



PFLAG of Cape Cod, Brewster

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

October - November 2006

NEWSLETTER

Brewster, MA

MA Equal Marriage News

BOSTON -- The state's entire high court should decide whether to force lawmakers to take action on a proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, one justice decided Thursday.

Justice Judith Cowin made the ruling after hearing arguments on last week's request by Gov. Mitt Romney and other gay-marriage opponents to force the lawmakers to decide whether voters can consider the proposal in 2008.

A hearing before the seven-member Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court—the same panel that said gay marriage was legal in 2003—is set for Dec. 20.

Supporters gathered more than 170,000 signatures in support of the proposed amendment, which would define marriage as the union of a man and a woman. It would ban future gay marriages in Massachusetts but leave existing same-sex marriages intact.

Lawmakers postponed action on the proposed ballot question until January, prompting Romney's request for court intervention.

The proposal would need approval of only 50 of the 200 legislators during the current session, then again in 2007, to continue to the November 2008 ballot.

Since gay marriage became legal, more than 8,000 same-sex couples have tied the knot in Massachusetts, the only state to allow gay marriage.

Good News from New Jersey!

[Excerpted from hrc.org 12/14/06]

New Jersey lawmakers passed two pieces of legislation that are positive steps forward for GLBT equality. The first piece of legislation adds gender identity and expression to the state laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing and public contracts. It was overwhelmingly passed by both Houses. In addition, the New Jersey Legislature passed a bill creating civil unions for same-sex couples that extends all of the state-level spousal rights and responsibilities. The bills are headed to Gov. Corzine's desk where he is expected to sign them.

The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in October that it is unconstitutional to deny same-sex couples state-level spousal rights and responsibilities, and that the Legislature must either amend its marriage law to include same-sex couples or provide these rights and responsibilities by some other means such as civil unions.

When Corzine signs Senate Bill 362 into law, New Jersey will become the ninth state to ban discrimination against transgender individuals. [Other states are California, District of Columbia, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Washington. (MA prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation but not gender identity or expression.)] During the education about the New Jersey bill, Garden State Equality aired the first American television commercial on transgender rights. See it at www.gardenstateequality.org/ad.htm.

Congress Passes AIDS Bill

[HRC, 12/9/06]

Both houses of the US Congress have passed the Ryan White Reauthorization Bill, and it awaits the President's signature. This is the largest single source of public funds for programs (excluding Medicaid) that treat people with HIV/AIDS in the United States. The CARE Act was first enacted in 1990 and supports a wide range of community-based services, including primary and home health care, case management, substance abuse treatment, mental health, nutrition, and housing services. The CARE Act also supports the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, which provides HIV-related prescription drugs to those without access to basic HIV treatment.

GAYLA Ball February 3

The seventh annual GAYLA Ball will be held at the Sheraton Four Points Motel in Eastham, February 3, from 7 to midnight. This is a glamorous and joyful celebration bringing together the Cape's lesbian, gay, transgender, transsexual, and straight communities.

Sponsored by the Welcoming Committee of the First Parish UU Church Brewster, this event has become a Valentine delight. Live music by 'Catherine and the Greats,' dinner buffet 7:30-8:30, dancing, and cash bar. Tickets are \$60 per person (more if you can, less if you can't). Early reservations are recommended because the event is expected to sell out. For information or tickets, call Joanne Hush at 508-896-2406.

NEWS FROM ALL AROUND

CANADA: An interesting study has been published by the University of Guelph that claims people who are ambidextrous are more likely to be bisexual. Among men, 4 percent of right-handers and 4.5 percent of left-handers said they are bisexual. But 9.2 percent of the ambidextrous said they were bisexual. The difference was even starker among women--6.2 percent of right-handed women and 6.3 percent of left-handed women said they are bisexual. But 15.6 percent of ambidextrous women say they are bisexual.

