



Buffalo / Niagara

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Buffalo, NY 14207

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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.

Monthly Meeting

Sunday, June 19, 2011
2:30–5:30 PM

The June meeting will be a self-help sharing meeting. 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.

Pride Parade

Join us on June 5th for the Pride Parade
See details on page 2

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.

It's a Parade

On Sunday June 5th, Buffalo will be having its LGBT Pride Celebration. As part of that celebration, there will be a parade that will include representatives from many organizations and businesses. PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara will be among those marching in the parade.

The parade is an amazing event and PFLAG's participation in that parade is critical. The LGBT people who are in the parade or watching from the sidelines are always thrilled to see PFLAG present especially those who may not have a good relationship with their families. Seeing parents, family, and friends who are supportive enough to be part of the parade can be uplifting to those people whose own relatives may not be able to participate. But this positive energy goes both ways and those who have participated in the past have been

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Jeffrey McConnell & Fred Dansereau
Kristian Rickard and Leanne Smith
Roger Seifert & Dennis Stuart
Kathleen & George Steigauf
Linda Stefaniak

overwhelmed by the response to their participation. Though parents, families, and friends who are accepting may not feel it is a big deal, they are quite moved to see the outpouring of emotion from those who are watching PFLAG pass by.

We would like to have a big contingent at the parade this year. If you would like to participate or have any questions, please call the helpline. The parade will start at Elmwood and Lafayette and travel toward downtown Buffalo. If you would like to participate but can't walk the parade route, please call us because we are arranging for cars for those members who want to be there but can't walk. We hope to see you there.

PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara News

On May 15, 2011, PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara held its Annual Meeting. At that time, Suzanne Evans was elected as Vice President and Michele Perry was elected as Secretary. Ann Carrier, Brian Carrier, and Brian LaBella were elected to the Board of Directors.

Gay Worker Wins Federal Ruling On Bias Lawsuit

Harlan Spector, The Cleveland Plain Dealer

A federal judge ruled on April 25th that a gay Cuyahoga County worker can claim constitutional protection in her job discrimination lawsuit against the county.

The ruling involves Shari Hutchinson, a lesbian who works for the county child support enforcement agency. Hutchinson sued the county in 2008, claiming she was denied promotions based on her sexual orientation, and that administrators retaliated against her when she complained.

U.S. District Judge James Gwin ruled that Hutchinson's claim falls under the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution, a decision that her lawyer described as far-reaching and unprecedented. "This potentially affects millions of gay government workers," said civil rights lawyer Avery Friedman. "The court ruled the 14th Amendment of the Constitution protects gay workers, and the case now proceeds to trial."

The burden is still on Hutchinson to prove her claims. She began working for the child-support enforcement agency in 2002, first as a support officer and then as an account clerk. Her suit claims the county passed her over for higher-paying positions in favor of less qualified straight people, though Hutchinson has a master's in business administration. In an effort to quash a promotion, one supervisor told his boss that Hutchinson "writes for a 'lesbian porno magazine' and her license plate, PACK8, has her lesbian 'pen name,'" the suit says.

The county denied her claims in court filings. Dave Lambert, civil division chief for Prosecutor Bill Mason, said he was pleased that the judge also ruled Monday that several of her claims are barred by a two-year statute of limitation.

The judge also rejected her complaint that the county discriminated by denying her a maximum \$100 credit for opting out the county health plan. The county gives married employees the \$100-per-paycheck credit, and \$50 to single employees with no dependents who opt out. Hutchinson, who opted out in favor of her domestic partner's insurance plan, said the "program's failure to provide a similar opt-out incentive for the county's homosexual employees amounts to sexual orientation discrimination."

Carrie Davis of the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio applauded the court for ruling that the constitution provides protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation. But she said a federal law prohibiting workplace bias based on sexual orientation is long overdue. "The judge wouldn't have had to make this decision had Congress changed the law a long time ago," Davis said.

