



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, October 17, 2010
2:30–5:30 PM

The October meeting will include a video as well as an opportunity for members to share what is on their minds. As always, newcomers will be offered the alternative of meeting privately with a PFLAG parent.

Kenilworth United Church of Christ
45 Dalton Drive
Tonawanda, NY 14223

The church is located two blocks west of Niagara Falls Boulevard at the corner of Decatur Rd and Dalton Dr. Decatur runs off of Niagara Falls Boulevard about 0.8 miles south of Sheridan Drive and about 0.8 miles north of Kenmore Ave.

Our meetings are in the library, which is near the parking lot entrance. The facility is handicap accessible.

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:

Oct 4: An Unexpected Journey
 Oct 11: All God's Children
 Oct 18: Claiming America's Promise
 Oct 25: The Families We Choose

Nov 1: How Can I be Sure God Loves Me?
 Nov 8: Reading between the Labels
 Nov 15: Your Mom's a Lesbian, Here's your Lunch...
 Nov 22: Straight from the Heart
 Nov 29: Our Faces

A description of the storylines can be found at:
www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org/video_project.shtml

Can You Help With The Newsletter

It is time consuming to find interesting things to share with our members. We want to have a content filled newsletter but that's hard to do within the time available. You can help. When you're reading the news and you see something that would be interesting to our members, just send an email with the information to pflag@bfn.org and if you're reading on-line most sites have a button that easily allows you to share the article with us.

Lifetime Members

Frank Carnevale & James Pilc
 Mary Hewitt
 Clarice Lechner-Hyman

Sponsoring Members

John & Diane Covert
 Sheila Dickinson
 Russel Hurlburt & John Percy
 Paula Welch Jack
 Ronda Marvel
 Bob Patterson
 James & Mary Ellen Walsh

Supporting Members

Anonymous (2)
 Jane & Tony Benfante
 Babs Conant & Camille Cox
 Shawn Cribari
 Loretta & Richard Gucwa
 Donald Kreger & Ron Ehmke
 Jeffrey McConnell & Fred Dansereau
 Mark Meyer
 Roger Seifert & Dennis Stuart
 Linda Stefaniak
 P. J. Tomczyk

Statement from Judge Leighton after the Margaret Witt trial

After ruling that retired Major Margaret Witt, a lesbian Air Force Reserve officer, should be reinstated to her unit, U.S. District Court Judge Ronald Leighton on Friday made the following comments from the bench:

Major Witt, you and I are unlikely to see one another again, in this context, anyway. I'd like to make a couple of points before you go:

1) I hope you will request reinstatement with the Air Force Reserves and the 446th [her unit]. You will provide the best evidence that open service of gays and lesbians will have no adverse effect on cohesion, morale or readiness in this or perhaps any Air Force or military unit.

2) You have been and continue to be a central figure in a long-term, highly charged civil-rights movement. That role places extraordinary stresses on you, I know. Today, you have won a victory in that struggle, the depth and duration of which will be determined by other judicial officers and, hopefully soon, the political branches of government. You said something in the trial that resonated with me. You said the best thing to come out of all this turmoil is the reaction of your parents when you told them of your sexual orientation: their love and support for you.

Notwithstanding the victory you obtained here today, for yourself and for others, I would submit to you that the best thing to come out of all this tumult is still that love and support you have received from your family. You are truly blessed as a family and I am sure they will see you through whatever obstacles and difficulties you may encounter along the road ahead.

University of Rochester Presentation

On October 14, 2010 at 5:00 pm, Dr. Jerome Goldstein' will give a presentation titled *The Neurobiology Of Sexual Orientation – The Gay Brain* at the University Of Rochester Meliora Weekend.

