



# Buffalo / Niagara

PO Box 617  
Buffalo, NY 14207

716-883-0384

PFLAG@bfn.org  
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, November 15, 2009**

2:30–5:00 PM

The November meeting will be a self-help sharing meeting. 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.**

Held at a location convenient to those involved.

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.

**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.**

## 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:

Nov 2: How Can I be Sure God Loves Me?  
 Nov 9: Reading between the Labels  
 Nov 16: Your Mom's a Lesbian, Here's your Lunch...  
 Nov 23: Straight from the Heart  
 Nov 30: Our Faces  
 Dec 7: Silent Pictures  
 Dec 14: Camp Lavender Hill  
 Dec 21: Trevor / I Know Who I Am, - Do You?  
 Dec 28: Maybe we're Talking About a Different God

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](http://www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org/video_project.shtml)

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## When I Knew

Westminster Presbyterian Church will show the documentary *When I Knew*, interviews with 16 people about when they realized they were gay or lesbian, in two parts on Sunday November 8, 2009 and Wednesday November 11, 2009 at 9:40 am in the Case Library. PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara members are welcome to attend.

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## Historic Week for LGBT Issues

The week of October 23, 2009 was an especially important one for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and their families, as both legislative

### Lifetime Members

Frank Carnevale & James Pilc  
 Mary Hewitt

### Sponsoring Members

Anonymous (1)  
 John & Diane Covert  
 Clarice Lechner-Hyman  
 Bob Patterson  
 James & Mary Ellen Walsh

### Supporting Members

Anonymous (2)  
 Jane & Tony Benfante  
 Babs Conant & Camille Cox  
 Shawn Cribari  
 Steve and Suzanne Evans  
 Brian Hilton  
 Russel Hurlburt & John Percy  
 Donald Kreger & Ron Ehmke  
 Ronda Marvel  
 Jeffrey McConnell & Fred Dansereau  
 Mark Meyer  
 Dennis Stuart

victories and administration advancements have put the spotlight on key issues for the LGBT community and underlined the necessity for additional laws to ensure parity for LGBT people and all Americans. It is fitting that during the month of October—designated as LGBT Awareness Month—these successes are paving the way for full equality for LGBT individuals and their families.

PFLAG National celebrated success in a decade-long fight on Thursday, October 22, when the Senate passed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. The groundbreaking bill includes sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories in federal law, the first time these groups have been afforded such protection. President Obama has repeatedly and publically announced his support for the bill and is expected to sign it in the following days.

The history of the hate crimes prevention act goes back more than two decades, to 1989 when Congress passed the Hates Crimes Statistics Act, which required law enforcement to collect data on crimes motivated by prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. This legislation built the foundation for the current hate crimes prevention law. In 1997, in response to a wave of murders and arsons directed at LGBT individuals, President Bill Clinton called a White House Summit on Hate Crimes, where the Hate Crimes Prevention Act we know today was crafted.

Before the legislature or executive office began to discuss hate crimes, PFLAG was already driving awareness about increasing violence against LGBT people. Jeanne Manford was outraged at such violence and set out to educate her community, writing letters to the editor, participating in LGBT pride events, and speaking with elected officials. It was from this activism in response to hate that PFLAG was established, and, since that time, PFLAG's commitment has never wavered when community education and grassroots advocacy is necessary to secure LGBT equality.

"The importance of the hate crimes bill to the LGBT community cannot be overstated," said John Cepek, president of PFLAG National. "Thanks to the tireless efforts of mothers like Judy Shepard—and Jeanne Manford before her—the U.S. Congress has taken a definitive stand against violence based on hate, they have sent a strong message on behalf of the equality movement."

The passage of the hate crimes bill came on the heels of several other key gains this week:

**A Family Victory!** – On Thursday, October 15, Rep. Pete Stark (D-Calif.) introduced H.R. 3827, the Every Child Deserves a Family Act, which would restrict federal funds for states that discriminate in adoption or foster programs on the basis of marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Currently, at least five states specifically prohibit LGBT people from adopting children. The passage of this law would help our LGBT

friends open up their homes to children who desperately need families to call their own.

