

EQUALITY.
NOW.

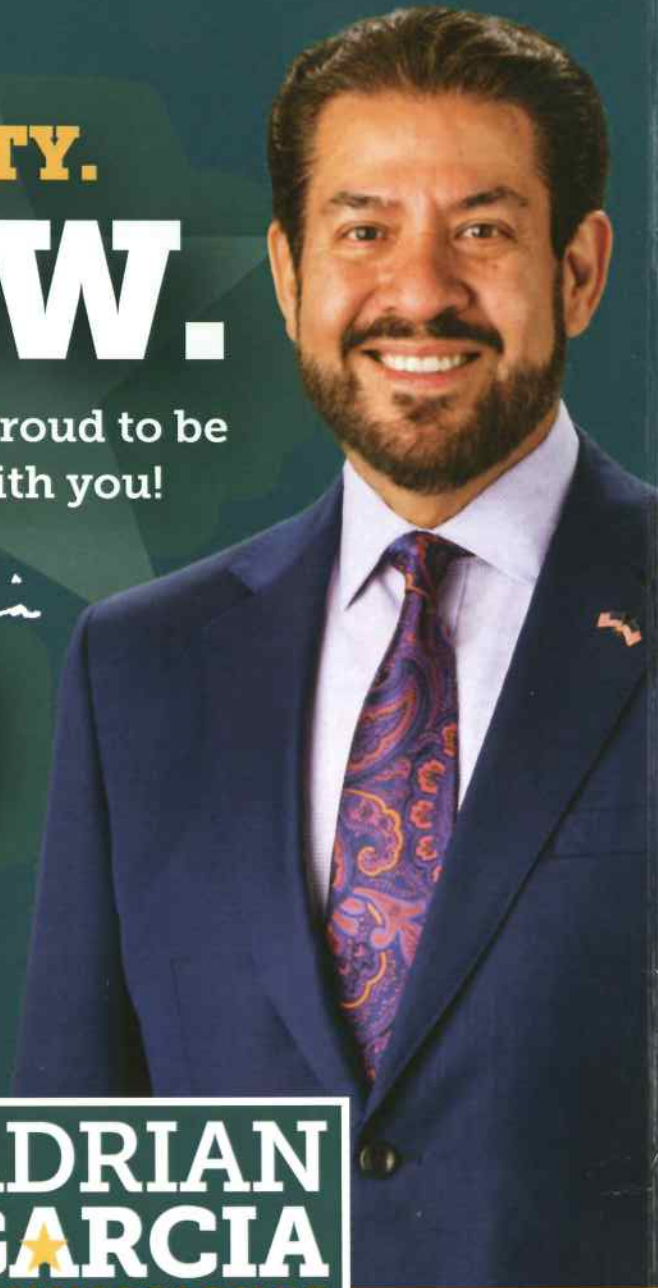
I am beyond proud to be
in this fight with you!