As an undergraduate student at the U or R, Dr. Goldstein, '63 came out as a gay man to his advisor at a time when homosexuality was still considered a mental disorder. He was immediately referred to a psychiatrist at Strong Memorial Hospital for treatment. Since that time, Dr. Goldstein has become a recognized medical neurologist with a specialization in the neurobiology of many research interests pursued at the San Francisco Clinical Research Center. As an advocate for gay rights, it has become clear that neurobiology is not just a field of interest for many neurological disorders but indeed a credible explanation for sexual orientation. As the director of the San Francisco Clinical Research Center, the San Francisco Headache Clinic, and the San Francisco Alzheimer's and Dementia Clinic, Dr. Goldstein has been provided with the background to study and pursue the neurobiology of migraine headaches and Alzheimer's disease and has thus extended his

knowledge base to sexual orientation. Research beginning in the 1990's and culminating with sophisticated volumetric MRI, functional MRI, and PET scanning of the brain in 2008 and 2009 have given further credibility to a widely held conclusion that most sexual orientation is in place at or shortly after birth by virtue of the brain. Dr. Goldstein's presentation on the "gay brain" has been presented at universities including Neurology grand rounds at Case Western Reserve School of Medicine, medical grand rounds at many hospitals including the largest hospital system in San Francisco, California Pacific Medical Center, The World Congress for Sexual Health, The International Congress on Clinical Neurology and Epidemiology, and the International Conference on Sexology. He was also featured in a 2008 *Salon.com* article, *Born that Gay* and wrote an editorial published in *Clinical Psychiatry News*, January, 2009.

Dr. Goldstein's presentation will cover: (1) Plant and animal kingdom's evolutionary history of same sex partnerships, (2) Societal reactions to same sex partnerships, (3) Homosexuality from ancient Egypt to the present time, (4) Psychiatric and psychoanalytic views and changes in those fields in regard to the gay brain, (5) Scientific theories which will help us understand the basis of sexual orientation, and (6) Latest scientific theories supporting the biology of gayness and sexual orientation.

A reception will follow.

Menendez Immigration Bill Includes Gay Rights Provision

By Elise Foley, The Washington Independent

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) introduced a comprehensive immigration reform bill, including a somewhat controversial provision to extend family-based immigration for same-sex couples. If passed — it's unclear whether even the reform bill could — the provision could help some of the estimated 24,000 gay and lesbian couples in the U.S. that include at least one foreign partner.

The Uniting American Families Act establishes rights of same-sex couples to bring their foreign partners to the U.S. Under the current system, straight couples can petition for their foreign-born husbands or wives to move to the U.S. as legal residents, but gay and lesbians are denied the ability to petition for foreign partners — even in states that allow gay marriage.

There was some question over whether comprehensive immigration reform would include the measure. Reps. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) and Mike Honda (D-Calif.) have pushed for the Uniting American Families Act to be included in comprehensive reform legislation, claiming it could broaden the support base for the bill.

But while many Catholic and other religious organizations support immigration reform, some argue they cannot support a bill with gay rights measures. "That

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Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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SUNY at Buffalo, Amherst Campus

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would be a deal-breaker," J. Kenneth Blackwell, a senior fellow at the evangelical Family Research Council, told the New York Times in July when asked about including same-sex family reunification in an immigration bill.

While it's unclear whether this bill will go anywhere, advocates of gay rights and immigration reform applauded the inclusion of the Uniting American Families Act to Menendez's bill.

"Senator Menendez's bill will set the stage, in this Congress and the next, for a serious debate on fixing our broken immigration system," Steve Ralls from the pro-LGBT Immigration Equality told The Advocate.

Michigan attorney general defends employee's right to blog

By the CNN Wire Staff

Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox defended an assistant's constitutional right to wage an Internet campaign against an openly gay college student, even though he considers that employee a "bully."

"Here in America, we have this thing called the First Amendment, which allows people to express what they think and engage in political and social speech," Cox told Anderson Cooper on CNN's "AC 360" on Wednesday night. "He's clearly a bully ... but is that protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution? Yes."

"Mr. [Andrew] Shirvell is sort of a frontline grunt assistant prosecutor in my office," Cox said. "He does satisfactory work and off-hours, he's free to engage under both our civil service rules, Michigan Supreme Court rulings and the United States Supreme Court rule."

For nearly six months, Shirvell, an assistant attorney general for the state of Michigan, has blogged about college student Chris Armstrong, an openly gay student assembly president at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Shirvell launched his blog in late April using the online moniker "Concerned Michigan Alumnus."