The latest available research shows more than 500,000 children are currently part of the foster care system, with only 3 percent placed in pre-adoptive homes. The bill introduced by Stark is intended to eliminate barriers to adoption, as studies indicate that foster children are more likely to commit crimes, more likely to experience homelessness and less likely to be able to hold jobs as young adults. The bill will help strengthen families and create a more opportunities for young people to grow into happy and productive adults.

**A Health Victory!** - On Wednesday, October 21, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced plans to create the first national resource center for LGBT senior citizens (over age 60), a group estimated as high as 4 million. The LGBT Resource Center will not only help existing agencies build competency and cultural sensitivity in serving this growing community, but also will expand awareness among LGBT individuals about the need to plan for later life and long-term care. The Administration on Aging plans to award a grant of \$250,000 each year to eligible entities, which include public-private nonprofit organizations with experience working on LGBT issues on a national level.

**A Housing Victory!** - On the same day as HHS's announcement, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan discussed the housing agency's series of proposals to ensure that its core housing programs are open to all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Discrimination on these bases is prohibited by the Fair Housing Act, but HUD acknowledged that the Act doesn't specifically cite its protection of LGBT people.

Although there is no existing data on such discrimination, Secretary Donovan said that it undoubtedly exists. To build the evidence of such barriers, HUD is commissioning the first-ever nationwide study into the occurrences and effects of discriminatory housing sales and rental programs. The plan includes clarifying that the term "family" includes LGBT individuals and couples; instituting requirements for grant recipients to comply with local and state non-discrimination laws that cover sexual orientation or gender identity; and stipulating that mortgage loans insured through the Federal Housing Administration consider only credit-worthiness when determining loan approvals, regardless of unrelated factors such as sexual orientation or gender identity.

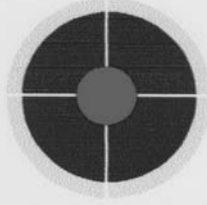
"PFLAG is grateful to the lawmakers and administrative officials who listened to families and heard their stories, then acted to help secure equality for our LGBT loved ones," said Jody Huckaby, executive director of PFLAG National. "This has been an extraordinary

## Kay Patterson, LMHC

Licensed Mental Health Counselor

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## Louis J. Moran, LCSW-R

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## SHEILA SULLIVAN DICKINSON

ATTORNEY & COUNSELOR AT LAW

733 WEST DELAVAN AVE., #2  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14222

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FAX: 716.816.0280

## Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

### *Joyful & Triumphant*

Friday Dec 11 (8 pm) - Unitarian Universalist Church  
695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY  
Saturday Dec 12 (8 pm) - Riviera Theater  
67 Webster Street, North Tonawanda  
Sunday Dec 13 (4 pm) - Westminster Presbyterian Church  
724 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY

Tickets & info: 883-1277  
www.buffalogaymenschorus.org

week for the movement, and one that gives us strength to continue driving forward on passing an inclusive ENDA and repealing hurtful laws such as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the Defense of Marriage Act.

## 1,138 Benefits Denied Same-Sex Couples and the Economic Consequences

Mark Reed, EqualityAcrossAmerica.org



Many have asked about the rights and benefits that are denied to same-sex couples. Following is a summary report from the GAO of the 1,138 federal rights and benefits provided via DOMA to married couples. These rights don't even begin to address those granted to married couples by the state.