Adrian Garcia



**ADRIAN
GARCIA**
COMMISSIONER
HARRIS COUNTY PRECINCT 2

POL. ADV. ADRIAN GARCIA CAMPAIGN

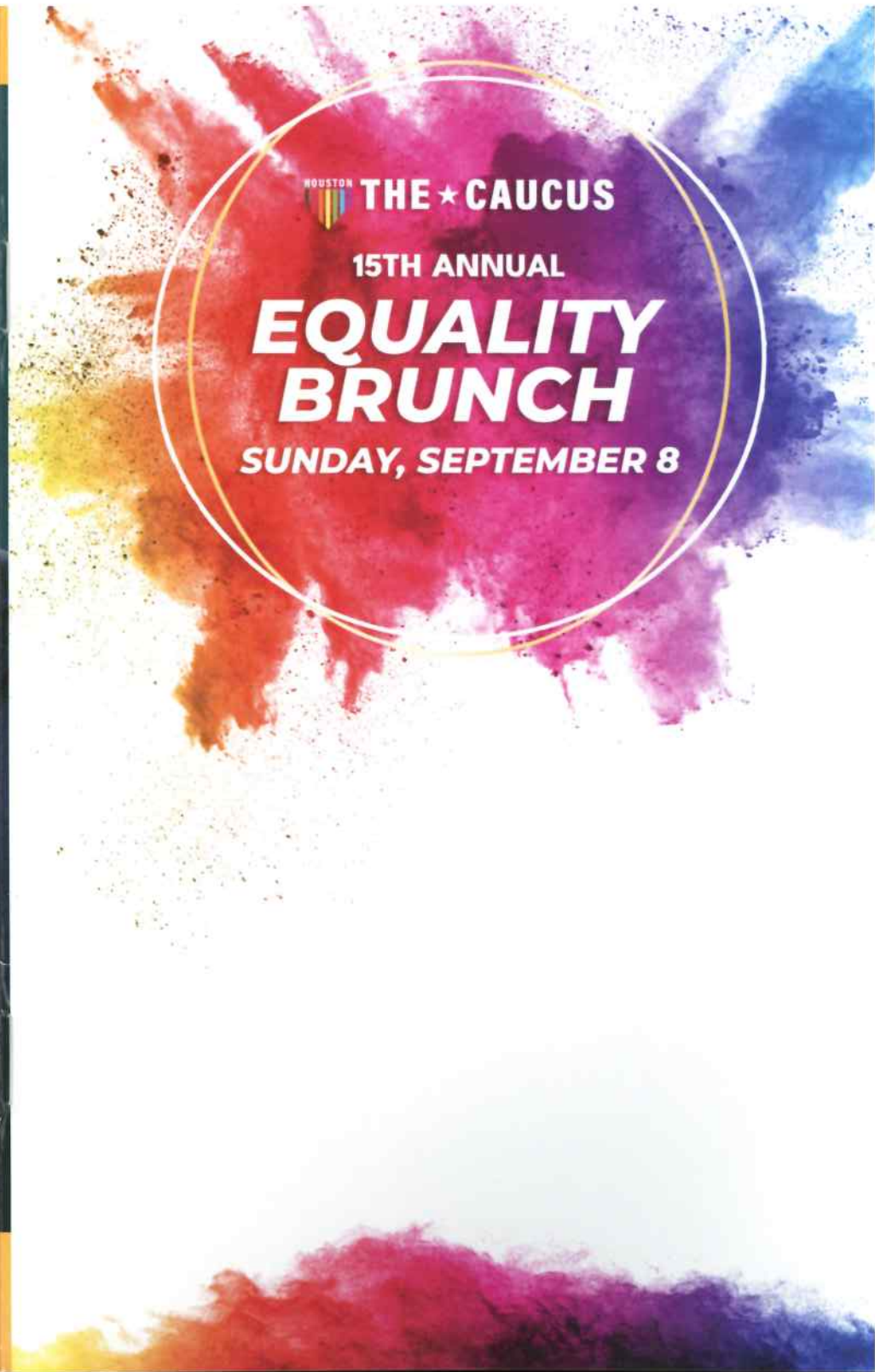


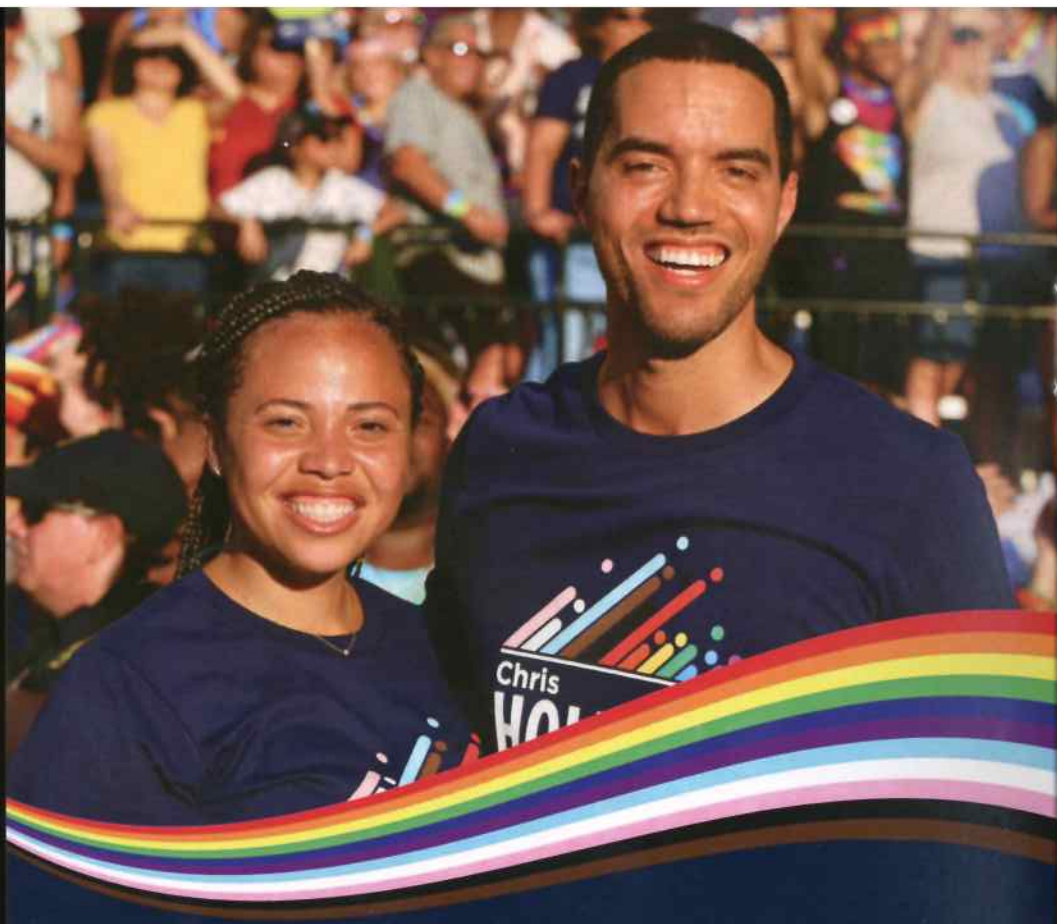
HOUSTON THE ★ CAUCUS

15TH ANNUAL

**EQUALITY
BRUNCH**

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8





WE WON'T GO BACK.

Chris HOLLINS
CITY CONTROLLER

POL. ADV. CHRIS HOLLINS CAMPAIGN

PROGRAM

WelcomeTamara Siler
Emcee

President's Remarks.....Austin Davis Ruiz

Keynote Speaker.....Jolanda Jones
State Representative HD-147

AWARD PRESENTATIONS

Remarks.....Jack Valinski

AWARDS CONTINUED

AppealAustin Davis Ruiz

FINAL AWARDS

Closing Remarks.....Tamara Siler

2024 AWARD RECIPIENTS

**Jim Owens Newcomer of
the Year Award**
Alejandra Salinas

**Barbara Cigainero
Volunteer of
the Year Award**
Neil Aquino

**Jim Cotton
President's Award**
Lauren Ashley Simmons

**Monica K. Roberts
Trans Advocacy Award**
Meghan Fairbanks

**Kristen Capps Social
Conscience Award**
Kevin Nguyen

**Annise D. Parker
Public Service Award**
Council Member
Abbie Kamin

**George Thomas
"Mickey" Leland
Humanitarian Award**
Mayor Pro-Tem Martha
Castex-Tatum

**Bayard Rustin
Civil Rights Award**
Commissioner Rodney Ellis

**Don Hrachovy Lifetime
Achievement Award**
Kennedy Loftin

AWARD RECIPIENT BIOS



NEIL AQUINO