A Sports Executive Leaves the Safety of His Shadow Life

By Dan Barry, The NY Times

Last month, in a Midtown office adorned with sports memorabilia, two longtime friends met for a private talk. David Stern, the commissioner of the National Basketball Association, sipped his morning coffee, expecting to be asked for career advice. Across from him sat Rick Welts, the president and chief executive of the Phoenix Suns, who had come to New York not to discuss careers, but to say, finally, I am gay.

In many work environments, this would qualify as a so-what moment. But until now, Mr. Welts, 58, who has spent 40 years in sports, rising from ball boy to N.B.A. executive to team president, had not felt comfortable enough in his chosen field to be open about his sexuality. His eyes welling at times, he also said that he planned to go public.

By this point, Mr. Welts had already traveled to Seattle to share his news with another friend, Bill Russell, one of the greatest basketball players ever and the recent recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He had also met with Val Ackerman, the founding president of the Women's National Basketball Association, in New York, and would soon be lunching in Phoenix with Steve Nash, the point guard and leader of the Suns and twice the N.B.A.'s most valuable player.

In these meetings and in interviews with The New York Times, Mr. Welts explained that he wants to pierce the silence that envelops the subject of homosexuality in men's team sports. He wants to be a mentor to gay people who harbor doubts about a sports career, whether on the court or in the front office. Most of all, he wants to feel whole, authentic.

"This is one of the last industries where the subject is off limits," said Mr. Welts, who stands now as a true rarity, a man prominently employed in professional men's

Kay Patterson

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Counseling for Change

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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

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team sports, willing to declare his homosexuality. "Nobody's comfortable in engaging in a conversation."

Dr. Richard Lapchick, the founder and director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, and the son of the basketball legend Joe Lapchick, agreed. "The fact that there's no other man who has done this before speaks directly to how hard it must be for Rick to do this now," he said.

Mr. Stern did not find the discussion with Mr. Welts awkward or even surprising; he had long known that his friend was gay, but never felt that he had license to broach the subject. Whatever I can do to help, the affably gruff commissioner said. He sensed the decades of anguish that had led the very private Mr. Welts to go public. After what needed to be said had been said, the two men headed for the door. And for the first time in their 30-year friendship, they hugged.

The very next day, the gifted Los Angeles Lakers forward Kobe Bryant, one of the faces of the N.B.A., responded to a technical foul by calling the referee a “faggot.”

A Feeling of Isolation

Rick Welts always knew. Growing up in Seattle, he was the industrious kid who landed a coveted job with the SuperSonics basketball team, first as a ball boy, then as an assistant trainer. By the time he went to the University of Washington, he had enough good-will clout to have Lenny Wilkens, then the coach of the Sonics, visit his fraternity for a chat.

But for all the fraternal respect this earned him, Mr. Welts felt isolated. What little he knew of gay culture was stereotypical, and unappealing, he recalled. “In my mind, it was effeminate: a way that I would not define as masculine.”

His growing responsibilities with the Sonics allowed him to miss class dances and other awkward obligations, but even alone, he felt out of place. Late one night, he walked two miles to slip a long confessional letter under the door of a young minister at his family’s church, but the well-intentioned minister could not help him. So he resigned himself to adapt, in private.

After college, Mr. Welts returned to the Sonics as assistant director of public relations, a position that came with a desk but not an office. His diligent omnipresence, from early morning to late evening, impressed the team’s coach at the time, the intimidating Bill Russell.

“Hey!” Mr. Russell would call. “White boy down the hall!”

And Mr. Welts would hustle up to do whatever was asked. The mutual respect that developed between the demanding basketball legend and the earnest employee gradually grew into a friendship close enough for Mr. Russell to judge him “a good teammate.”

Immersed in a business where manhood is often defined by on-court toughness and off-court conquest, Mr. Welts rose to become the public relations director for the Sonics, at a time when the team won its only championship, in 1979. He still ticks off the names of the starting five as though they were family: Dennis Johnson. John Johnson. Gus Williams. Jack Sikma. Lonnie Shelton.

An N.B.A. Career

Mr. Welts was eventually recruited by Mr. Stern, then a rising star in the N.B.A.’s front office, to become the league’s director of national promotions. That is, to ask businesses to invest marketing dollars in what was then, perhaps, the least popular professional sport.

