



Buffalo / Niagara

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www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org

We meet because we have learned that someone very close to us is Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgendered.

We try to help one another deal with this information in a positive manner.

Although we do not agree at all times, we try to be understanding.

We offer help to those who seek it, but do not force ourselves on others.

We strive to maintain anonymity while sharing on a level that is comfortable for all of us.

We encourage all to attend meetings for their own benefit as well as that of the group.

It is our hope that when each of us reaches a point of understanding and acceptance, we realize that this is when others need us the most.

Buffalo Monthly Meeting

Sunday, March 15, 2009

2:30 – 5:00 PM

The March meeting will include a presentation by anthropology professor Dr. Phillips Stevens. See the article on page 2 for more details. As always, newcomers will be offered the alternative of meeting privately with a PFLAG parent.

Heritage Room, Westminster Presbyterian Church
724 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14209

Use the driveway to left of the church to reach the church parking lot. Walk behind the church to other side of the building (through the nursery school) and enter through the kitchen entrance.

New Parents Meetings

These meetings are scheduled as needed. Please call the helpline.

Christ United Methodist Church Library
350 Saratoga (corner of Harlem Road), Snyder, NY
North of the Harlem Road exit of Route 33

Enter through door closest to the lighted parking lot. This self-help one-on-one meeting deals with the concerns of parents and family members who have recently learned that a loved one is Lesbian or Gay.

For Niagara satellite meeting details, call 297-5785.

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Buffalo/Niagara, is a non-profit, all volunteer, community-based organization not affiliated with any ethnic, religious, economic, or political group. Membership is open to all. PFLAG membership lists are kept confidential and mailings are sent in plain envelopes.



Local News

Queer Journeys Programs

Queer Journeys is a cable access program sponsored by PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara and coordinated by Camille Cox and Babs Conant. The programs are based on documentaries on GLBT issues. This program only airs in Buffalo, on Mondays at 6:30 pm and Tuesdays at 1:00 am on Adelphia Channel 20.

The schedule for the next two months is:

- Mar 2: Safe School Program for Youth in Massachusetts
- Mar 9: A Little Respect
- Mar 16: Choosing Children, Pt 1
- Mar 23: Choosing Children, Pt 2
- Mar 30: Our Brother, Dan
- Apr 6: An Unexpected Journey
- Apr 13: All God's Children
- Apr 20: Claiming America's Promise
- Apr 27: The Families We Choose

A short description of the storylines and a full schedule can be found on our website at:

www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org/video_project.shtml

An Anthropologist Considers Homosexuality

Anthropological and biological studies conclude that homosexuality is a normal variant of human sexuality.

This talk briefly discusses the nature of culture and the premises of anthropological investigation, and emphasizes the fact that homosexuality is a human cultural universal, found in roughly the same percentages in all societies in the world and at all stages of recorded history; it is reported among all primates and certain other animal species as well. That fact alone signifies that the explanation for the condition is to be found at a level deeper than learned cultural behavior; that it is innate to the species. We must distinguish between homosexuality, a human constant, and homosexual behavior, which is found in a variety of forms and contexts around

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James & Mary Ellen Walsh

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Jane & Tony Benfante
Babs Conant & Camille Cox
Shawn Cribari
Russel Hurlburt & John Percy
Donald Kreger & Ron Ehmke
Jeffrey McConnell & Fred Dansereau
Dennis Stuart

the world. Some representative cultural examples are presented.

But it is the wide variety of cultural attitudes toward homosexuality that are most important to our understanding – from indifference to special accommodation to intolerance and homophobia. These latter attitudes characterize American views of the phenomenon. Rigorous Western research into human sexuality for over a hundred years came to the conclusion about the universality of homosexuality before anthropology did; but such findings have been ignored, repressed, or condemned as salacious and irresponsible. Homophobia in America is a powerful intolerance, resulting from extreme narrow-mindedness strengthened by a puzzlingly selective reading of Scripture, and old cultural bias. Understanding is basic to acceptance, and we should work actively to help people understand it.

Phillips Stevens, Jr., Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Anthropology at UB. He has conducted anthropological field work in West Africa and the Caribbean. He is the author or editor of many publications, and he is the recipient of several grants and honors, including two awards for excellence in teaching. In 1993-94 he was a member of the Presbytery of Western New York's Work Group on Human Sexuality Conversation. He helped to produce four-week and six-week courses of study for the Presbytery, both of which included a video featuring Dr. Stevens and the late Dr. James Haynes of Buffalo State College discussing the anthropology and the biology of human sexuality, respectively. Realizing that anthropology can offer valuable insights into certain human beliefs and behaviors, Dr. Stevens speaks regularly on homosexuality and other urgent social issues to various non-profit organizations and schools in Western New York.