"Welcome to 'Chris Armstrong Watch,'" Shirvell wrote in his inaugural blog post. "This is a site for concerned University of Michigan alumni, students and others who oppose the recent election of Chris Armstrong -- a RADICAL HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVIST, RACIST, ELITIST, & LIAR -- as the new head of student government."

Among other things, Shirvell has published blog posts that accuse Armstrong of going back on a campaign promise he made to minority students; engaging in "flagrant sexual promiscuity" with another male member of the student government; sexually seducing and influencing "a previously conservative [male] student" so much so that the student, according to Shirvell, "morphed into a proponent of the radical homosexual agenda;" hosting a gay orgy in his dorm room in October 2009; and trying to recruit incoming first-year students "to join the homosexual 'lifestyle.'"

In a written statement from his office on Tuesday, Cox distanced his office from Shirvell's comments.

"Mr. Shirvell's personal opinions are his and his alone, and do not reflect the views of the Michigan Department of Attorney General," Cox said in the written statement provided by his office Tuesday night. "But his immaturity and lack of judgment outside the office are clear."

Shirvell said he works on the blog during his off-hours.

On "AC 360" on Tuesday, Shirvell made no apologies for his blog postings, which include a picture of Armstrong with "Resign" written over his face. The same

picture also had a swastika superimposed over a gay pride flag, with an arrow pointing toward Armstrong.

Shirvell acknowledged protesting outside of Armstrong's house and calling him "Satan's representative on the student assembly."

"I'm a Christian citizen exercising my First Amendment rights," Shirvell told Cooper. "I have no problem with the fact that Chris is a homosexual. I have a problem with the fact that he's advancing a radical homosexual agenda."

Armstrong has supported gender-neutral housing at the university for transgender students who haven't had sexual reassignment surgery.

Armstrong told CNN he has hired an attorney and is pursuing legal action against Shirvell.

CNN senior legal analyst Jeffrey Toobin says Armstrong may have grounds for a harassment case.

Private Moment Made Public, Then a Fatal Jump

By Lisa W. Foderaro, The New York Times

It started with a Twitter message on Sept. 19: "Roommate asked for the room till midnight. I went into molly's room and turned on my webcam. I saw him making out with a dude. Yay."

Mr. Clementi, a Rutgers University freshman, is thought to have jumped off the George Washington Bridge.

That night, the authorities say, the Rutgers University student who sent the message used a camera in his dormitory room to stream the roommate's intimate encounter live on the Internet.

And three days later, the roommate who had been surreptitiously broadcast — Tyler Clementi, an 18-year-old freshman and an accomplished violinist — jumped from the George Washington Bridge into the Hudson River in an apparent suicide.

The Sept. 22 death, details of which the authorities disclosed on Wednesday, was the latest by a young American that followed the online posting of hurtful material. The news came on the same day that Rutgers kicked off a two-year, campuswide project to teach the importance of civility, with special attention to the use and abuse of new technology.

Those who knew Mr. Clementi — on the Rutgers campus in Piscataway, N.J., at his North Jersey high school and in a community orchestra — were anguished by the circumstances surrounding his death, describing him as an intensely devoted musician who was sweet and shy.

"It's really awful, especially in New York and in the 21st century," said Arkady Leytush, artistic director of the Ridgewood Symphony Orchestra, where Mr. Clementi played since his freshman year in high school. "It's so painful. He was very friendly and had very good potential."

The Middlesex County prosecutor's office said Mr. Clementi's roommate, Dharun Ravi, 18, of Plainsboro, N.J., and another classmate, Molly Wei, 18, of Princeton Junction, N.J., had each been charged with two counts of invasion of privacy for using "the camera to view and transmit a live image" of Mr. Clementi. The most serious charges carry a maximum sentence of five years.

Mr. Ravi was charged with two additional counts of invasion of privacy for trying a similar live feed on the Internet on Sept. 21, the day before the suicide. A spokesman for the prosecutor's office, James O'Neill, said the investigation was continuing, but he declined to "speculate on additional charges."

Steven Goldstein, chairman of the gay rights group Garden State Equality, said Wednesday that he considered the death a hate crime. "We are sickened that anyone in our society, such as the students allegedly responsible for making the surreptitious video, might consider destroying others' lives as a sport," he said in a statement.

