



PFLAG of Cape Cod, Brewster

Parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgenders

February 2004

NEWSLETTER

Brewster, MA

San Francisco Marriages

In defiance of state law, the mayor of San Francisco, Gavin Newsom, changed the city's marriage licensing requirements to allow same-sex couples to receive a license beginning Feb. 12, National Freedom to Marry Day. The following letter is a personal account reprinted from PFLAG Alert 2/13/04, from Toni Broaddus, Director of Equality California:

"Dear Friends & Movement Colleagues,

Today I married the love of my life at City Hall in San Francisco. I cannot begin to express the overwhelming emotions we both have been feeling all day. We are still somewhat in shock; finally, after 11 years together, we have an official document that recognizes what we have always known: we are bound together for life.

For an activist who has been working on marriage for some time now, this is truly an incredible day. There were over a hundred couples at City Hall in San Francisco--and I am guessing that double that will have gotten married by the end of the day. It was a crazy scene--no one knew for sure if we were going to have a protest, or actually get licenses. Janice & I were there early, and about 11:30 Del Martin & Phyllis Lyon walked out of City Hall, Kate Kendell at their side, and showed off their marriage license to the press (who thought they were just there for a rally). That was an amazing moment. These 2 strong and powerful women, who celebrate 51 years together on Saturday, were the very first same-sex couple to be married in the United States. No one else deserved that honor more....

Janice & I skipped the rally and went in early to get in line for marriage licenses, which the City Clerk's office started issuing at noon. There was some kind of computer glitch (I believe it kept printing out "bride" and "groom" instead of "applicant 1" and applicant 2") and the staff kept apologizing for the wait. We told them we had been waiting for 11 years, we could wait just a little longer!

We got our license (\$82...) and then Assemblyman Mark Leno performed our ceremony on the inside staircase of City Hall. Kate Kendell was our witness. Our parents were there on cell phones held by our friends.

For those of you in California & all across the country, I just want to say, thank you! Thank you for believing in this day and for working to make this happen, and thank you because I know you will keep working to make this a reality for all LGBT people across this country. It IS possible, we CAN win this battle, and we DO deserve this very basic human right.

Oh, one more thing... on this historic Freedom to Marry Day, Assemblyman Mark Leno introduced a bill to end marriage discrimination across California. Fittingly enough, it is AB 1967, which is the year that the US Supreme Court overturned laws banning mixed-race marriages."

MA Constitutional Convention Suspended

After three failed attempts at passing a constitutional amendment to ban marriage rights for same-sex couples, the Massachusetts constitutional convention has been suspended until March 11.

Impassioned debates lasted until midnight on the evening of February 12, after two days of similarly emotional speeches. Hundreds of protestors and supporters of same-sex marriage demonstrated at the State House on both Wednesday and Thursday, but by the end of the convention on Thursday night, the supporters outnumbered the protestors. When the legislators filed out of the chamber, a crowd of gay activists broke out into a chorus of "God Bless America" and thanked those lawmakers who voted against the constitutional amendment. [Shirley Gomes voted YES.]

The legislature voted on only one additional amendment on Thursday, which would have defined marriage as between one man and one woman, adding the line, "nothing in this article requires or prohibits civil unions in Massachusetts." Legislators struck down the amendment in a vote of 103 to 96.

Support for the SJC

[[Boston Globe](#), 1/5/04]

Saying the "rule of law and the legitimacy of the courts" are at stake, former governor William Weld, two former state attorneys general, and two top lawyers delivered a letter to all 200 legislators January 5, urging them to enact into law the Supreme Judicial Court's ruling allowing gays to marry.

The letter, signed by Scott Harshbarger, attorney general from 1991 to 1999, and James M. Shannon, his predecessor, says that efforts by opponents of same-sex marriage to create an alternative civil union system have "no legal justification."

"We see the SJC's ruling as unequivocal: the existing ban on marriage for gay people is unconstitutional," reads the letter, authored primarily by Harvard constitutional scholar Laurence Tribe. ". . . We urge each of you as members of a coordinate branch of government sworn to uphold the constitution, and the rule of law, to use the remainder of the time period in the court's stay to take any and all steps possible to facilitate the orderly issuance of marriage licenses to qualified same-sex couples."

Australia

[365Gay.com 2/15/04]

A transgender woman will make golfing history next month when she tees up for the Australian Women's Open. Never before has a transgender woman played in a professional women's tournament.

"It's a dream for me -- I've been playing golf since I was eight, but I turned professional only in August last year. So, it's been a long time coming," said 37 year old Mianne Bagger.

Bagger admitted that while most women on the golf course accepted her sex-change operation, some still found it hard to come to terms with.