A Walk in the Vineyard

PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara will be hosting *A Walk in the Vineyard*, which will be a fund-raising event for our Safe Schools program. The purpose of the Safe Schools program is to end bullying (all bullying) in schools and to make our schools safe for all children. According to the CDC, 33% of gay youth will attempt suicide? In fact, gay teen suicide attempts are four times that of heterosexual youth. Here are some other alarming statistics contributed by Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN):

- Over 90% of LGBT youth report that they sometimes or frequently hear homophobic remarks in their school (words such as "faggot", "dyke", or "queer").
- 36% of lesbian gay and bisexual youth report hearing homophobic remarks from faculty or school staff.
- 20% of secondary school counselors report that counseling a homosexual student concerning gay issues would not be personally gratifying, and do not consider themselves competent in counseling gay adolescents.

- LGBT youth are almost twice as likely as their non-gay peers to be threatened with or injured by a weapon at school.
- LGBT youth are more than four times as likely to skip whole days of school out of fear.
- Harassed youth are more than four times as likely to report having made a serious enough suicide attempt to have been treated by a doctor or nurse.

We would love to have all of our membership come out and help with this fund raising event. Even if you cannot help with the setup, the event itself, or the cleanup, please come and support us and the Safe Schools initiative.

February Meeting Report

Todd Plank, who is the Empire State Pride Agenda WNY Field Coordinator was the featured speaker at our February. Todd talked about many issues of concern facing the GLBT community in New York including Marriage Equality, Gender Equality Non-Discrimination Act, and Dignity for All Students. These three pieces of legislation are currently pending in the legislature. More information on each can be found by going to www.prideagenda.org, and clicking on "Issues Explained."

Todd also spoke about Pride in the Pulpit, Pride in the Workplace and Pride in Our Union. The purpose of Pride in the Pulpit is to confront religious based bigotry. Pride in the Workplace encourages workplaces throughout New York State to be free of discrimination and affirm the presence and contributions of their lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees. Pride in Our Union encourages unions in all sectors of the labor movement in New York State to be free of discrimination and to bargain and advocate on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) members and their families. In solidarity, we work to build a movement that calls for respect for diversity and advances the goal of social and economic justice for all. Finally, Todd encouraged everyone to participate in the Equality and Justice Day in Albany on April 28th. E&J Day is one day every year that is set aside to speak with our elected officials concerning these important issues. Buses will be

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traveling from Buffalo to Albany and returning the same day. It is a long day, but one well worth the time considering what can be gained by telling our legislators about our families.

Winter Weather

Buffalo winter weather sometimes requires cancelations such as our holiday party. PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara is registered with WIVB and WGRZ for posting cancelations of our meetings or events. So, if the weather outside is frightful, you can check with those stations to see if our meeting or an event is canceled.



Education

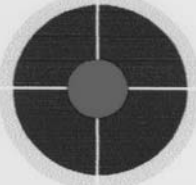
Academy Awards

Dustin Lance Black won the Oscar for original screenplay for his work on 'Milk'. His acceptance speech was very empowering. Black recalled being raised in a Mormon home and hearing Milk's story around the time his family moved to California. "It gave me the hope one day I could live my life openly as who I am and then maybe even I could even fall in love and one day get married," said the first-time nominee and writer on HBO's "Big Love."

"I want to thank my mom, who has always loved me for who I am . . .," he said. "But most of all, if Harvey had not been taken from us 30 years ago, I think he'd want me to say to all the gay and lesbian kids out there tonight who have been told that they are less than by their churches, by the government or by their families that you are beautiful, wonderful creatures who have value. And that no matter what anyone tells you, God does love you." Watch the complete acceptance speech (under 2 minutes) by going to <http://tinyurl.com/c9v6hh>.

Legality of DOMA Questioned.

Two federal appellate judges in the 9th Circuit raised doubts about the constitutionality of the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) via rulings on two separate internal employee grievances. Judges Kozinski and Reinhardt both ordered court administrators to include the spouses



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of the two plaintiffs (both judicial employees) in their federal benefits plans. Judge Reinhardt went so far as to say that denying the plaintiff's spouse benefits under DOMA violated the due process clause of the 5th Amendment, marking the first time a federal appellate judge has ruled DOMA unconstitutional (albeit just in this specific instance). While Kozinski dodged the issue of DOMA, instead construing the Office of Personnel Management statute's to include spouses even if they are not recognized as such under federal law, but said he was "doubtful" whether the exclusion of same-sex spouses could be classified as furthering a legitimate government interest.



