



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, April 17, 2011
2:30–5:30 PM

At the April meeting, we will be showing the documentary *Out in the Silence*, which is described as “the announcement of filmmaker Joe Wilson’s wedding to another man ignites a firestorm of controversy in his small hometown and a plea for help from the mother of a gay teen being tormented at school” and “following the story of a small American town confronting a firestorm of controversy ignited by a same-sex wedding announcement in the local newspaper, this gripping documentary illustrates the challenges of being an outsider in a conservative rural community and the change that is possible when courageous people break the silence and search for common ground.” The video will be followed by a time for discussion. 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 Meeting

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.

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.

BGMC Spaghetti Dinner

Dennis Stuart

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus will host an All-You-Can-Eat Spaghetti Dinner, featuring live performances of the Chorus, on Sunday, May 1st from 4:00 to 8:00. The dinner and festivities will be held at Boomerang's Bar & Grill, 995 Niagara Street, Buffalo 14213.

Advance tickets are only \$10 per person and may be purchased at www.buffalogaymenschorus.org or from any Chorus member or by calling the Chorus office at 883-1277. Tickets at the door will be \$15.

Attendees should feel free to arrive at any time as dinners – which include spaghetti, meatballs, salad & rolls – and entertainment will go on continuously. There will be basket raffles, CDs for sale, a theme tray auction and a cash bar. All proceeds are to benefit the BGMC.

Lifetime Members

Frank Carnevale & James Pilc
Mary Hewitt
Clarice Lechner-Hyman
Bob & Lesley Kearney

Sponsoring Members

Sheila Dickinson
Russel Hurlburt & John Percy
Ronda Marvel
Mark Meyer
Bob Patterson
James & Mary Ellen Walsh

Supporting Members

Anonymous (3)
Wendy Christophersen
John & Diane Covert
Babs Conant & Camille Cox
Shawn Cribari
Loretta & Richard Guwca
Tom Gregg
Paula Welch Jack
Donald Kreger & Ron Ehmke
Jeffrey McConnell & Fred Dansereau
Roger Seifert & Dennis Stuart
Kathleen & George Steigauf
Linda Stefaniak
P. J. Tomczyk

NY Push For Marriage Equality

There is a serious push being put on to pass a marriage equality bill in New York State. We are encouraging our members to contact their state senator and assembly member and encourage them to support the passage of a marriage equality bill that will expand marriage rights to same-sex couples. The letter doesn't have to be long and can even be handwritten. A simple statement of how this issue affects you and your family can help to make a difference.

Cuomo to LGBT Leaders: I Expect Vote on Marriage Equality in 'Six to Eight Weeks or Maybe Sooner'

Chris Rovzar, New York Magazine

According to Marriage Equality New York head Ron Zacchi, Governor Cuomo has told state LGBT leaders he expects a vote on a marriage-equality bill in the State Senate in "six to eight weeks, or maybe sooner." Even though the math doesn't look good for such a bill's passage (advocates would need to swing a small number of Republicans, all of whom voted against the bill last time), Cuomo is fresh off strong-arming the state legislature into a budget deal, and he still has sky-high popularity strengthening his hand. If there's a vote in the time frame Cuomo predicts, it will come at about the same time that the Empire State Pride Agenda shepherds hundreds of New Yorkers to lobby their legislators for Equality and Justice Day on May 9. If the legislators listen to them, to Cuomo, or the rest of the 57 percent of New Yorkers who support civil marriage rights for gay couples, the bill just might have a shot.

Neutrality Not Enough to Stop Anti-Gay Bigotry

Richard Cohen, President, Southern Poverty Law Center

Recently, Minnesota's largest school district was beset by tragedy. A string of student suicides – some likely related to anti-gay bullying, according to community advocates – had rocked the Anoka-Hennepin School District. When several other student suicides made headlines across the country in September, it only underscored the urgent need to address the rampant anti-gay bullying and prejudice in our schools.

Inaction or denial would only invite more tragedy.

That's why the Southern Poverty Law Center traveled to Minnesota last fall. They met with community members about the situation. And when they hosted a screening of our new documentary, *Bullied*, more than 2,000 people gathered for the event in Minneapolis.