Mr. Welts accepted. By this point, he had established a relationship with an architect he had met by chance in a Seattle restaurant in 1977. Soon Rick and Arnie became just another Manhattan couple, enjoying the live-and-let-live anonymity of the big city.

At the same time, Mr. Welts helped to raise the N.B.A.’s profile and profits. In 1984, for example, he created the N.B.A. All-Star Weekend, with a slam-dunk contest and an old-timers’ game, just as Mr. Stern became the league’s commissioner. And in 1997, he and Ms. Ackerman won accolades for their roles in establishing the W.N.B.A.

“In many ways, he had a complete understanding of the soul of the N.B.A.,” a grateful Mr. Stern said. The N.B.A., though, did not have a complete understanding of Rick Welts.

Although he had opened up to his supportive parents and to his younger, only sibling, Nancy, Mr. Welts feared that if he made his homosexuality public, it would impede his rising sports career. “It wasn’t talked about,” he said. “It wasn’t a comfortable subject. And it wasn’t my imagination. I was there.”

But this privacy came at great cost. In March 1994, his longtime partner, Arnie, died from complications related to AIDS, and Mr. Welts compartmentalized his grief, taking only a day or two off from work. His secretary explained to others that a good friend of his had died. Although she and Arnie had talked many times over the years, she and her boss had never discussed who, exactly, Arnie was.

Around 7:30 on the morning after Arnie’s death, Mr. Welts’s home telephone rang. “It was Stern,” he recalled. “And I totally lost it on the phone. You know. Uncle Dave [was] comforting.” Even then, homosexuality was never discussed — directly.

For weeks, Mr. Welts walked around the office, numb, unable to mourn his partner fully, or to share the anxiety of the weeklong wait for the results of an H.I.V. test, which came back negative. Sometime later, he began opening the envelopes of checks written in Arnie’s memory to the University of Washington, and here was one for \$10,000, from David and Dianne Stern, of Scarsdale, N.Y. In thanking Mr. Stern, Mr. Welts said they “did the guy thing,” communicating only through asides and silent stipulations.

“This was a loss that Rick had to suffer entirely on his own,” Mr. Stern said, reiterating that he was following Mr. Welts’s lead. “It’s just an indication of how screwed up all this is.”

When Mr. Welts left the N.B.A. in 1999, he was the league’s admired No. 3 man: executive vice president, chief marketing officer and president of N.B.A. Properties. By 2002, he was the president of the Suns who still kept his sexuality private — a decision that at times seemed wise, as when, in 2007, the former N.B.A. player John Amaechi announced that he was gay, prompting the former N.B.A. star Tim Hardaway to say that, as a rule, he hated gay people.

But again Mr. Welts paid a price. Two years ago, a 14-year relationship ended badly, in part because his partner finally rejected the shadow life that Mr. Welts required. “My high profile in this community, and my need

to have him be invisible,” Mr. Welts said, with clear regret. “That ultimately became something we couldn’t overcome.”

He began to think: here he was, in his mid-50s, and maybe he had sacrificed too much; and maybe he should open up about his sexuality, in a way that might help others. He kept a journal, sought advice from his sister and close friends, listed the pros and cons. He also had long talks with his widowed mother, Phyllis, in the months before she died of lung cancer, at 85, last fall. She encouraged him to do what he thought was best.

‘Of Course. Anything.’

On an overcast spring morning in Seattle, Bill Russell, wearing a green Boston Celtics cap adorned with a shamrock and No. 6 — his old jersey number — welcomed that white boy down the hall into his home, with Mr. Welts feeling as though he were about to slip another envelope under the door. They sat down near an autographed photograph of President Obama that thanked Mr. Russell “for the inspiration.”

Mr. Welts said what he wanted to say, and asked whether Mr. Russell, whose aversion to speaking with the news media is legendary, would agree to talk to a reporter for *The Times*. “Of course,” Mr. Russell recalled saying. “Anything.” As Mr. Welts shook the massive right hand offered to him, he felt a rush of nervous relief. “I was really now on this journey,” he said.