Neil Aquino is a 26-year resident of Houston with a long record of effective public advocacy, including a commitment to LGBTQ+ causes. In his first political life in Cincinnati, Ohio, Neil was part of the opposition to overturn Cincinnati's LGBTQ+ protections, and played a vital role in successful efforts demanding Major League Baseball strongly punish Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott for racist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic remarks. Neil also volunteered at AIDS Volunteers of Cincinnati.

In Houston, Neil has continued his advocacy work launching the Houston Democracy Project in 2023. The Project works to protect democracy against current authoritarian threats by making it a focus of the public and elected officials. Neil is also a co-organizer of the weekly John Cornyn Houston Office Protest, now approaching its 8th year on Houston streets. A purpose of the Cornyn Protest is for people to see others like themselves willing to stand openly and confidently for democracy.

Neil has a political science degree from Xavier University in Cincinnati and has been married to his wife, Laura, for 24 years.



MARTHA CASTEX-TATUM

Mayor Pro-Tem Martha Castex-Tatum, a dynamic community advocate, won the May 5, 2018, special election, to fill the unexpired term of the late Council Member Larry Green for District K, which stretches across southwest Houston into Fort Bend County. Breaking barriers, Martha started her public service journey as the first African American female on the San Marcos, TX city council, earning the role of Deputy Mayor Pro-Tem.