She said she went through two years of hormone replacement therapy before surgery in 1995. "There seems to be a misconception in society that one day we (transsexuals) just wake up and think, 'I'm going to have a sex-change today,'" she said. "I have always known there was something different about me since I was young -- we are born this way."

United Kingdom

[PlanetOut.com 2/12/04]

In a major win for transgender people in the United Kingdom, the House of Lords -- the upper chamber of British Parliament -- approved the Gender Recognition Bill by a vote of 155-57.

The bill now goes to the House of Commons for approval. If granted, the bill would, starting in 2005, allow trans people to receive new birth certificates reflecting their current gender. The certificates would then allow trans people to marry opposite-sex partners.

Under the proposed bill, people petitioning for new birth certificates will have to show they have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, a condition characterized by the belief of having been born with the wrong gender.

In order to have a new gender recognized, trans people will have to provide evidence they intend to live permanently in that gender. They will not have to undergo sex reassignment surgery.

While the sex change would be kept confidential in most instances, churches could refuse to conduct a marriage for someone who has had a sex change, and sports bodies would still be able to make special rules regarding transgender competitors.

Britain has been one of a few nations in the European Union not to allow trans people to officially change birth certificate gender.

Next month, the House of Lords is expected to consider a separate bill that would allow civil registration of gay marriages.

However, Transsexuals in Scotland are claiming that new legislation giving greater recognition to them is riddled with faults, because of the United Kingdom's stance on same-sex marriages.

The Gender Recognition Bill ...would allow...people to change the gender written on their birth certificates, but because couples of the same gender are not allowed to get married, when the certificate is changed, existing marriages must effectively be annulled.

Many transsexual activists say this is unfair, as they have no intention of separating from their marital partners and are keen to push the issue with local MPs. Two transsexual men expressed "unhappiness" at the bill, which they claim "forces transsexuals to choose between their human rights and the protections marriage provides their family."

Florida: The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against four gay men, who are foster parents seeking to adopt children in their care. The ACLU is appealing the ruling, arguing that the appeals court misunderstood the US Supreme Court's Texas ruling which says that states can no longer make up reasons to discriminate against gay people.

New Jersey: To the cheers of gay and lesbian couples gathered in the Statehouse, the Senate passed a landmark bill that offers financial and legal benefits for same-sex partners. The bill now goes to Gov. McGreevey, who said he would sign it into law. The Assembly narrowly passed it last month. Yesterday's vote was 23-9, with eight senators recorded as not voting.

Colorado: The Denver Public School System has amended their protection policy, stating that transgender and gender non-conforming students will be protected under policies unanimously adopted by the school board at its January meeting. The school board voted to add the term "gender identity" to other categories protected under the policy that declares "Equal Educational Opportunities" for students.

Kentucky: The Boyd County Board of Education settled with a group of students who sued the board after their gay-straight alliance (GSA) in Ashland, KY, was forced to disband.

The settlement, reached with guidance from the ACLU, requires that the district treat all student clubs equally, continuing a trend seen in school districts throughout the country where challenges have been made to the federal Equal Access Act, which gives specific guidelines on student clubs in schools. At the same time, the settlement mandates annual anti-harassment training sessions for all district staff as well as for students in high schools and middle schools throughout the district.

California: The SF marriage licenses that were modified for same-sex couples will not be accepted by the state agency that processes licenses. [The SF licenses substitute "applicant one and applicant two" for "bride and groom," and "unmarried individuals" for "unmarried man and unmarried woman."]

However, the issue will be decided in the courts because the resultant weddings violate a state law defining marriage as being between a man and a woman.

Washington: The Washington Court of Appeals upheld a lower court ruling that same-sex couples must abide by the same principles as married couples in disputes over joint assets when their relationships end.

Israel: A bill to give same-sex partners limited rights passed its first vote in the Israeli Parliament. The bill, an amendment to the Damages Law, received first reading in the Knesset, passing by a 24-16 vote. It still needs approval of the committee of the whole, and a final vote before becoming law. Under the legislation, each partner in a common-law couple would be entitled to damages in the event of the death in an accident of one of the partners. The bill redefines "spouse" to include same-sex couples.

Spain: Voters go to the polls in mid-March to elect a new national government, and the opposition Socialist Party has included a package in its platform that would recognize the rights of gay couples.

Belgium: In a move that would make it one of the world's most gay-friendly nations, Belgium appears poised to grant same-sex couples the right to adopt children.

Barney Frank Declines Boy Scout Request

[PFLAG Alert 2/7/04]

In a letter to Rep. Barney Frank, Boy Scout Executive Roy Williams said he "would be honored if you would lend your support" to a new Boy Scout initiative.