Three weeks later, he met Ms. Ackerman for a tearful Sunday brunch at a trendy restaurant in TriBeCa, during which she reassured him that the step he was taking was worth it. Then, the next morning, he met with Mr. Stern, a longtime mentor who, he thought, would likely be drawn into whatever discussion might follow his revelation.

“He was supportive but didn’t ask questions,” Mr. Welts recalled, adding, “And the litigator in him was already directing a response.”

Mr. Stern held back — a little. “What I didn’t say at the time was: I think there’s a good chance the world will find this unremarkable,” he recalled. “I don’t know if I was confusing my thoughts with my hopes.”

The next day, by coincidence, the N.B.A. began filming a public-service announcement against hurtful language. In the script, a young ballplayer calls another player’s basketball moves gay, after which two Phoenix Suns stars appear. Grant Hill: “Using gay to mean dumb or stupid — not cool.” Jared Dudley: “Not in my house — not anywhere.”

That night, Kobe Bryant called the referee the slur, forcing Mr. Stern once again to confront a culture in which the worst thing you can say about a man is to suggest that you think he is less than a man.

Mr. Stern quickly issued a \$100,000 fine against Mr. Bryant, who has apologized. When asked weeks later about the persistent perception of the N.B.A. and other men’s team sports as homophobic, Mr. Stern removed

his glasses, rubbed his eyes and said, “I think we’re going to get there.”

Meeting on the Mountain

Mr. Welts’s final stop before his public announcement was to a high-end restaurant perched on the side of Camelback Mountain, just outside Phoenix, for lunch with Steve Nash. A few weeks earlier, a mutual friend had given Mr. Nash the heads-up about what Mr. Welts wanted to discuss. Mr. Nash was surprised; he thought that everyone already knew that Mr. Welts was gay.

These two Suns employees are not friends, exactly, but they hold each other in high professional regard. “I just think it’s a shame, for all the obvious reasons, that this is a leap that he has to take,” Mr. Nash said.

With a spectacular view of Paradise Valley before them, the two basketball men talked about a topic rarely discussed in their work world. Mr. Welts asked for Mr. Nash’s support, and the ballplayer, honored by the request, said yes. Of course.

“Anyone who’s not ready for this needs to catch up,” Mr. Nash said later. “He’s doing anyone who’s not ready for this a favor.”

In Rarity, a Player Speaks Out for Gay Rights

By John Branch, *The NY Times*

Since September, advocates for same-sex marriage in New York have released 30-second videos of celebrities endorsing their cause. More than 30 have taken part, including the actors Julianne Moore and Sam Waterston, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and the former first daughter Barbara Bush. Former President Bill Clinton released a written statement of support, too.

Until now, supporters have come mostly from the worlds of politics, entertainment, theater and fashion. One type of New York celebrity was conspicuously absent: the athlete. Enter Rangers forward Sean Avery.

He recently recorded a video, becoming one of only a few active athletes in American team sports to voice support for gay rights, and is believed to be the first in New York to publicly advocate for same-sex marriage. No active male player in a major American team sport has declared his homosexuality, and homosexual slurs remain in use to insult opponents and officials.

Avery, a 31-year-old from Pickering, Ontario, has played nine seasons in the N.H.L. Known as a fashion-conscious, on-ice agitator, he has never been afraid of what others think of him. “The places I’ve played and lived the longest have been in West Hollywood, Calif., when I played for the L.A. Kings, and when I moved to New York, I lived in Chelsea for the first four years,” Avery said in a phone interview. “I certainly have been surrounded by the gay community. And living in New York and when you live in L.A., you certainly have a lot of gay friends.”

Avery, who lives in the SoHo section of Manhattan and keeps a home in Los Angeles, said some of those friends had wanted to marry, and he saw no reason they should not. "I'm certainly open to it," he said. "Maybe I can help, and I jumped at this opportunity."

The videos are part of the New Yorkers for Marriage Equality campaign, organized by the Human Rights Campaign, a national gay-rights organization. In December 2009, New York lawmakers voted against legalizing gay marriage, but polls show that a majority of people now support it.

"Sean Avery is a true leader on the ice and off," said Brian Ellner, who oversees the same-sex marriage campaign. "His commitment as the first New York professional athlete to campaign for marriage equality is an important step as we grow the majority of New Yorkers who already want all loving and committed New York couples to have the same rights."