In January 2024, Martha was appointed Mayor Pro-Tem by Mayor John Whitmire. Martha's dedication extends nationally, where she serves on the National League of Cities' Transportation and Infrastructure Services Committee, recently appointed as Vice Chair, and is a member of the National League of Cities 2024 Presidential Election Task Force.

Beyond her impressive professional journey, Martha is the proud mother of one son, Jacob Paul Tatum. Her desire is to restore faith in government and foster a stronger, connected community at local, state and national levels.



RODNEY ELLIS

Commissioner Rodney Ellis has been a steadfast and enthusiastic ally of the LGBTQIA+ community his entire career. As a state senator, he voted against numerous discriminatory pieces of legislation and fought for many years to include sexual orientation in the James Byrd Hate Crimes Bill and vigorously supported the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO).

As the County Commissioner for Harris County Precinct One, Ellis led the effort to update the county's nondiscrimination policy to add sexual orientation and gender-identity protections. He is proud to have established the first-ever LGBTQIA+ Commission with his Democratic colleagues on Commissioners Court. Commissioner Ellis continues to be very outspoken in his support for transgender children across Texas who are in the crosshairs of Texas legislators. Beyond his career-long advocacy for equality, LGBTQIA+ people are present in every part of Commissioner Ellis' life. Championing equality and inclusion is personal – in legislative, political, business, nonprofit, and social circles. "I am truly grateful and will never stop fighting for equality."



MEGHAN FAIRBANKS

Meghan Fairbanks is a long time Houstonian currently living in Montrose and working as an IT professional. As a late blooming transgender woman, Meghan discovered a passion for advocacy and activism around the time of, and in response to, the 87th Texas Legislature in 2021 and the anti-LGBTQ+ legislation being put forth by that session. She continues to make her voice heard, regularly advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and other social justice causes.

In 2022 Meghan founded Trans & GenderQueer Houston to provide transgender and gender non-conforming folks a place to socialize and network outside of the traditional support group environment. She is also currently a board member of the Transgender Foundation of America. Additionally, she is a graduate of Equality Texas's Equality Leaders program.

Meghan has been the recipient of the Horizon Award from the Houston Transgender Unity Committee in 2022, the Monica Roberts Transgender Activist of the Year Award from Equality Texas in 2023.



ABBIE KAMIN

Council Member Abbie Kamin is the youngest member ever to be elected to Houston City Council, and the first to become a mother while serving. Abbie represents District C, which includes Houston's historic LGBTQIA+ neighborhood, Montrose. A champion for all Houston families, she is a civil rights attorney that has worked for our community at every level of government.

Inspired by the families she represents, Abbie created, in partnership with the Greater Houston LGBTQ+ Chamber, Houston's annual Families with Pride – a celebration for LGBTQIA+ children, families, and allies. She spearheaded creating a permanent home for the Montrose Remembrance Garden and regularly partners with organizations like the Montrose Center, Grace Place, Tony's Place, The Caucus, and Equality Texas. She was honored to be Pride Houston 365's 2021 Ally Grand Marshal and received this year's Champion Award from the Chamber. She and her husband Matt are grateful to be raising their son in a welcoming community surrounded by so many LGBTQIA+ family, friends, and fellow Houstonians in their lives.



KENNEDY LOFTIN

Kennedy Loftin is a native Texan, raised and educated in the Houston area. He learned the dignity of hard work from his grandfather on their East Texas farm. Soon after starting his career in development, he accepted a position for Miami-based Best Buddies International, a position that gave him the opportunity to liaise with celebrity partners and plan high-profile events with broad global impact.

In 2008, Kennedy returned home to serve as Executive Director for Best Buddies Texas,

the youngest in the history of the organization. Kennedy joined the Montrose Center in 2015 as the Chief Development Officer, increasing private philanthropy 586% during his tenure. He successfully completed a \$27.5 million capital campaign to build and open the nation's largest, LGBTQ-affirming, affordable, senior living center, the Law Harrington Senior Living Center, which houses over 130 LGBTQ+ and Black seniors from Houston's Montrose and Third Ward neighborhoods.

In his spare time, Kennedy is a devoted fan of live music, sparkling wine, and delicious foods.