People are deeply worried about what is happening in the school district – and for good reason. School officials have not been realistically addressing anti-gay bigotry and harassment. The district's curriculum policy instructs teachers to remain "neutral" on matters

regarding sexual orientation, but that's not what's been happening. In reality, the fear of being at odds with this policy has prevented teachers from standing firm against bullying, regardless of the anti-bullying policies in place.

Teachers are silenced. Students are targeted. And we shouldn't be surprised by the devastation that follows.

Quite simply, this "neutrality" policy is neutral in theory, one-sided in fact and dangerous in practice. You need only to look at recent events at Champlin Park High School to understand the point.

Desiree Shelton and Sarah Lindstrom were elected by their classmates to serve on the school's "Snow Days" royalty court. Traditionally, the chosen students walk as couples during a procession. Desiree and Sarah wanted to participate as a same-sex couple, but school officials made changes to the event to prevent them from walking together.

It was a stunning display of hypocrisy for a school district that's supposedly "neutral" in matters regarding sexual orientation. Officials had plenty of hollow excuses and empty reasons for their decision. But the real reason was obvious: They were bowing to bigotry.

Rather than stand up to it – and support the decision of the students – they surrendered.

When any form of bigotry gains a foothold in a community, we must act. That's why the SPLC – along with the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the law firm Faegre & Benson – filed a lawsuit on behalf of the young women. Less than 24 hours later, a settlement agreement had been reached with school officials.

As a result, Desiree and Sarah walked hand-in-hand as a couple to the cheers of their classmates.

The school and the district deserve a lot of credit for doing the right thing in the end. But possibly the most encouraging aspect of this incident – and for the future of this community – was the response of the student body. At a high school in a district that has seen so much tragedy, students overwhelmingly supported the rights of their lesbian classmates. They looked at these two young women and saw fellow students they wanted to honor as school "royalty." They saw two people deserving dignity, respect and, yes, even the right to walk together into an assembly as a couple.

And when it looked as if their classmates would be denied, the students didn't follow the example of school officials and bow to the pressure of prejudice. They banded together, carried posters and took a stand for their classmates.

As one student told a reporter: "We're a pretty respectful school. Our rule is just let people be who they are."

And that's hope for the future.

(Editor's Note: The SPLC Winter 2010 issue of *Intelligence Report* had articles on LGBT hate crimes and anti-gay myths. You can find this issue at:

<http://tinyurl.com/splcLGBTwork>)

Kay Patterson

Licensed Mental Health Counselor

Counseling for Change

5820 Main Street, Suite 203, Williamsville, NY 14221

Phone: (716) 838-1236 Cell: (716) 583-4902



Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Live Out Loud

Friday June 10 (8 pm) - First Presbyterian Church
One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY

Saturday June 11 (8 pm) - Orchard Park Pres. Church
4369 South Buffalo St, Orchard Park, NY

Sunday June 12 (7 pm) - Temple Beth Zion
805 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY

Tickets & info: 883-1277

www.buffalogaymenschorus.org

Gentle Moves

MOVEMENT FOR THE MIND. BODY. AND SOUL

Suzanne Evans

716.574.5503

suz32dana@yahoo.com

Dance Inspired Therapeutic Movement Classes

Group Classes:

St. John's Grace Episcopal Church

51 Colonial Circle

Buffalo, NY 14222

Private lessons available



For Younger Class Of Political Operatives, Gay Rights Issues Often Pit Them Against Their Candidates

Sam Stein, Huffington Post

It's become a political truism to say that there is a generational divide with respect to gay rights, as polling data bears out the fact that younger voters, even conservatives, are far more in favor of same-sex marriage than their elders.

But as the 2012 election, particularly the Republican presidential primary, takes shape, that divide -- even between some presumptive candidates and their younger staffers -- has been drawn more sharply into focus.

In early March, James Richardson, who served as online communications manager for the Republican National Committee in the 2008 cycle, was signed up by

Gov. Haley Barbour (R-Miss.) to serve as a communications adviser for his Political Action Committee and, likely, his presidential campaign. A well-respected operative within GOP circles, Richardson had run a personal blog in between those two stints. And at some point in time -- more than two years ago -- he argued that the Republican Party should embrace the philosophical concepts (and political benefits) of gay adoption and gay marriage.