CONNECTICUT: GLAD filed a brief in the Connecticut Supreme Court in November in the ongoing marriage equality case *Kerrigan and Mock v. Department of Public Health*. GLAD argues that the denial of marriage by the 2005 civil union law is arbitrary and fails to provide gay and lesbian citizens with the equal treatment the state constitution requires.

EPISCOPALIANS: Two of the largest Episcopal parishes in Virginia voted overwhelmingly to leave the Episcopal Church and join fellow Anglican conservatives to form a rival denomination in the U.S. However, Episcopalians in Ohio elected a gay-friendly bishop.

HAWAII: A 38-year-old transgender woman won a seat on the state Board of Education and, according to national advocacy groups, a place in history as the nation's highest-ranking transgender elected official.

ILLINOIS: A gay school superintendent filed suit against his school district alleging he was fired for being gay. Dr. Richard Mitchell is being represented by Lambda Legal and claims the Bremen Community School Board and the board's president conspired to fire him after a parent inquired about his sexual orientation.

INDIA: An Indian runner who won a silver medal in the women's 800 meters at the Asian Games failed a gender test and was stripped of the medal. There are no compulsory gender tests during events sanctioned by the International Association of Athletics Federations, but athletes may be asked to take a gender test. The medical panel usually includes a gynecologist, endocrinologist, psychologist, and internal medicine specialist. An Indian athletics official who spoke to *The Associated Press* on condition of anonymity said the woman almost certainly never had sex-change surgery. Instead, the official said she appeared to have "abnormal chromosomes." He said the test revealed more Y chromosomes than allowed.

IRELAND: The high court rejected a case by two women who were married in Canada and sought to have their relationship recognized in Ireland. However, a civil partnership bill is moving through the Legislature, and same-sex rights may soon be expanded.

ISRAEL: The Supreme Court issued an order on November 21 to the Israeli government that they must recognize same-sex marriages performed abroad. While same-sex marriages performed in Israel are not yet recognized, this means that Israel is the sixth country in the world to recognize marriages between same-sex couples.

JUDAISM: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, which interprets religious law for the Conservative movement of Judaism, ruled to allow both commitment ceremonies for same-sex couples and the ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis.

NFL: The National Football League fined Pittsburgh Steelers' linebacker Joey Porter \$10,000 for using an anti-gay slur to describe Cleveland Browns tight end Kellen Winslow, following a game between the two teams earlier this month. Cameras captured Porter's use of the word 'fag' in an interview after a Dec. 7 game. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* columnist Ron Cook and other commentators and community activists called on Porter to apologize. The linebacker did eventually apologize but added that he did not "mean to offend anybody but Kellen Winslow."

NEW YORK: City health officials backed off a plan announced in November that would have allowed New Yorkers to switch the sex on their birth certificates without undergoing sex-change surgery.

SOUTH AFRICA: legalized same-sex marriage, and same-sex couples were eligible to marry on December 1, 2006. South Africa is now the fifth country to provide marriage equality for its GLBT citizens.

SWITZERLAND: In the first-time-ever vote of the people, the Swiss voted 58% in favor of extending civil unions to same-sex couples. The law will go into effect January 1, 2007. Marriages between same-sex couples from other countries will be recognized as civil unions in Switzerland, but not as marriages, highlighting a similar patchwork quilt of rights in the European Union that is seen in United States.

WASHINGTON, DC: The National Institute of Health announced that circumcision may reduce HIV transmission rates by half. Two studies in Africa have identified the link that scientists have been studying for decades, but the studies tracked only men involved in heterosexual intercourse.

ZOO STORY: "And Tango Makes Three," the real-life story of "the very first penguin in the zoo to have two daddies," has drawn objections in schools or public libraries in several states. This is a picturebook in which two male penguins at New York's Central Park Zoo pair up and hatch an adopted egg.

