterosexuals as a lesbian and by many in the queer community as straight. I prefer to think of myself by the native American conception of "two spiritedness," which they used to describe the *winkte*, or go-betweens, that act as peace-makers.

The Vermont Supreme Court in *Baker* did not address the statutes that offended the Vermont Constitution. While the State may have a strong

interest in recording the contract between two people who marry (as it does with birth, death, deeds, mortgages and host of other contracts), only marriage involves the State's police power.

But there is no rational basis for involving police power. The Court failed, both in research and analysis, to consider simply removing the restrictions on marriage as it then existed, and proposed instead two possible solutions, only one of which was marriage. The legislative result was civil union, which not only which upholds the long-discredited "separate but equal" doctrine, but builds a lengthy addition to Vermont laws. What is worse about civil unions is the requisite public disclosure of private fact, which may well create a "target list" that could potentially bring violence here to Vermont.

If the Court had simply invalidated the State's use of the offending police powers, the denial of equal access to the laws would have ended State involvement, apart from the recording function. This would have allowed for civil marriages without discrimination,

and left churches free to perform marriages (or not perform them) as their faith dictates. The churches would have been fully protected by the First Amendment, whatever choice they made. The tension between church and the State would have dissipated, and the State would have extricated itself from the tension that has now polarizes Vermont. Such a result satisfies the old maxim "he who governs best, governs least," the guiding principle of the founders of both our nation and our state.

The focus of my campaign, however, is on representing all Vermonters in national issues that affect all our lives. One of the largest of these issues is the budget and the debt.

The budget is supposed to be an *estimate*, often itemized, of expected income and expenses for a given period in the future — at least according to *Webster's College Dictionary*.

Our \$5.5 trillion public debt costs us \$250 billion annually in interest alone. Most of that is trust-fund money legally mandated to be held in government securities. The balance is marketable debt representing the actual borrowing of the government. The latter is being paid down, but not by as much as it could be without all the "supplemental" and "emergency" appropriations added to the budget as the projected revenues increase. While the mar-

ketable debt is being diminished, the public debt is growing, due to the increasing reserves of the trust funds. This does not bode well for the budget, not is it good for the trust funds.

Here's an example. The trustees of the Old-Age and Survivors and Disability Insurance report that the disability trust fund peaks in 2005, after which it declines until exhausted in 2023. The old-age and survivors trust fund is in slightly better shape, peaking in 2014 and exhausted in 2040. As for Medicare, we again see the fund peak in 2015 and exhaust in 2023. A prescription benefit for the elderly and disabled is a desirable goal, but worthless if it isn't properly funded. The Republican-led House has passed the Medicare Rx 2000 Act, a modest prescription benefit that Congressman Sanders voted against, despite the fact that it may help the elderly, who, he has often complained, are forced to choose between medicines and basic life needs. There are no good projections available for the impact of this modest benefit on the life of the fund, because there is no experience with it, but surely, it will lengthen the life of the fund.

I propose that the law be changed to allow investment of trust funds in state and municipal instruments to reduce the federal debt, freeing more tax

money while at the same time slightly increasing each fund's revenue, due to the higher interest rates. And possibly other investments could be explored to further extend the life of these funds. Such good-sense approaches can insure a better future for us all.

There are other corrections needed to bolster the trust funds, such as the consolidation of retired military personnel into the Veterans Administration (VA) for their health benefits. They were promised health care for life by our government, but currently, they have to seek an active base for their medical care. In Vermont, that is too far to travel, and frequently results in the cost shifting from the Pentagon budget to the Medicare trust fund for older retirees.

The defense of the nation requires the best and the brightest of our young people to operate the complicated machinery of the modern military. The nation should pay competitively with the private sector for the skills needed. We should also eliminate Clinton's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Merit, not classification, should determine who will best defend the country.

Making policy that is fair, understandable and sensible is my goal. My pledge is to work toward a better government for everyone.

Karen Kerin lives in South Royalton. ▼

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