"[T]he Republican Party is at a defining crossroads," Richardson wrote on his site. "Now is not the time for an echo chamber. And homosexual demagoguery is not the answer to the Party's woes, particularly when gay men and women represent the only demographic in which John McCain bested President Bush (27% to 19% based on exit polling)."

Such musings are increasingly common among younger conservatives. But, a Democratic source pointed out, after Richardson signed up with Barbour -- who has long opposed gay marriage -- his post was removed, replaced with a "no results found" message.

Richardson declined to comment for this report, but stressed that he took the site down of his own volition, not at the behest of anyone in Barbour's orbit. He could have kept it up, but that would have produced the awkward specter for a candidate and a top staffer arguing opposing sides of a prominent social issue. Communications aides, after all, are supposed to be the messengers, not the message.

Of course, it's not groundbreaking that a campaign hand has a policy disagreement with the boss. But the removal of Richardson's post underscores a far more telling feature of the modern Republican Party: A large chunk of the GOP operative class has no problem with expanding gay rights, but those staffers nonetheless work for candidates who are principally opposed to such moves.

Steve Schmidt, who managed John McCain's presidential campaign in 2008, waited until after the election to announce that he not only supports gay marriage but also believed the Republican Party would be better off supporting it in its platform. Ken Mehlman, who served as the campaign manager for the 2004 presidential reelection campaign of George W. Bush -- in which the prospect of gay marriage served as a key, divisive social issue -- came out of the closet only after removing himself thoroughly from politics.

Below campaigns' top tiers, such ideological differences are even more common. Liz Mair, who worked alongside Richardson at the Republican National Committee and helped the McCain campaign, joined the firm Hynes Communications after the 2008 election. While at that post, she shifted between the worlds of commentary, campaign consulting and issue advocacy -- the latter of which landed her a gig on the advisory board of the Republican group GOProud, which supports expanding gay rights.

For Mair and other operatives, such juggling has its benefits, not least of which is the sense of ideological liberation that comes from being off the trail. But it also has a self-censoring effect -- essentially discouraging so-called "campaign gypsies" from divulging personal political beliefs lest they be used to haunt their next candidate employer.

"I'd love to live in a world where my political views corresponded 100 percent with those of any given candidate out there, but the reality is, the best-case scenario is that as an operative, you agree with your candidate on 90 to 99 percent of the issues, and 100 percent on those that matter most to you," Mair told The Huffington Post. "I don't think there's ever a situation where someone agrees 100 percent on everything, though. Certainly, I've never been lucky enough to identify a candidate with whom I do agree 100 percent."

Indeed, so far only a few candidates in the prospective Republican presidential field have even hinted an openness toward gay marriage. Former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman endorsed civil unions in his state, and more recently, former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer said he was fine with states legalizing gay marriage, though he still supports the federal policy that defines marriage as between a man and a woman.

To a lesser extent, the same dynamic that Mair and Richardson face is true on the Democratic side of the aisle. Chris Kofinis, a longtime operative who helped encourage the retail giant Walmart to embrace policies of equality towards gay employees, now serves as the chief of staff to Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), the only Democrat vote against a repeal of the army's "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

A number of White House staffers, meanwhile, admit in private that they support gay marriage -- a position that President Barack Obama has kept at arm's length. Steve Hildebrand, Obama's openly gay former deputy campaign chairman, has walked a fine line with respect to urging the administration to be bolder in its gay rights agenda and openly criticizing its meekness.

"[T]his is a bipartisan issue," Mair said, "but it's also an issue that has arisen because of the kinds of functions that must be performed in campaigns these days, and the fact that for various reasons, operatives are more in the public eye as personalities in their own right than perhaps they once were."

Gay Judicial Nominee Sails Through Breezy Hearing

Chris Johnson, The Washington Blade

A New York attorney who could be the first openly gay man to serve on the federal bench breezed through a confirmation hearing on Wednesday during which faced only softball questions from Democratic senators.

J. Paul Oetken, nominated by President Obama in January to serve as U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York, faced no opposition during a Senate

Judiciary Committee hearing that only Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.) attended.

In his opening statement, Oetken mentioned his partner, Charkrit "Makky" Pratayot, was in the room supporting him in addition to his brother and sister. Oetken said his father wanted to attend the hearing, but was unable because he was recovering from surgery.