KEVIN NGUYEN

Kevin Nguyen is a first-generation, Vietnamese American Texan who was raised Catholic by two immigrant parents. He attained three Bachelor of Science degrees in Biology (Baylor University 2007), Health (University of Houston 2018), and Psychology (University of Houston 2021), and a Corporate Entrepreneurship Certificate from the Bauer College of Business (University of Houston June 2019). He also holds a Master of Science Degree in College Counseling and Student Development (Azusa Pacific University 2010).

He deeply values the idea of self-discovery and improvement through education and experience and within his work and lifestyle, and he wants to produce a certain sense of inclusivity, curiosity, and mutual respect for those he interacts with. Having a variety of lived experiences has been an eye opener for Kevin of the different complexity and importance of being an LGBTQ+ person, an AAPI person, and a voting member of this country. Kevin believes that learning the nuances within our communities and celebrating one another is imperative to growth, maturity, personal development, and support.



ALEJANDRA SALINAS

Alejandra Salinas is a partner in the Houston office of Susman Godfrey LLP and focuses her practice on complex and high-stakes litigation. She has been recognized as one of the best young lawyers in America by Lawdragon, a Texas Rising Star by Thomas Reuters Super Lawyer, and a Top Women in Law in Houston by the National Diversity Council.

Alejandra has significant pro bono experience including defending Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo against a partisan election challenge,

working with the ACLU to secure a settlement with Magnolia ISD to eliminate its discriminatory hair policy, co-drafting a Supreme Court amicus brief on political gerrymandering, and successfully arguing an immigration case before the 9th circuit whereby the client was able to remain in the county.

Alejandra is an active board member for Second Mile Haiti, an organization invested in fighting childhood malnutrition and improving outcomes for impoverished women and children in Haiti.



LAUREN ASHLEY SIMMONS

Lauren Ashley Simmons is running in the November 5 general election for State Representative in District 146 to reclaim a seat at the table for all of us. She defeated an anti-LGBTQ+, anti-public education, and anti-labor incumbent in the Democratic primary.

Lauren is a mom and a union organizer who has spent her adult life fighting for the people who Greg Abbott attacks every day. As a Black, queer woman, Lauren has a deep understanding of these struggles – she lives at

the intersection of race, class, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Lauren grew up in a family of activists, trailblazers, and justice warriors. One of her enslaved ancestors escaped a plantation in Mississippi and walked to Texas to find his wife who had been sold. They founded the Freedmen's town of Shankleville, one of more than 500 freedom colonies in Texas. Today, Lauren fights to ensure that all LGBTQ+ people, particularly those of us who are trans, people of color or HIV+, are full and equal within our movement, across our country, and around the world.



FIGHTING FOR LGBTQIA+ EQUALITY



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MENEFEE**

HARRIS COUNTY ATTORNEY

POL. ADV. CHRISTIAN D. MENEFEE CAMPAIGN

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County Commissioner Adrian Garcia
Judge Ursula A. Hall
Council Member Abbie Kamin &
Mayor Pro-Tem Martha Castex-Tatum
Judge Jim Kovach
Judge Fredericka Phillips
Sean Teare for Harris County District
Attorney & Black Law Group PLLC



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Friends of Equality

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Denise Brown for the 127th Civil District Court
Maria and Paul Calzada
Judge Kyle Carter
State Senator Molly Cook
Justice Julie Countiss
Judge Phillis Frye
Judge Kristen Hawkins
City Controller Chris Hollins
County Clerk Teneshia Hudspeth
State Representative Jolanda Jones
Justice Sara Beth Landau
Jay Malone
Judge Jeralynn Manor
County Attorney Christian Menefee
Judge Silvia Mintz
Stephen Miranda and Blake Mudd



SPONSORS CONTINUED

Friends of Equality Cont.

Linda Morales
Nicole Perdue for the 133rd Civil District Court
Edward Pickett
Justice Margaret Poissant
State Representative Jon Rosenthal
Alejandra Salinas
Tom Seymour and Bob Burgess
Judge Jerry Simoneaux
Strong Strategies
Judge Fran Watson

Thank you to all that donated past the print deadline!

**2024 Houston LGBTQ+ Political Caucus Officers,
Board of Directors, and Leadership Team Members**

Austin Davis Ruiz	President
Porscha Brown, J.D., M.P.A	Vice President, Board Chair
Piper Madland	Secretary
Aaron Rublein	Treasurer

Joëlle Espeut	Odyssey Oakengrove
Maria C. Gonzalez, Ph.D.	Jack Valinski
Brandon Mack, M.Ed	Ryan Wright, J.D.