At the end of the inaugural event for the university's "Project Civility" campaign on Wednesday, nearly 100 demonstrators gathered outside the student center, where the president spoke. They chanted, "Civility without safety — over our queer bodies!"

It is unclear what Mr. Clementi's sexual orientation was; classmates say he mostly kept to himself. Danielle Birnbohm, a freshman who lived across the hall from him in Davidson Hall, said that when a counselor asked how many students had known Mr. Clementi, only 3 students out of 50 raised their hands.

But Mr. Clementi displayed a favorite quotation on his Facebook page, from the song "I'll Never Fall in Love Again": "What do you get when you kiss a guy? You get enough germs to catch pneumonia."

And his roommate's Twitter message makes plain that Mr. Ravi believed that Mr. Clementi was gay.

A later message from Mr. Ravi appeared to make reference to the second attempt to broadcast Mr. Clementi. "Anyone with iChat," he wrote on Sept. 21, "I dare you to video chat me between the hours of 9:30 and 12. Yes, it's happening again."

Ms. Birnbohm said Mr. Ravi had said the initial broadcast was an accident — that he viewed the encounter after dialing his own computer from another room in the dorm. It was not immediately known how or when Mr. Clementi learned what his roommate had done. But Ms. Birnbohm said the episode quickly became the subject of gossip in the dormitory.

Mr. Clementi's family issued a statement on Wednesday confirming the suicide and pledging cooperation with the criminal investigation. "Tyler was a fine young man, and a distinguished musician," the statement read. "The family is heartbroken beyond words."

The Star-Ledger of Newark reported that Mr. Clementi posted a note on his Facebook page the day of his death: "Jumping off the gw bridge sorry." Friends and strangers have turned the page into a memorial.

Witnesses told the police they saw a man jump off the bridge just before 9 p.m. on Sept. 22, said Paul J. Browne, the New York Police Department's chief spokesman. Officers discovered a wallet there with Mr. Clementi's identification, Mr. Browne said.

The police said Wednesday night that they had found the body of a young man in the Hudson north of the bridge and were trying to identify it.

Officials at Ridgewood High School, where Mr. Clementi graduated in June, last week alerted parents of current students that his family had reported him missing and encouraged students to take advantage of counseling at the school.

The timing of the news was almost uncanny, coinciding with the start of "Project Civility" at Rutgers, the state university of New Jersey. Long in the planning, the campaign will involve panel discussions, lectures, workshops and other events to raise awareness about the importance of respect, compassion and courtesy in everyday interactions.

Events scheduled for this fall include a workshop for students and administrators on residential life on campus and a panel discussion titled "Uncivil Gadgets? Changing Technologies and Civil Behavior."

Rutgers officials would not say whether the two suspects had been suspended. But in a statement late Wednesday, the university's president, Richard L. McCormick, said, "If the charges are true, these actions gravely violate the university's standards of decency and humanity." At the kickoff event for the civility campaign, Mr. McCormick made an oblique reference to the case, saying, "It is more clear than ever that we need strongly to reassert our call for civility and responsibility for each other."

Mr. Ravi was freed on \$25,000 bail, and Ms. Wei was released on her own recognizance. The lawyer for Mr. Ravi, Steven D. Altman, declined to comment on the accusations. A phone message left at the offices of Ms. Wei's lawyer was not returned.

Some students on the Busch campus in Piscataway seemed dazed by the turn of events, remembering their last glimpse of Mr. Clementi. Thomas Jung, 19, shared a music stand with Mr. Clementi in the Rutgers Symphony Orchestra.

On Wednesday afternoon, hours before Mr. Clementi's death, the two rehearsed works by Berlioz and Beethoven. "He loved music," Mr. Jung said. "He was very dedicated. I couldn't tell if anything was wrong."

Raymond Chase Commits Suicide, Fifth Gay Youth To Take Life In Three Weeks

Huffington Post

Johnson and Wales student Raymond Chase, 19, took his own life on September 29th, according to the *Advocate*.

Chase, a sophomore reported as openly gay, apparently hanged himself in his dorm room. According to Now Public, the circumstances surrounding his death are not yet known.