Schumer recommended the nomination of Oetken to the president in September. During the hearing, the senator said he values "moderation and judicial modesty" in judicial nominees. Schumer questioned Oetken, along with the other three nominees giving testimony before the panel, what those words mean to him as well as what qualities he thinks are most important in a judge.

In response, Oetken said he agreed that moderation and judicial modesty are "crucial characteristics" for someone sitting on the bench. The nominee said the notion of judicial modesty has two parts: following precedent and decisions from higher courts as well as only deciding a case before a judge and not going beyond the controversy at hand.

"There are learned opinions that are decided for judges ... in the Second Circuit and the Supreme Court [that] govern all decisions in the district court in the Southern District," Oetken said.

Prior to his nomination as a federal judge, Oetken was practicing law at Debevoise and Plimpton. Since 2004, has served as associate general counsel at Cablevision. From 1999 to 2001, Oetken was associate counsel to President Clinton and specialized in First Amendment issues, presidential appointments, ethics, civil rights, and legal policy.

Oetken is also no stranger to roles as an LGBT advocate. The nominee has been involved with Lambda Legal and the American Civil Liberties Union. Additionally, Oetken co-authored a U.S. Supreme Court friend-of-the-court brief in *Lawrence v. Texas*, which struck down sodomy laws throughout the country.

In his opening statement, Schumer commended Oetken for his qualifications and reputation for moderation, but also noted the significance of having the first openly gay male judge to sit on the federal bench.

"I also look for candidates who bring diverse views and backgrounds to the bench," Schumer said. "Paul is the first openly gay man to go through an Article III confirmation process in this country, which makes this moment historic. But long after today, what the history books will note about Paul is certain to be his achievements as a fair and brilliant judge."

Along with Oetken, the committee considered during the hearing three other nominations: Bernice Bouie Donald, who's been nominated to become U.S. circuit judge for the Sixth Circuit; Paul Engelmayer, who's also been nominated to become a U.S. district judge for the Southern District of New York; and Ramona Villagomez

Manglona, who's been nominated to become a judge for the district court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

Whether Oetken becomes the first openly gay male federal judge remains to be seen. Obama in January also nominated another openly gay man to the federal bench, Edward DuMont. The president tapped him to serve as an appellate judge and to sit on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

Whether the Senate first grants Oetken or DuMont confirmation will determine who becomes the first openly gay male to serve on the federal bench. Should DuMont receive confirmation, he would also become the openly LGBT federal appellate judge.

While Oetken could be the first openly gay male to serve on the federal bench, he wouldn't be the first openly LGBT person. In 1994, President Clinton nominated Deborah Batts, an out lesbian, to serve as federal judge also for the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of New York.

Following the hearing, Schumer acknowledged to the *Washington Blade* the significance of the nomination of Oetken and he commended the nominee for his other qualities. "There are three standards when I nominate judges: excellence – they should be legally excellent and not a political hack; moderation – I don't like judges too far right; I don't like them too far left because they tend to make law; and third is diversity in all its ramifications," Schumer said. "I've worked very hard to diversify the bench and find nominees that meet all three criteria. I'm very proud to nominate Mr. Oetken because it shocked me, basically shocked me, when I heard no openly gay man had been nominated to the federal bench anywhere, and there are hundreds of judges."

Schumer said the timing for when the panel will consider reporting the nomination to the floor is up to Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.). Still, Schumer said he hopes the vote will come "as soon as possible."

Erica Chabot, a Judiciary Committee spokesperson, said senators have up to March 23 to submit written follow-up questions for Oetken. After the responses are returned to the panel, the chairman can list the nomination for a vote during an upcoming meeting.

Support for Gay Marriage Reaches a Milestone

Gary Langer, ABC News

More than half of Americans say it should be legal for gays and lesbians to marry, a first in nearly a decade of polls by ABC News and *The Washington Post*.

This milestone result caps a dramatic, long-term shift in public attitudes. From a low of 32 percent in a 2004 survey of registered voters, support for gay marriage has grown to 53 percent today. Forty-four percent are opposed, down 18 points from that 2004 survey.