Curious Case in Ohio

[lambdalegal.org, 11/20/06]

In December 2005, Lambda Legal intervened on behalf of Professors Jean Lynch and Yvonne Keller, after the domestic partner benefits offered by their employer, Miami University, came under attack by the antigay Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) along with Ohio legislator Thomas Brinkman. The lawsuit against the university claimed that its domestic partner benefits violate Ohio's antigay constitutional amendment, which limits marriage to a man and a woman. Lambda Legal argued that Ohio's constitutional amendment does not apply to the university because it concerns only marriage and does not address the legality of domestic partnership benefits.

Lambda Legal argued that Brinkman had no standing to sue, because the University pays for its domestic partner benefits with privately donated funds, not with tax dollars or tuition. Brinkman also had not shown that he suffered any direct impact that would be corrected if Miami University took away the health and dental insurance it currently offers to the domestic partners of university employees. Quote from Judge's Decision when he dismissed the lawsuit: "Brinkman has not shown the kind of individual, concrete damages required to have taxpayer standing, nor can those damages be presumed."

New Bedford Anti Rally Rally

[Excerpted from E. Jacobs, baywindows.com]

VoteOnMarriage.org, the organization that sponsored the amendment to **ban** same-sex marriage, organized a rally Dec. 9 in New Bedford, the first of a series of rallies around the state to protest lawmakers' scuttling of the amendment by a procedural maneuver. On a cold Saturday morning, VoteOnMarriage.org managed to draw a crowd of about 200 people to their rally, but there was one major problem: most of the people who came were there to **support** marriage equality, not oppose it.

The contrast between the two camps gathered in downtown New Bedford was stark. In front of New Bedford City Hall about 80 people had gathered, most carrying the same mass-produced green "Let the People Vote" signs that have been a staple of VoteOnMarriage.org rallies for the past year.

Directly across the street a crowd of about 120 people gathered. This group had been organized by the Marriage Equality Coalition of the South Coast, an affiliate of MassEquality. In contrast to the monolithic green signs, nearly all the signs were hand made, with messages like "Love Thy Neighbor," "I'm Proud of My Gay Son," and "New Bedford Does NOT Discriminate." Bev Bacelli, lead organizer of the counter-protest, said she put out the word via e-mail about three days before the event, and through e-mail forwards and word of mouth they built a crowd that surpassed VoteOnMarriage.org's.

First Gay Retirement Community

[Bob Moos, *Dallas Morning News*]

Jan Gaynor and Barbara Cohn decided to spend their retirement years in Santa Fe, NM, not just because it's steeped in 400 years of history and art, but because it offers something new. The sixty-something couple wanted to live in the nation's first full-fledged retirement community for gays and lesbians. They sold their house in California and moved into a condominium at Rainbow Vision, Santa Fe, last summer.

Since Rainbow Vision opened in June, 60 people from across the country have bought or leased residences in the 13-acre development of adobe buildings. It is the first project to offer a broad range of retirement living choices--from 120 residences for active adults to 26 assisted-living suites. From the outside, only rainbow banners at the entrance suggest this is no run-of-the-mill retirement home.

According to the American Society on Aging, 21 gay and lesbian retirement communities are under construction or on the drawing board.

The president of Rainbow Vision Properties Inc., the privately held company that built the community, said she faced skepticism when she asked potential investors for help with the \$32 million project. After conventional financiers told her the venture was too risky, she turned to individuals who shared her vision. It took her nine years to raise the money, often in \$25,000 or \$50,000 investments.

Construction will begin on a second Rainbow Vision community in Palm Springs next year. [Ed. Question: is this kind of exclusive community a good idea?]

Which Bathroom to Use?

[Excerpted from lambdalegal.com]

In a small but significant victory for transgender rights, the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund announced in October that it reached an agreement with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in New York that allows people to use MTA public restroom in accordance with their gender expression.

The agreement arose from a complaint filed on behalf of Helena Stone, 70, a transgender woman who had been arrested by MTA police officers over her gender identity.