Judson Dunn

Houston LGBTQ+ Political Caucus Pioneers

Pokey Anderson	Lee Marsters
Bill Buie	Jerry Miller
Hugh Crell	Gary Van Ooteghem
Rev. Robert Falls	Robert Schwab
Carl Hayes	

Previous Keynote Speakers

1986 David Scondras, Boston City Council
 1987 Barney Frank, U.S. House of Representatives
 1988 Dr. Mathilde Krim, Cofounder of AmFar
 1989 Steve Schultze, Mayor of West Hollywood
 1990 Art Agnos, Mayor of San Francisco
 1991 Bill Scott, Texas Board of Health
 1992 Andrew Sullivan, Editor of *The New Republic*
 1993 Torie Osborn, Executive Director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force
 1994 Michelangelo Signorile, Author of *Queer in America*
 1995 Donna Red Wing, National Field Coordinator, GLAAD
 Jose Zuniga, Author of *A Soldier Of The Year*
 1996 Jim McIngvale, Owner of Gallery Furniture
 1997 Margo Frazier, Travis County Sheriff
 1998 Kerry Lobel, Executive Director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force

Previous Keynote Speakers Continued

2012 Matthew Breen, Editor-in-Chief of *The Advocate*
 2020 Pete Buttigieg, Mayor of South Bend & Democratic Candidate for President of the United States
 2021 Malcolm Kenyatta, Pennsylvania State Representative
 2022 Christian Manuel, Texas State Representative & Stephanie Byers, Kansas State Representative
 2023 Liliana Bakhtiari, Atlanta City Council Member

Previous Equality Brunch Presenting Sponsors

2019 Sheila Jackson Lee, U.S. House of Representatives
 2021 Sylvester Turner, Mayor of Houston
 2022 John Whitmire, Texas State Senator

Houston LGBTQ+ Political Caucus Past Presidents

1975-1977 Gary Van Ooteghem
 1977 Don Hrachovy
 1977-1978 Jim Cotton
 1978-1980 Steve Shiflett
 1980-1981 Lee Harrington
 1982-1983 Larry Bagneris
 1984 Norman Guttman
 1984-1985 Sue Lovell
 1986-1987 Annise D. Parker
 1988 David Fowler
 1989 Ray Hill
 1990 Dennis Spencer
 1991 Larry Lingle
 1991 Toni Knight
 1992-1993 Christopher Bacon, Esq.
 1993 Terri Richardson
 1994 Gary Van Ooteghem
 1994-1995 Terri Richardson
 1996 Pat Gandy
 1997 Lane Lewis
 1998 Rev. Burton Bagby-Grose
 1999 Carl Smith

Past Presidents Continued

2000	Sean Carter
2001	Debra Rogers
2002-2004	Dr. Kenneth Jones, MD
2005-2006	Maria C. Gonzalez, Ph.D.
2006-2008	Jenifer Rene Pool
2009-2010	Kristopher A. Banks, Esq.
2011-2014	Noel A. Freeman, MPA
2014-2016	Maverick Welsh
2016-2017	Fransheneka "Fran" Watson, Esq.
2017	Frances Valdez, Esq.
2018-2020	Mike Webb
2020	Katharine Ligon, MSW
2020-2022	Jovon Alfon B. "LuJack" Tyler



AWARDS HISTORY

Kristen Capps Social Conscience Award

The Kristen Capps Social Conscience Award is given to a person whose deeds and life work exhibit social conscience concerns for the dignity and equality for the LGBTQ+ community.

2017	Alan Dettlaff	2021	JD Doyle+
2018	Kandice Webber	2022	Christian Menefee
2019	Landon Richie	2023	Transgender Education
2020	Chris Hollins		Network of Texas

Don Hrachovy Lifetime Achievement Award

The Don Hrachovy Lifetime Achievement Award is given to the person who has shown a life-long commitment to the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. Don Hrachovy spent thousands of hours maintaining the confidential mailing list, the cornerstone of the LGBTQ+ voting bloc. The dedication of this early Caucus president continues to inspire volunteers today. This award was also named the Distinguished Caucus Member and Tim Brookover as a lifetime achievement honor.