The issue remains divisive; as many adults "strongly" oppose gay marriage as strongly support it, and

opposition rises to more than 2-1 among Republicans and conservatives and 3-1 among evangelical white Protestants, a core conservative group. But opposition to gay marriage has weakened in these groups from its levels a few years ago, and support has grown sharply among others – notably, among Catholics, political moderates, people in their 30s and 40s and men.

The results reflect a changing albeit still polarized climate. Gay marriage has been legalized in five states and the District of Columbia, by court ruling or legislative action, since 2003, while many other states prohibit it. The Obama administration late last month said it would no longer defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act, a 1996 law banning federal recognition of gay marriages.

While younger adults and liberals remain at the forefront of support for gay marriage, the new results underscore its expansion. In an ABC/Post poll five and a half years ago, for example, under-30s were the sole age group to give majority support to gay marriage, at 57 percent. Today it's 68 percent in that group – but also 65 percent among people in their 30s, up a remarkable 23 points from the 2005 level; and 52 percent among those in their 40s, up 17 points.

Adults 50 and older remain more skeptical, but even that's seen change. Most notably, 33 percent of seniors now say gay marriage should be legal, up from 18 percent five years ago.

Trends among other groups are equally striking. Compared with five years ago support for gay marriage has grown by 10 points among women, but by 18 points among men; it's now at parity. Support has grown by 17 points among Democrats, but also by 13 points among independents, to a clear majority, 58 percent, in the crucial political center. And it's 63 percent among moderates, up 21 points.

The poll has an insufficient sample size to evaluate individual racial minority groups reliably. However, support for gay marriage is essentially identical among whites, 53 percent, and nonwhites, 54 percent. That's up by 13 points among whites – and by 20 among nonwhites.

Support is up by a striking 23 points among white Catholics, often a swing group and one that's been ready, in many cases, to disregard church positions on political or social issues. But they have company: Fifty-seven percent of non-evangelical white Protestants now also support gay marriage, up 16 points from its level five years ago. Evangelicals, as noted, remain very broadly opposed. But even in their ranks, support for gay marriage is up by a double-digit margin.

This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone March 10-13, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,005 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. The results from the full survey have a 3.5-point error margin. The survey was produced for ABC News by Langer Research Associates

of New York, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Colorado House Panel Kills Bill On Civil Unions On 6-5 Party-Line Vote

Lynn Bartels, The Denver Post

A Colorado state House committee killed a civil-unions bill that would have given gay couples many of the rights and responsibilities of marriage.

The bill failed, as expected, on a party-line vote, with six Republicans voting against sending the measure to another committee and five Democrats voting in favor.

Dozens of Coloradans packed the Old Supreme Court Chambers for the hearing, which began shortly before 2 p.m., while others listened in other rooms set up for the overflow. The testimony on Senate Bill 172 – at times, part gay group therapy, part Bible study – continued until 8:30 p.m., when the committee began debating the bill's merits.

Parents, partners and pastors testified in favor of the bill, which was sponsored by two Denver Democrats who are gay, Rep. Mark Ferrandino and Sen. Pat Steadman.

"This is not a radical concept," Ferrandino said. "It's a mainstream concept... This does not end marriage."

He said that it was difficult to hear testimony against the bill from people who think "my life is wrong" but that those opponents had a right to their say.

"What makes me saddest," Ferrandino said, "is there were people on that committee who were, I think, supportive in their hearts but weren't willing to stand up against the leadership and the far-right fringe of their party." He added: "It's not a matter of if; it's a matter of when."

Bill supporters had worried about the House Judiciary Committee: Three of the six Republicans are from El Paso County and were on record as opposing civil unions. It wasn't the committee Ferrandino would have picked to hear the bill, he admitted when the proposal was assigned to Judiciary. The motion was to send the bill to Appropriations, a standard motion for a number of hearings.

Ferrandino and other bill supporters maintained that if they could have gotten the bill to the House floor, they had the votes to get it passed. Republicans have only a 33-32 edge in the House.

Ferrandino's partner, Greg Wertsch, and Ferrandino's twin sister, Nicole McWhirter, testified in favor of the bill. She said she was uncomfortable when her brother came out but proud that her children think nothing of "Uncle Mark" and "Uncle Greg" being gay. Wertsch, who has been with Ferrandino for 10 years, talked about their efforts to adopt a child. "I love you, Mark," Wertsch said, causing Ferrandino to tear up.