Stone had been assigned to repair pay telephones at Grand Central Station in 2005 by her employer, Verizon. MTA police arrested her three times when surveillance footage showed her entering the women's restroom. The MTA quickly dropped all criminal charges after a trans rights group organized a protest rally.

As part of the final settlement, MTA agreed to allow people to choose the restroom most consistent with their gender expression, to implement gender sensitivity and training programs for employees, and to pay Stone \$2,000 in damages.

PFLAG Speaker Training

We'd love to have more trained speakers to tell their stories. These can be parents or friends of GLBT's or GLBT people. Greater Boston PFLAG is offering a one-day training session on Saturday, February 3 in Waltham, 9am to 6pm. Register by calling 781-891-5966 or email info@gbpflag.org.

May 19 'Wedding March'

Join Marriage Equality USA as they March coast to coast to raise funds and awareness about the importance of marriage equality. Walk across the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, or join in one of the many local Wedding Marches that will take place across the USA.

Special UU Service

The Welcoming Congregation Committee of First parish UU Church in Brewster invites all to attend a special service on Sunday, January 7, 2007 at 9 or 11 am.

This service will examine the historic status of First Parish UU as the first Welcoming Congregation in the denomination. It will explore where to go from here and reaffirm the congregation's commitment to strengthen its connections with the LGBT community.

Refreshments and conversion will follow each service. 1969 Main St (Route 6A), Brewster.

Parents of Lesbians & Gays:

A PhD candidate from the Univ. of Louisville is looking for study participants to complete a survey about their reactions when they learned their child was gay. The survey can be completed online or on paper. For a paper copy, call 502-552-2999. No names are required.
www.questionpro.com/akira/takeSurvey?id=557817

Complimentary Copy

PFLAG/Cape Cod, Brewster is including a copy of "A Straight Guide to GLBT Americans" with this newsletter. We hope you will read it and make it available for all your straight friends. This brochure was created and published by the Human Rights Campaign in partnership with PFLAG.

GLBT Group Meetings

PFLAG/Brewster every third Monday, 7pm, 1st Parish
CIGSYA 56 Barnstable Rd, Hyannis, 7pm Wed & Thur
Family-Parent Meetings, 2nd Monday, CIGSYA House
Lesbian Connections 1st Friday Potluck, 6:30pm; 1st Parish
Winslow House; 430-2653
Straight Spouse Gp: 1st Tuesday, 7pm, 1st Parish, 896-2620
Transgender Support: 2nd Wednesday 7-9pm, 1st Parish
Barn top floor, on Harwich Rd, 362-4435

Dates to Remember

Dec 18, Jan 15, Feb 19: Brewster PFLAG, 7 pm
Jan 9, Feb 13, Mar 13: Straight Spouse Gp, 896-2620
Jan 10, Feb 14, Mar 14: Transgender Support 362-4435
Jan 7: Special Welcoming Service, 1st Parish 9 & 11am
Feb 3: GAYLA Ball, Eastham Sheraton 7-12pm (see p. 1)

PFLAG/Cape Cod, Brewster

PO Box 1167 Orleans, MA 02653

MISSION: *Promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender 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 1st Parish UU Church, Brewster; everyone is welcome. Information, call 508-398-6471.

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

OFFICERS: Coordinator, Randy Lewis-Kendell; Treasurer, Joanne Hush; Corresponding Sec'y, Pem Schultz; Publicity, Joanne Hush & Pem Schultz; Newsletter, Joann Figueras & Doris Scherbak; Library, Randy Lewis-Kendell.

NEWSLETTER: Email joann@pflagcapecod.org.

WEBPAGE: www.pflagcapecod.org

Membership Application PFLAG/Brewster

___ \$35 Family ___ \$25 Individual ___ \$15 Limited income

\$ _____ Additional donation for local

chapter

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Checks are payable to PFLAG/Brewster. Mail to Joanne Hush, 200 Breakwater Rd, Brewster, MA 02631