### Defense of Marriage Act: Update to Prior Report GAO-04-353R January 23, 2004

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) provides definitions of "marriage" and "spouse" that are to be used in construing the meaning of a federal law and, thus, affect the interpretation of a wide variety of federal laws in which marital status is a factor. In 1997, we issued a report identifying 1,049 federal statutory provisions classified to the United States Code in which benefits, rights, and privileges are contingent on marital status or in which marital status is a factor. In preparing the 1997 report, we limited our search to laws enacted prior to September 21, 1996, the date DOMA was signed into law. Recently, Congress asked us to update our 1997 compilation. We have identified 120 statutory provisions involving marital status that were enacted between September 21, 1996, and December 31, 2003. During the same period, 31 statutory provisions involving marital status were repealed or amended in such a way as to eliminate marital status as a factor. Consequently, as of December 31, 2003, our research identified a total of 1,138 federal statutory provisions classified to the United States Code in which marital status is a factor in determining or receiving benefits, rights, and privileges.

(Download the full report from [www.gao.gov/new.items/d04353r.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04353r.pdf))

What's the price of not having equal rights? According to the New York Times, it could be upwards of \$467,000. That's how much the paper estimates a gay couple will pay — in a worst-case scenario — over the span of their lifetimes for extra costs related to health care, legal affairs, and other issues. It sure is expensive to be denied the more than 1,100 benefits granted to straight married couples.

To figure this dollar amount out, the Times created a same-sex couple whose real life situation might mirror that of a straight couple. They looked at the three states with the largest LGBT populations — New York, California and Florida — and merged data from those three states to determine annual gross incomes, and other various

cost of living expenses. And not surprisingly, they found that being gay is expensive. Damn expensive, especially if you're a family.

The biggest expenses that gay couples face, at least in the Times' hypothetical picture, is in the areas of health care, social security and estate taxes. Health care is a crazy variable, because it's dependent on a person's employer, but in the worst case scenario gay couples pay more than \$211,000 alone for health care than straight couples over the course of their lifetimes, a shocking figure to say the least.

Social Security is a big bust for gay couples, since the federal government doesn't recognize same-sex marriage. This lack of recognition means that gay couples don't receive a myriad of government benefits that straight couples receive.

And then there's the estate tax, which might be the most viscerally unfair example of how straight married couples have it pretty good when it comes to U.S. tax laws. Straight married couples can transfer an unlimited amount of assets to each other during their lives and at death without having to pay any sort of estate tax. Gay couples? Not so much. Same-sex couples have to shell out a boatload in federal estate taxes, at least if the estate passes an expense threshold. Granted, this really only effects very, very wealthy same-sex couples, but it's still an example of how unfair the U.S. tax system really is.

The statistics and information in the Times piece are pretty dense, but the bottom line is this: gay couples generally have to pay more throughout their lifetimes because same-sex marriage isn't legal in the U.S. If the federal government chose to recognize same-sex marriage, then all of these costs or penalties would evaporate. It's really as simple as that.

## Paterson says gay marriage bill will pass

Governor Paterson has pledged it'll come to a vote at the same time he brings Albany lawmakers back to town to grapple with the budget. "And when we do the first calendar that is written, marriage equality will be on the calendar," he said.

But do New Yorkers really want a vote on gay marriage mixed in with trying to balance the budget? "I don't think the issue of civil rights should be tied to the budget," Alan Van Capelle of Empire State Pride Agenda said.

Van Capelle, who recently held a commitment ceremony with his partner, says he's just glad to see the senate finally vote yes or no on gay marriage. "We believe that 62 people in the New York State Senate should say whether they support equality or don't support equality, and if they do, we will celebrate. If they don't, then we will know what work as a community we have to do in 2010," Van Capelle said.

Senator Tom Duane who's gay, says there are enough votes to approve gay marriage, but some democrats don't want to see a vote just yet.

"I believe marriage should be between a man and a woman," Sen. Ruben Diaz Jr. said. Diaz, a conservative preacher and senator, is pushing for a vote next year an election year. He believes the issue is toxic to senators facing a tough re-election fight. "They are running for cover and they will be so afraid to bring it to a vote next year that the homosexual community will lose next year," Diaz said.

There's been a lot of talk the governor will call for a special session in the next couple of weeks. The big question is will the senate vote yes or no on the issue of gay marriage with or without a deal on how to balance the state budget.