In addition, Barb Nash, the partner of Rep. Sue Schafer, D-Wheat Ridge, testified for the bill. "I did not choose my sexuality, but I have chosen to build a life with

my partner for the last 20 years, four months and 15 days," she said.

An unusual number of witnesses hailed from Loveland, which was no accident. Reps. Brian DelGrosso and B.J. Nikkel, both of Loveland, were viewed as the GOP lawmakers on the House Judiciary Committee most likely to vote for the measure. One witness said DelGrosso told him at a town-hall meeting that if the bill passed, it would benefit someone in DelGrosso's family. DelGrosso later said his uncle is gay.

The other Republicans on the committee are Bob Gardner, Mark Barker and Mark Waller, all of Colorado Springs, and Jerry Sonnenberg of Sterling. Barker pointed out that voters in 2006 already spoke on the issue, voting against a civil-unions-type referendum and a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. The voters, he said, should decide the issue.

Rep. Claire Levy, D-Boulder, spoke in favor of the bill, saying it doesn't take anything away from traditional couples but would give so much to gays who want equal protections under the law.

Rep. Christine Duran, D-Denver, urged the committee to vote on the right side of history.

Thursday was Steadman's 47th birthday, and he briefly was in the back of the hearing room listening to testimony.

The testimony against the bill was less sexually graphic than during the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the measure in early March, when vivid descriptions of anal sex embarrassed bill opponents. But there were a number of references Thursday to the Bible.

Before Thursday's hearing, in a prayer vigil on the east side of the Capitol, opponents relayed a message that civil unions and same-sex marriage are wrong.

"I believe that to change the definition of marriage in Colorado law is not the right way to go," said Sen. Kevin Lundberg, R-Berthoud, who voted against the bill when it was heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee. A much larger rally in support of civil unions took place on the west steps of the Capitol. Denver mayoral candidates Michael Hancock, Doug Linkhart and Carol Boigon were among those at the rally.

Gay Sailor: Lemoore Panel Says He Can Stay

Lewis Griswold, The Fresno Bee

A gay sailor at Lemoore Naval Air Station said a Navy panel apparently agreed with his lawyer's argument that "don't ask, don't tell" is dead.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Derek Morado, 26, said he was "ecstatic" after the administrative panel's unanimous vote Thursday not to recommend his discharge from the Navy. Lt. Alana Garas, a Navy spokeswoman at the Pentagon, said the panel's vote would not be made public under federal privacy laws. The last time a service

member was discharged for being gay was in November, the Pentagon said.

A gay rights group that publicized Morado's case said the panel's vote sets a precedent for the rest of the military. "The best part is, he doesn't have to have this dark shadow over his head," said Robin McGehee of Fresno, a director of GetEQUAL.

The three-member panel of two officers and a senior petty officer met for several hours to hear arguments and evidence, then held a closed-door meeting for 25 minutes before announcing their unanimous vote, Morado said.

Although happy with the vote, Morado said he "was a little bit surprised," largely because military personnel typically support existing policy.

The Navy Personnel Command will now review the panel's decision, but Morado said his lawyer assured him the command can't reverse the decision and is unlikely to return it for further review. If the panel had recommended discharging Morado, the decision would have required approval by the secretary of the Navy.

Morado, trained in bomb assembly and storage, said he was given other duties on base after being outed. He leaves today for a new assignment in San Diego.

Under the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, the military could not discriminate against homosexuals and lesbians who remained in the closet, but could discharge anyone who is openly gay.

Morado, who attended a Sacramento high school, said he knew he had to hide his homosexuality when he enlisted in 2003. But Morado was written up for misconduct in 2009 after another sailor saw a photo of him kissing a man that was posted on his MySpace page.

Late last year, President Barack Obama signed into law a repeal of the controversial policy, but it has yet to take effect. But the new law gave his Navy lawyer a winning argument, Morado said. "Our angle was that the upcoming repeal of 'don't ask, don't tell' is putting the old policy out the door soon," he said.

No date has been set for the repeal to go into effect, but the branches are undergoing training in the new policy, military officials said.

Going legal and getting more business?