In his reply, the openly gay Frank noted that the Boy Scouts have characterized gay men as unfit to associate with, and he declined to engage in an act of "hypocrisy" by endorsing their initiative.

"Where there is much about what the Boy Scouts do that I admire and I am a former Scout myself, I was under the impression that you considered people like myself to be unworthy of association with the Boy Scouts," wrote Frank.

"I am a gay man, which according to your policy as I read it in various court decisions, means that I am neither 'morally straight' nor 'clean.' . . . Why do you want a person you so characterize to be signing a tribute to you?"

ABA Opposes Marriage Amendment

[PFLAG Alert 2/13/04]

The House of Delegates of the American Bar Association has approved a resolution calling on Congress to drop attempts to pass a Federal Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. The decision of what constitutes a legal marriage should be left up to the states, and not dictated by the federal government.

Supporters pointed out that laws currently on the books, including the Defense of Marriage Act, already allow states to refuse to recognize marriages performed in other states that don't follow local laws, and prohibits the federal government from recognizing gay marriage.

The proposed Constitutional Amendment, which was introduced in the House of Representatives last May and in the Senate last November, has already gathered more than 100 co sponsors, including Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TENN). President Bush has indicated he would support the measure, which has been given new urgency by efforts in Massachusetts to pass the country's first law allowing gay couples to marry. Vermont in 1999 passed a law allowing gay couples to enter into 'civil unions,' and other states have passed laws either recognizing or outlawing recognized gay unions.

There are more than 1,000 legal rights, benefits, and responsibilities of marriage, according to the ABA resolution. It is uncertain whether people in 'civil unions' would be eligible for those benefits.

The resolution will allow the ABA and its members to lobby against the proposed Constitutional amendment.

PFLAG Endorses 'Day of Silence'

Students interested in creating safe schools for all are encouraged to register and participate in the Day of Silence on April 21, 2004. The Day of Silence, a project of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in collaboration with the United States Student Association (USSA), is a student-led day of action where those who support making anti-LGBT bias unacceptable in schools take a day-long vow of silence to recognize and protest the discrimination and harassment -- in effect, the silencing experienced by LGBT students and their allies.

Marriage in 'Recorded History': An Open Letter Gov. Romney

[Excerpted from Gary Leupp, CounterPunch.org 12/13/03]

"Dear Governor Romney,

[When] the Massachusetts high court ruled that discrimination against gay couples in matters relating to marriage violated the Commonwealth's constitution, ... you immediately rejected that decision, declaring: "I agree with 3,000 years of recorded history. ... Marriage is an institution between a man and a woman, and our constitution and laws should reflect that."

...But you really don't know much about [marriage history], do you? ...If you want to talk about homosexual unions in recorded history you should do some study first. [Leupp then recommends about 10 books on the subject which include the following information:] legally recognized homosexual marriage in ancient Rome extending into the Christian period; Church-blessed same-sex unions and even an ancient Christian same-sex nuptial liturgy; "brotherhood-bonds" between samurai males, involving written contracts and sometimes severe punishments for infidelity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the Azande of the southern Sudan, where for centuries warriors bonded, in all legitimacy, with "boy-wives; and lesbian marriages in Guangdong, China, into the early twentieth century.

What the study of world history will really tell you, Governor, is that pretty much any kind of sexual behavior can become institutionalized somewhere, sometime. You know that polygamy remains normal and legal in many nations, as it was among your Mormon forebears in Utah. In Tibet, polyandry has a long history, and modern Chinese law seems powerless to prevent marriages between one woman and two or three men.

[Leupp then recounts numerous traditions of man-boy sex in various cultures, and says,] I'm not trying to gross you out or anything, Governor, just help you recognize that there may be more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your (somewhat too confident) philosophy of sexual history.

Another thing, ... I've been married to a Japanese woman for 20 years, [but] for a long time in California "miscegenation" between whites and "Mongolians" ... was banned by law. ... The Mormon Church was committed to the view that African-Americans were inferior way up until 1978, and, . . . very recently (1998), South Carolina chucked its constitutional clause ... forbidding "marriage of a white person with a Negro or mulatto or a person who should have one-eighth or more Negro blood." Things change if people want them to.

Jacques Senate Seat Vacant

[365Gay.com 2/18/04]

The Massachusetts Senate seat vacated by lesbian activist Cheryl Jacques could play a key role in the outcome of next month's Constitutional Convention. Jacques resigned from the Senate last November to take on the leadership of the Human Rights Campaign.

When state lawmakers last week narrowly voted against three proposed Constitutional amendments, Jacques seat was vacant, but it will be filled in time for a second attempt at passing an amendment next month.