Don Hrachovy Award

Tim Brookover Award

1986	Cicely Wynne	2013	Marion Coleman
1987	Don Hrachovy	2014	Ellen Cohen
1988	Joe Thornton	2016	Greg Jeu
1989	Jack Valinski	2018	Bill Baldwin
1990	David Fowler	2019	JD Doyle
1991	Pat Hall		
1992	Ray Hill		
1993	Annise D. Parker		
1994	Eugene Harrington		
1995	Jim Owens		
1996	Toni Knight		
1997	John Kellett		
1998	Carmen Pollock		
2020	Monica Roberts		
2021	Ray Ramirez		
2022	Lane Lewis		
2023	Jovon Alfon B. "LuJack" Tyler		

Distinguished Member Award

2014	Kristen Capps
2015	Leslie Jackson
2016	Maria C. Gonzalez, Ph.D.
2017	Kristopher A. Banks, Esq.
2018	Jim Taylor
2019	Judson Dunn

Monica K. Roberts Trans Advocacy Award

The Monica K. Roberts Trans Advocacy Award recognizes someone who has educated, advocated, and created political change for the BIPOC trans community.

- 2020 Ana Andrea Molina
- 2021 Roxanne Collins
- 2022 Joëlle Espeut
- 2023 Adri Pérez

Bayard Rustin Civil Rights Award

The Bayard Rustin Civil Rights Award is given to a person who has advocated for the recognition and civil rights of the LGBTQ+ community. The award was created to commemorate the 1988 Silver anniversary of the March on Washington for Civil Rights and Jobs, is named after the gay civil rights pioneer who organized the historic march.

- 1988 Craig Washington
- 1990 Eugene Harrington
- 1991 Beverly Clark
- 1992 Sue Lovell
- 1993 Phyllis Frye
- 1994 Brian Bradley
- 1995 Keith Stewart
- 1996 Dale Carpenter
- 1997 Gary Van Ooteghem
- 1998 Annise D. Parker
- 2020 Black Lives Matter: Houston
- 2021 Harrison Homer-Guy
- 2022 Jolanda Jones
- 2023 Ian L. Haddock

Eleanor Tinsley Ally Award

The Eleanor Tinsley Ally Award goes to the distinguished community ally who fights for civil rights for the LGBTQ+ community.

- 2009 Garnet Coleman
- 2010 Sheila Jackson Lee
- 2011 John Whitmire
- 2012 Anna Milliken Eastman
- 2013 Shondra Wygal
- 2014 Jerry Davis
- 2015 Sarah Schimme
- 2016 Erika Richie
- 2017 Sylvia Garcia
- 2018 Alan Rosen
- 2019 Project Curate
- 2020 Lillie Schechter
- 2021 Al Green
- 2022 Adrian Garcia
- 2023 Lesley Briones

Annise D. Parker Public Service Award

The Annise D. Parker Public Service Award honors the public official who shows great courage on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community. This award was previously named for the first openly gay supervisor of the City of San Francisco, Harvey Milk.

Harvey Milk Award

- 1987 Lance Lalor
- 1989 Debra Danburg
- 1990 Art Agnos
- 1991 Bob Bullock
- 1992 Katy Caldwell
- 1993 John Whitmire
- 1995 Sheila Jackson Lee
- 1996 Garnet Coleman
- 1997 Debra Danburg

Annise D. Parker Award

- 2020 Mary Gonzalez
- 2021 Ann Johnson
- 2022 Maria C. Gonzalez, Ph.D.

Excellence in Media Award

The Excellence in Media Award honors members of the community for their significant contributions in media to the LGBTQ+ community.

- 2020 Isiah Carey
- 2021 Dalton DeHart
- 2022 Queer Voices
- 2023 OutSmart Magazine

Jim Cotton President's Award

The Jim Cotton President's Award is given to an individual who has contributed to the LGBTQ+ community in significant ways. Originally named The Caucus President's Award, it was renamed after Jim Cotton, who served as the organization's first Black president in 1977.

- 2009 Steven Kirkland
- 2010 Christina Gorcynski
- 2011 Kathy Hubbard
- 2013 Liz James
- 2014 Mark Eggleston
- 2016 Melanie Espinosa Pang
- 2018 Atlantis Narcisse
- 2018 Parker Sheffy
- 2019 Lorin Roberts
- 2020 Julie Mabry
- 2021 Larry Bagneris
- 2022 Alexis Melvin

Dennis Spencer Service Award

The Dennis Spencer Service Award, named after the 1990 Caucus President, is an award given for an individual's contributions to The Caucus and the LGBTQ+ community.