Johnson and Wales Vice President Ronald Martel e-mailed students with the news Thursday:

"Today I contact you with the deeply sad news of the passing of Raymond Chase, sophomore, 19, culinary arts major. The campus community is mourning the loss of this vibrant young man who leaves many JWU friends and teachers, and a loving family of Monticello, New York.

Funeral arrangements are not available at this time. As we obtain more information that can be shared, we will do so. Ray's JWU friends and the university are planning a memorial service for the campus community. Those details will be forthcoming."

Many consider this -- the fifth suicide by a young gay person in the past few weeks -- as a national call to action. According to the *Miami Herald*, Campus Pride (which recently released a study on attitudes towards LGBT students on campus) issued a statement in reaction to the deaths:

...the recent pattern of LGBT youth suicides is cause for grave concern. Campus Pride demands national action be taken to address youth bullying, harassment and the need for safety and inclusion for LGBT youth at colleges and universities across the country. We must not let these tragic deaths go unnoticed. Together we must act decisively to curb anti-LGBT bias incidents, harassment and acts of violence.

(Editor's Note: For more information about Campus Pride's "2010 State of Higher Education for LGBT People" report, visit www.campuspride.org/research.)

Judge in California rules on military's ban on openly gay service members

By Robert Barnes, Washington Post

A federal judge in California rules in early September that the U.S. military's ban on openly gay service members violates the Constitution, the most recent in a string of court rulings overturning restrictions on the rights of the country's gay men and lesbians.

U.S. District Judge Virginia A. Phillips said the government's "don't ask, don't tell" policy is a violation of due process and First Amendment rights. Instead of being necessary for military readiness, she said, the

policy has a "direct and deleterious effect" on the armed services.

Citing testimony at a two-week trial in July by experts and former service members, Phillips wrote: "All of these examples demonstrate that the act's restrictions on speech not only are broader than reasonably necessary to protect the government's substantial interests, but also actually serve to impede military readiness and unit cohesion rather than further these goals."

She granted a request for an injunction to stop the military from discharging openly gay service members, but allowed the government time to appeal the ruling.

Phillips's decision is likely to put more pressure on Congress to act on pending legislation that would repeal the policy, which forbids the military to ask about a service member's sexual orientation but retains a ban on gays serving openly. The House voted in May to repeal the act, but the legislation is stalled in the Senate.

Meanwhile, even though President Obama supports the repeal, his Justice Department defended the law before Phillips. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has said he believes Congress should not implement a repeal until the military first completes a study on how to integrate gay men and lesbians into the ranks.

The ruling comes just over a month after U.S. District Judge Vaughn R. Walker in San Francisco said a California's voter-approved ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional.

And earlier this summer, a judge in Boston said the federal Defense of Marriage Act violated the Constitution. The act denies federal benefits to same-sex couples even in states where their marriages are legal.

All the decisions will begin working their way through the federal appeals court system.

It is expected that the Supreme Court at some point will be called upon to decide the same-sex marriage issues. But "don't ask, don't tell" might be disposed of through the political process.

"It could well be the catalyst that is needed to drop some of the opposition we've seen in the Senate" to holding a vote, said Aubrey Sarvis, executive director of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a group that has been lobbying Congress to end "don't ask, don't tell."

"This should not linger in the courts. It should be resolved by Congress, this year," Sarvis said.

The California case was brought by the Log Cabin Republicans, a 19,000-member group that includes current and former military members.

"As an American, a veteran and an Army Reserve officer, I am proud the court ruled that the arcane Don't Ask Don't Tell statute violates the Constitution," said Log Cabin Republicans Executive Director R. Clarke Cooper.

Dan Woods, lead attorney for the case, added, "This is a major victory in the fight for equality and means that military service will be available to all Americans, regardless of their sexual orientation."

There was no immediate reaction from the Justice Department. During the trial, attorney Paul G. Freeborne had challenged the standing of the Log Cabin Republicans to contest the act. He also argued that the policy is a political decision to be made by Congress and not judges.

Phillips criticized the government's defense in her ruling, writing, "It again must be noted that Defendants called no witnesses, put on no affirmative case, and only entered into evidence the legislative history of the Act."