Voters go to the polls March 2, to decide between Republican state Rep. Scott Brown, who supports a constitutional ban on gay marriage, and former Jacques aide Democrat Angus McQuilken who opposes the amendment. Obviously, for supporters of marriage equality, it is extremely important that McQuilken win.

PFLAG Scholarships

PFLAG Brewster is again joining with Anne Toran from Falmouth to offer scholarships to graduating Cape and Island seniors who have been active in their GSA or other Diversity group. The applicant must be a member of a current graduating class and have been accepted to an accredited 2- or 4-year college or trade school. The application must be accompanied by a high school transcript, a letter of recommendation from a faculty member, and a brief essay on the impact of the GSA or Diversity Club on the student population at large.

Local PFLAG groups have earmarked about \$2500 for this project, but additional contributions will be gratefully accepted. For a scholarship application call 508-540-1038.

Forum: Equality in Marriage

The Unitarian Universalist Churches of Cape Cod are sponsoring a meeting on May 3, 7 pm, at the 4C's for "Civil Rights, Civil Marriage: A Forum on Same-Gender Marriage." Addressing the group will be Mary Bonauto, the GLAD attorney who argued the case before the MA Supreme Judicial Court, and Linda Davies and Gloria Bailey, the Orleans couple who were plaintiffs in the case.

There will also be wedding planners, florists, caterers, and clergy who support equal marriage for all. PFLAG/Brewster will be one of the sponsors of this event and will have a table with PFLAG information.

'No-Name-Calling' Day

During the week of March 1 - 5, 2004, thousands of middle schools around the country will take part in a week of educational activities aimed at ending name-calling and verbal bullying of all kinds. Over 3,500 school administrators and educators from all 50 states have agreed to participate in the week's events with more signing up each week.

A resource guide with lesson plans, a video for classroom use, and other promotional materials are available to educators: www.NoNameCallingWeek.org.

Volunteer at CISGYA

CISGYA is looking for adults to serve as chaperones for Fri or Sat. night movies or dances, and as friends & advisors at their Wed. meetings, 7-8:30. Call Randy 430-2818 or Linda 280-9931 for info. Weekly attendance is not required, but there should be some regularity. The kids appreciate having adult allies, are let down when they never or seldom return.

GLBT Group Meetings

PFLAG/Brewster every third Monday, 7pm, 1st Parish Ch.
CISGYA, 56 Barnstable Rd. Hyannis, 7pm Wed & Thur,
Freedom to Marry Coalition of CC: ccftmc@yahoo.com
Lesbian Connections :1st Fridays, 6:30-8pm, 1st Parish Barn
Metropolitan Community Church: 1st & 3rd Sundays, 7pm,
Chapel in the Pines, Eastham, 385-2873 or 430-2682
Straight Spouse Group. third Thursday monthly, 896-9060
Transgender Support 2nd Sundays 2-4pm, 1st Parish; 4th
Mondays, 7pm, CISGYA House, 255-5354 or 362-4438

Dates to Remember

Feb 16, Mar 15, Apr 19: Brewster PFLAG, 7 pm
Feb 19, Mar 18, Apr 15: Straight Spouse, 896-9060
Feb 23, Mar 14 & 22, Apr 11 & 26: Transgender 432-8119
April 24: 'Day of Silence' in Schools
May 3 Marriage Equality Forum, 4C's, 7pm
June in P'Town: Providence Gay Men's Chorus

PFLAG/Cape Cod, Brewster

PO Box 1167 Orleans, MA 02653

MISSION: *Promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons, their families and friends, through Support, to cope with an adverse society; Education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and Advocacy, to end discrimination and secure equal civil rights.*

MEETINGS: 7 pm on the third Monday of each month at First Parish Church, Brewster; everyone is welcome. For information call 508-240-2737 or 508-432-8119.

MEMBERSHIP: Dues-paying members support the efforts of PFLAG both locally and nationally. Ten dollars goes to PFLAG National (includes subscription to *Pflagpole*), and the balance is used for our own Newsletter and the purchase of pamphlets, books, and videos. Our fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

OFFICERS: Co-Leaders, Pem Schultz & Rob Lewis; Treasurer, Martha Berndt; Corresponding Sec'y, Betsy Cochran; Publicity, (volunteer needed); Newsletter, Joann Figueras and Doris Scherbak; Program, (volunteer needed); and Library, Randy Kendall; Addl. Board member Joanne Hush.

NEWSLETTER: Published four times a year. Send articles to PO Box or e-mail joann@pflagcapecod.org.

WEBPAGE: www.pflagcapecod.org

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Cape Cod Gay Pride Parade July 17!