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## Van Capelle Calls Out The Senate On Gay Marriage

Elizabeth Benjamin, NY Daily News

(Blog entry on October 22, 2009)

At the Empire State Pride Agenda's sold-out fall dinner this evening, the organization's executive director, Alan Van Capelle, had some harsh words for the state Senate, which has failed to pass a bill to legalize gay marriage in spite of repeated pledges by its leaders to do so.

Van Capelle called out several senators by name, including Sen. Tom Duane, the Senate's lone openly-gay member, who is carrying the marriage bill and has said on multiple occasions he believes there are sufficient votes in the chamber to pass it.

"Tonight I say the time for making cases is past," Van Capelle said. "The time for petty partisan finger pointing is past. The time for lame excuses, for botched maneuvers and simple, plain old foot dragging is past. The time to get this bill to the floor of the New York state Senate is now. The time for the state Senate to acknowledge our existence is now the time for us to hear our lives - our lives! - debated on the floor of the New York state Senate is now. Sen. John Sampson, you're the leader of the state Senate. Sen. Tom Duane, you have told us on multiple occasions that you have the votes to pass this bill. Give us the dignity the rights and the respect we deserve bring this bill to a floor for a debate and a vote. If we win let us celebrate and if we go down we know what we need to do in 2010. Period."

(Duane is here tonight. I saw him during the cocktail hour, but haven't glimpsed him since Van Capelle's speech).

Van Capelle also issued a warning to the elected officials in the room, particularly those who "make a statement and then fail to fight in the trenches where it counts." (Invoking Dante, he suggested the hottest circle of hell might be reserved for those who "take a stand, but do so tepidly").

"We have campaigned for you. We have raised money for you we have supported you in every way imaginable, and we should have no patience for these sorry summer soldiers," Van Capelle said. "Now is not the time for half hearted you must risk yourselves as we risk ourselves every day. We must fight and work for equality as we fight and work for equality every day and if you do not, we can find other friends who will do that job for us and do it better than you."

ESPA spent upwards of \$1 million in 2008 to flip the Senate into Democratic hands (and that doesn't count the additional money poured into the Democrats' coffers by the Gill Action Fund and other pro-marriage interests.

Gov. David Paterson has made marriage a central issue in his bid to resurrect his poll numbers. And yet, the marriage bill remains stalled in the Senate, even after the Assembly has twice passed it on the other side of the Capitol. The measure was a political football in the first leadership battle, in which Malcolm Smith is widely believed to have promised anti-marriage Sen. Ruben Diaz Sr. the bill wouldn't come to the floor for a vote in exchange for his vote to become majority leader. Smith pledged to let the bill out of committee when he was satisfied it had the 32 votes necessary to pass, and it appeared that might actually happen.

Then came the coup.

Paterson put the marriage bill on one of his post-coup extraordinary session agendas, and Duane was briefly speculated to be considering a leap to the GOP side of the aisle in exchange for a promise the measure would come to the floor. But none of that came to pass.

Just this week, Paterson said he hoped the Senate would take up marriage when it returns to Albany for budget-cutting special session. But since then, he has caved to legislative leaders and pushed off the date for that session, which was initially supposed to be Oct. 27. It now appears lawmakers won't return to the Capitol until after the Nov. 3 elections.

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## Duane: Gay Marriage Going To The Floor 'A Given' (But When?)

Elizabeth Benjamin, NY Daily News

(Blog entry on October 23, 2009)

Sen. Tom Duane said he has no hard feelings about being called out last night by Empire State Pride Agenda Executive Director Alan Van Capelle for the Senate's delay in bringing a gay marriage bill to the floor.

"I certainly share his impatience and, you know, I appreciate his anger," said Duane, who is carrying the legislation. "I sometimes think, and I don't know this, but sometimes behind an emotion as strong as his was around anger, you know, there's some fear behind it."

"So, I think there's some fear that marriage might not happen. But it is happening. We have the votes the