Advocacy

Policy Matters

Dear Policy Matters,

Even though I live in my state's capital city, I have always worked outside of the lawmaking process. It's a really big step for me to participate in the majority of PFLAG's action alerts...I am really hesitant to actually pick up the phone and call the office of my congressional member.

Despite my reluctance in the past, I decided to participate in PFLAG's recent action that encouraged people like me to call my congressional representative, encouraging them to sponsor the Uniting American Families Act. I did participate and, overall, I thought the call went pretty well.

I'm now wondering how big of a deal is it to schedule a follow-up meeting with my representative, in her office? Best, Chuck, PFLAG Washington

Dear Chuck,

Thank you so much for participating in PFLAG's recent action alert! You are a true champion for equality and we thank you for all of your hard work and commitment to the movement.

We can definitely appreciate where you are coming from with participation in action alerts – writing, calling and especially meeting with public servants can be both time consuming and somewhat intimidating. As you

know, we always encourage our members to be as involved with the lawmaking process as possible.

While writing a hand-written letter or calling over to a representative's office is effective, the best way to really make a lasting impression on your legislators is to meet with them in person – primarily because you are creating the foundation for a lasting relationship. In time, after several meetings with your legislators, you may find that they may personally reach out to you on the legislation that may impact you or your family and friends directly.

I hope that you will consider giving a lobby visit a try in the future. We would be happy to help set something up with your representative. Additionally, be sure to review PFLAG's *Bringing the Message Home*. This guide provides you with the basics. If you have more specific questions or concerns, please be sure to contact our Field and Policy Manager directly at rperry@pflag.org.

Thank you so much for your question!

Uniting American Families Act

From the HRC website

The problem

Under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents may sponsor their spouses (and other immediate family members) for immigration purposes. But same-sex partners of U.S. citizens and permanent residents are not considered "spouses," and their partners cannot sponsor them for family-based immigration. Consequently, many same-sex, bi-national couples are kept apart or torn apart.

What is the Uniting American Families Act?

The Uniting American Families Act (UAFAs) would remedy this injustice and allow U.S. citizens and permanent residents to sponsor their same-sex partners (called "permanent partners" in UAFAs) for family-based immigration.

The legislation amends the definitions sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act to include definitions for "permanent partner" and "permanent partnership." The Act defines "permanent partner" as an individual who is at least 18 years of age who is in a committed relationship with another individual at least 18 years of age who is not a first, second or third-degree blood relative, with the

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Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Land Where the Good Songs Go

Friday, Mar. 20th (8 pm) - Unitarian Universalist Church

695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY

Saturday, Mar. 21st (8 pm) - Holy Trinity Lutheran Church,
1080 Main Street, Buffalo, NY

Sunday, Mar. 22nd (4 pm) - Daemen College,
4380 Main Street, Amherst, NY

Tickets & info: 883-1277

www.buffalogaymenschorus.org

intent that this be a lifelong commitment. The individual must be financially interdependent with his or her partner, cannot be married or in another permanent partnership and must be unable to enter into a marriage recognized under the INA with the partner.

UAFA will provide lesbian and gay individuals the same opportunity as different-sex, married couples to sponsor their partner. Like different-sex couples, there are requirements such as providing proof of the relationship — including affidavits from friends and family or evidence of financial support. As with current immigration laws for married couples, UAFA would impose harsh penalties for fraud, including up to five years in prison and as much as \$250,000 in fines.

Countries that have embraced immigration equality

The United States lags behind 20 countries that recognize same-sex couples for immigration purposes: Andorra, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. None of these countries has reported fraud problems associated with its decision to allow immigration equality for its citizens.

What is the current status of the bill?

It was introduced in the 111th Congress by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) in the Senate and Representative Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) in the House.

The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act

From the HRC website

The problem

Benefits, such as health insurance and retirement savings, are a significant portion of employee compensation. Although the federal government—the nation's largest civilian employer—offers attractive family benefits to employees with different-sex spouses, it does not offer the same benefits to lesbian and gay workers with partners. As a result, these employees do not receive equal pay for their equal contributions, and the government cannot keep pace with leading private-sector employers—including many federal contractors—in recruiting and retaining top talent.

What is the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act?