- 1991 Dennis Spencer
- 1992 Brian Keever

Dennis Spencer Service Award Cont.

- 1993 Kevin Davidson
- 1994 Cicely Wynne
- 1995 John Freeman
- 1996 Gary Grant
- 1997 Chris Bacon
- 1998 Jimmy Carper
- 2022 Francisco Sanchez, Jr.

Barbara Cigainero Volunteer of the Year Award

The Barbara Cigainero Volunteer of the Year Award is given to an outstanding volunteer who has contributed significantly to The Caucus. It recognizes individuals for their time, talent, and efforts given to the organization.

- 1986 Phil Batdorg & George Coe
- 1987 Carmen Pollock
- 1988 Sylvia Ayers
- 1989 Bill Willis
- 1990 Richard Prawitz
- 1991 Kevin Davidson
- 1992 Bill Willis
- 1993 Robbie Cavanaugh
- 1994 Lou Vanech
- 1995 Patrick McKee
- 1996 C. Patrick McIlvain
- 1997 Scott Tillinghast
- 1998 Dr. Clari Koepsel
- 2020 Luis Adame
- 2021 Christyna Lewis
- 2022 Pat Strong

Jim Owens Newcomer of the Year Award

The Jim Owens Newcomer of the Year Award goes to a new Caucus member that has contributed significantly within their first year of membership.

- 1986 Jim Owens

Jim Owens Newcomer of the Year Award Cont.

- 1987 Lou Vanech
- 1988 Rev. Glynn Harper
- 1989 Harry Livesay & Michael Hollier
- 1990 Larry Lingle & Bill White
- 1991 Duncan Allen
- 1992 Carol Clark
- 1993 Terri Richardson
- 1994 Dale Carpenter
- 1995 Jovon Alfon B. "LuJack" Tyler
- 1996 Jay Seegers
- 1997 Robert Johnson
- 1998 Michelle C. Myers
- 2020 Austin Davis Ruiz
- 2021 Porscha Brown
- 2022 René Mendiola
- 2023 Ryan Wright, J.D.

John Paul Barnich Award

The John Paul Barnich Award is named after the first, openly gay man to become a sitting judge in Texas (appointed in 1999). The award is given to those who make outstanding contributions to advance justice for the LGBTQ+ community.

- 2009 Phyllis Frye
- 2010 John Nechman
- 2011 Steven Kirkland
- 2012 Maria C. Gonzalez, Ph.D.
- 2013 Lou Weaver
- 2014 Noel A. Freeman, MPA
- 2015 Brad Pritchett
- 2016 Monica K. Roberts
- 2018 Ana Andrea Molina
- 2019 Fransheneka "Fran" Watson, Esq.
- 2020 Steven Kirkland & Daryl Moore
- 2021 Shannon Baldwin, Jason Cox, Jim Kovach, Beau Miller & Jerry Simoneaux
- 2022 Jeff Watters

George Thomas "Mickey" Leland Humanitarian Award

Formerly the Caucus Humanitarian of the Year Award, this award recognizes an individual for their extraordinary humanitarian contributions to the LGBTQ+ community.

- 1988 Dr. Mathilde Krim
- 1989 George Thomas "Mickey" Leland (*Posthumous*)
- 1990 Carmen Pollock
- 1991 Bill Scott
- 1992 Dr. Clair Koepsel
- 1993 Ben Reyes
- 1994 John Paul Barnich
- 1995 Kathy Hubbard
- 1996 James Grace & Lee Masters
- 1997 Gordon Crofoot, MD
- 1998 Donald L. Skipwith
- 2023 Brian Klosterboer

Larry Bagneris Leadership Team Member of the Year Award

Named after Larry Bagneris, the sixth Caucus President (1982-83), this award is voted on by the board and is given to the board member who has exhibited outstanding contributions to the organization.

- 2021 Katharine Ligon, MSW
- 2022 Mario Castillo



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TEXAS FIRST DISTRICT
COURT OF APPEALS
PLACE 9

Justice with Integrity, Serving Our Community

Early Voting:
October 21-November 1

Election Day:
November 5

Last Day to Register:
October 7



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DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE
JUSTICE, SUPREME COURT
PLACE 2

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Onward to November!

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Molly Cook

- DEMOCRAT FOR TEXAS SENATE -

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MARILYN BURGESS

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