Danielle Douglas, The Washington Post

Orders started streaming in at Da Vinci's Florist & Lighting in Silver Spring in the months following the legalization of same-sex marriage in the District last March.

The store's wedding department manager, Diana Skenderovic, began marketing to couples on GayWeddings.com, after attending the city's first gay and lesbian wedding expo that May, and quickly saw results. This year, she said, is shaping up even better than the last. Business from same-sex couples is up nearly 40 percent.

Da Vinci's is among a number of local wedding vendors to have witnessed an increase in business since the District legalized gay marriage, supporting predictions that the law would benefit the region's economy.

"There seems to be some windfall for our small businesses engaged in the event and wedding industry," said Jeffrey D. Richardson, director of the D.C. Mayor's Office of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Affairs. "There is potential for a real long-term economic impact."

A 2009 study by the nonprofit Williams Institute projected that the Washington region would rack up more than \$52.2 million in revenue over three years. None of the jurisdictions in the Washington area, however, is tracking the current business impact.

Kathryn Hamm, president of GayWeddings.com in Arlington, said increased Web traffic to District vendors last year helped make the city one of the top markets on her company's site. Hamm pointed out, however, that Virginia was the fifth most visited market, while Maryland was the 10th, a sign, she said, of the broader economic benefit of the law.

"There is opportunity out there for thoughtful vendors, who look at what their business objectives are and what the opportunity is in specific markets," she said. "This region is exciting because it's so diverse."

The number of vendors from the region on GayWeddings.com, one of the largest such directories in the country, has also grown tremendously in the past year. Hamm witnessed a 35 percent increase in D.C. businesses, a 28 percent uptick from Maryland companies and a 24 percent jump in vendors from Virginia.

Aside from Web sites courting the gay couples, a crop of wedding expos has sprung up within the past year to help caterers, deejays and photographers get a slice of the pie. Just this past weekend, the Washington Court Hotel hosted an expo for Marry Me in D.C., a local organization run by wedding officiants.

"Most of the vendors I've spoken to really want to work with same-sex couples but don't know how to reach the community," said Deborah Cummings-Thomas, co-founder of Marry Me in D.C. "The expo allows them face time with couples."

Weddings are certainly a profitable business. The average heterosexual wedding in the United States cost \$24,066 in 2010, according to industry research firm the Wedding Report. While there is no equivalent data for same-sex weddings, the Williams Institute study reported that gay couples in Massachusetts spent an average \$7,400.

Skenderovic says Da Vinci's has provided services for various sizes of same-sex weddings, though most of them have been smaller ceremonies of under 100 people.

Intown Uptown Inn in the District, which has played host to some 20 same-sex weddings in the past year, many with fewer than 40 people.

"Many couples bring those that are closest to them, especially when they're from out of town," Gartrell said. "This has been a great added revenue source."

PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA 2010-2011	
Board of Directors	
<i>President:</i>	Kristian Rickard
<i>Vice-President:</i>	John Covert
<i>Secretary:</i>	Michele A. Perry
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Jeffrey J. McConnell
<i>Directors:</i>	Suzanne Evans
Newsletter Staff	
<i>Editor & Design:</i>	Jeffrey J. McConnell
<i>Duplication:</i>	Jeffrey J. McConnell
<i>Distribution:</i>	Paula Jack

Please circle item(s) ▽	JOIN US!	PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA
Please join our PFLAG chapter to support our mission at whatever level membership you can:		
▽ Lifetime Membership	\$ 500	▽ New ▽ Renewal ▽ Change of Address
▽ Benefactor Membership	\$ 250	
▽ Sponsoring Membership	\$ 100	▽ Advertising member (Business Card Advertisement \$100. Annually for 10 issues)
▽ Supporting Membership	\$ 50	
▽ Household Membership	\$ 30	
▽ Newsletter Subscription Only	\$ 15	▽ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities
Donations of \$50.00 or more can be included in the chapter newsletter. Please circle. OK to publish ▽ Do not publish ▽		
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 ▽		
Make checks payable to PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara and mail to: P.O.Box 617 Buffalo, NY 14207		
PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara is a non-profit 501(c)3 and donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law. <u>Please write clearly</u>		
Name (s) _____		Date _____
Address _____		City _____
State _____	Zip _____	Phone (____) _____
E-mail address _____		