The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act (DPBO) would provide the same family benefits to lesbian and gay federal civilian employees as are already provided to employees with different-sex spouses. To receive benefits, employees would have to submit an affidavit of eligibility for benefits with the Office of Personnel Management, certifying that the employee and

domestic partner meet necessary criteria, as provided in the Act.

DPBO is consistent with leading employers' policies

DPBO would bring employment practices in the federal government in line with those of America's largest and most successful corporations. Fifty-six percent of Fortune 500 companies provide domestic partner benefits to their employees. In addition, 16 states and over 200 local governments offer their public employees domestic partnership benefits. A May 2000 poll conducted by the Associated Press found that a majority of Americans favor the extension of health insurance coverage to same-sex partners. In addition, this legislation has been endorsed by the American Federation of Government Employees, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Harvard University, National Treasury Employees Union and United Church of Christ.

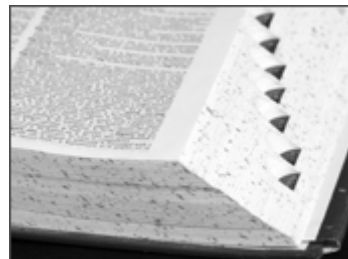
What is the current status of the bill?

In the 110th Congress, Senator Joe Lieberman (ID-CT) introduced DPBO. It was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which held a hearing on September 24, 2008. Representative Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) introduced the legislation in the House, where it was referred to the Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Post Office, and the District of Columbia. DPBO had 24 co-sponsors in the Senate and 91 co-sponsors in the House.

Support

What does it all mean?

There are dozens of new terms that you might see on the PFLAG site or the websites of our allies and colleagues. Here are a few helpful definitions to get you started.



GLBT: Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. This acronym is used to refer to these individuals

collectively. (It is sometimes stated as LGBT.) Occasionally, the acronym is stated as GLBTA to include allies – straight and supportive individuals – in the community.

Sexual Orientation: Enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings to other people. Heterosexual (straight) individuals experience these feelings primarily for people of the opposite sex. Homosexual (gay or lesbian) individuals experience these feelings primarily for people of the same sex. Bisexual (bi) individuals experience these feelings for people of both sexes.

Gender Identity: A person's sense of being male or female resulting from a combination of genetic and environmental influences. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced in infancy and reinforced in adolescence.

Gender expression: A person's way of communicating gender identity to others.

Queer: Think of queer as an umbrella term. It includes anyone who wants to identify as queer and who feels somehow outside of the societal norms in regards to gender, sexuality or/and even politics. This, therefore, could include the person who would rather not identify with any particular label, the gender fluid bisexual, the gender fluid heterosexual, the questioning GLBT person, and the person who just doesn't feel like they quite fit in to societal norms and wants to bond with a community over that.

Transgender: A broad term describing the state of a person's gender identity which does not necessarily match his/her assigned gender at birth. Other words commonly used are female to male, male to female, crossdresser, drag queen or king, gender queer, gender blender, two-spirit, and androgyny.

Intersex: individuals born with chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia. The medical term "hermaphrodite" has been used, but is not accepted by many intersex people. Medical professionals commonly assign a male or female gender to the individual and proceed to perform gender assignment surgeries beginning in infancy and often continuing into adolescence, before a child is able to give informed consent. The Intersex Society of North America opposes this practice of genital mutilation on infants and children.

PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA
2008 – 2009

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Tentative Meeting Schedule

All meetings will include time for sharing.

- 3/15 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting
- 4/19 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Gay/Straight Alliances and Gay and Lesbian Youth Services
- 5/17 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Pride Planning
- 6/21 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Father's Day and Post-Pride discussions
- 7/19 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara Annual Picnic

<p>Please circle item(s) ▾</p> <p>Please join our PFLAG chapter to support our mission at whatever level membership you can:</p> <p>▾ Lifetime Membership \$ 500</p> <p>▾ Benefactor Membership \$ 250</p> <p>▾ Sponsoring Membership \$ 100</p> <p>▾ Supporting Membership \$ 50</p> <p>▾ Household Membership \$ 30</p> <p>▾ Newsletter Subscription Only \$ 15</p>	<p>JOIN US!</p> <p>▾ New ▾ Renewal</p> <p>▾ Advertising member (Business Card Advertisement \$100. Annually for 10 issues)</p> <p>▾ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities</p>	<p>PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA</p> <p>▾ Change of Address</p>
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Your National PFLAG membership is included in your local chapter dues. You will also receive the quarterly PFLAG-Pole Newsletter delivered to your home or by email from the national office. **Circle here if you don't want to receive the PFLAG-Pole Newsletter ▾**

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