On the other side, she said, the military was hurt by discharging servicemembers who had performed well in combat and other situations, and it had forced gays in the ranks to hide their true identities, denied their ability to have personal relationships and kept them from expressing themselves even in private communications.

"In order to justify the encroachment on these rights, defendants faced the burden at trial of showing the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Act was necessary to significantly further the government's important interests in military readiness and unit cohesion," Phillips wrote. "Defendants failed to meet that burden."

Citizens Board: Atlanta Police Mistreated Gay Bar Patrons

Board Recommends Action Against 24 Atlanta Cops

A citizen oversight panel said action should be taken against a number of Atlanta Police officers for improperly detaining dozens of people at a gay bar raid.

The raid took place in September 2009, when officers from the APD Vice Squad and Red Dog unit ordered patrons of the Atlanta Eagle gay bar to lie face down on the floor for up to an hour.

Review Board Executive Director Cristina Beamud confirmed to CBS Atlanta in an e-mail that the board wants Atlanta Police officials to take action against the 24 officers involved in the raid.

The board decided recommendations for disciplining specific officers should wait until investigators determine the exact roles of each officer.

But according to AtlantaUnfiltered.com, board chairman Joy Morrissey said the maximum penalty under APD personnel rules — a three-day suspension — would not be enough.

The board also said supervising officers should be disciplined for allowing officers to use profane and homophobic language during the raid, the board said.

Schwarzenegger continues to reject Prop 8 appeal

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is holding firm in his refusal to defend the state's same-sex marriage ban in court.

Lawyers for Schwarzenegger said in a letter Wednesday that the governor has authority to refuse to

appeal a federal judge's ruling that overturned Proposition 8. The letter was filed with the California Supreme Court.

It came in response to an effort by a conservative legal group to persuade the court to force Schwarzenegger and Attorney General Jerry Brown to challenge the Aug. 4 ruling that declared the voter-approved ban unconstitutional.

Proposition 8's sponsors have appealed. But doubts have been raised about whether its members have the authority to do so because as ordinary citizens they are not responsible for enforcing marriage laws.

Protecting gay rights

Giving federal workplace protection to gay, lesbian and transgender employees is a necessary step.

Los Angeles Times September 9, 2010 Editorial

The heated legal and political battle over Proposition 8 might suggest that marriage equality is the last barrier to full participation in society for gays and lesbians. In fact, blatant discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation remains permissible in workplaces across the nation, an injustice Congress must rectify.

Thanks to landmark laws such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, most workers must be judged on their abilities and job performance, not on irrelevant personal characteristics such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or disability. Gay, lesbian and transgendered employees, however, are unprotected by the federal government.

That would change with enactment of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. In both its House and Senate versions, ENDA would prohibit discrimination in private and public employment on the basis of "actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity." It would also forbid employers from segregating gay, lesbian and transgendered employees from the rest of the workforce. Also prohibited would be retaliation against any person who reported a case of discrimination or opposed a discriminatory practice.

The bill incorporates exemptions in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for religious organizations, a political necessity that is also consistent with the 1st Amendment's protection of the free exercise of religion. Less defensible is an exclusion for the U.S. military, but that concession would become less important with abolition of the inhumane "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia have prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Twelve of those states, including California, and D.C. also ban discrimination based on gender identity. But federal protection is necessary even in those states to provide gays, lesbians and transgendered people with the same range of legal remedies available to other victims of discrimination. In

states with no protection, ENDA obviously is even more vital.

There has been heartening progress toward greater acceptance of gays, lesbians and transgendered people in this society. But that doesn't render workplace protection for gays and lesbians unnecessary any more than a decline in racial and religious discrimination lessens the importance of existing anti-discrimination policies. In fact, laws against discrimination can shape public attitudes toward discrimination even in the private sphere.

Democratic leaders in both houses should expedite consideration of the bill as this Congress nears its conclusion. If they don't, President Obama should press them to act. Gays, lesbians and transgendered employees are still subjected to unequal treatment and harassment. Enacting ENDA is a moral as well as a political imperative.

**PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA
2010-2011**

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