Avery's 30-second video opens with a close-up of him looking into the camera. "I'm Sean Avery, and I'm a New Yorker for marriage equality," he says. "I treat everyone the way I expect to be treated, and that applies to marriage." That may be a bit of an inside joke. Avery has twice led the N.H.L. in penalty minutes and is known as one of the league's most unpopular antagonists.

Avery is shown in photographs wearing his Rangers uniform as music swells and words appear on the screen. "New Yorkers support full marriage equality," they read. "Do you?" Avery ends the video by saying, "Committed couples should be able to marry the person they love. Join me in supporting marriage equality."

Avery has long been viewed as someone unafraid to set off on his own. In the past few years, he has worked as an intern at Vogue magazine and been voted "most hated" player in the N.H.L. In the 2008 playoffs, he gained notoriety for waving his arms and stick in the face of Devils goalie Martin Brodeur. That tactic, which made hockey purists cringe, was quickly banned by the league.

Avery joins a short list of active athletes showing support of gay rights. Among them, Brendon Ayanbadejo, a linebacker for the Baltimore Ravens, recorded a video statement for Equality Maryland earlier this year.

Grant Hill and Jared Dudley of the N.B.A.'s Phoenix Suns recently recorded a public-service announcement for the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network to combat antigay language in sports. It is expected to be broadcast during the conference finals. In April, the Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant used a slur against an official and was fined \$100,000 by the league.

Avery said such slurs remain in wide use in hockey, too. He suspects they may be used against him even more now that he is speaking out on behalf of same-sex marriage. "People have been calling me names for 10 years just because I like to wear nice suits," he said. "It's going to take a lot to get me upset or to get under my skin. I'm O.K."

The Civil Union Bait-And-Switch

By Theodore Olson and Eric Schneiderman

Olson is former United States solicitor general. Schneiderman is attorney general of New York.

Proponents of same-sex marriage are only a few weeks into a new effort to pass a marriage equality bill in New York State by the end of this year's legislative session, and already there are opposing voices offering civil unions as a potential "compromise." As lawyers from both sides of the aisle who have been entrusted with pursuing the law on behalf of the public, we can agree that this is simply not an acceptable legal alternative.

A civil union reflects a second-class status that fails to protect committed same-sex couples who choose to be married. This is not a Democratic or Republican issue; this is a matter of protecting the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection under law for all Americans.

In New York, there are more than 1,300 state rights and responsibilities that come with a marriage license. From spousal inheritance rights to the ability to file joint tax returns to child custody rules to the transferring of workers' compensation benefits, the scope of marriage-related law is expansive. Some are fundamental, others mundane – but all serve to underscore how deeply interwoven New York's marriage laws are and how extraordinarily they reach into the lives of countless people. Unlike the universally accepted concept of marriage, employers, businesses and individuals simply do not know how to treat civil unions. Several states have experimented with these so-called compromise solutions and have already reached the conclusion that they just don't work.

For example, after New Jersey granted civil unions to gay and lesbian couples, many employers refused to offer them partner benefits because they were not legally married. Hospitals denied them the rights of married couples, checking the "single" box - rather than the "married" box - on patients' admissions forms, thereby denying them access to hospitalized loved ones. Gay and lesbian couples were put at risk in emergencies when they traveled, because civil unions, unlike marriages, are often not recognized across state lines.

All of these legal uncertainties led the New Jersey Civil Union Review Commission to ultimately declare civil unions a failure, finding that the separate categorization "invites and encourages unequal treatment of same-sex couples and their children."

Many states that have experimented with civil unions have abandoned them and moved to marriage for all couples, citing similar experiences that demonstrate this separate status is not equal. Connecticut and New Hampshire have replaced their civil union statutes with marriage for all couples. And legislators in Vermont voted to do the same by a two-thirds, bipartisan majority.

Civil unions were not the right solution for these states and they are not right for New York.

Moreover, civil unions are not what the public is demanding: They are voicing full-throated support for the freedom to marry. Marriage for gay and lesbian couples has stronger across-the-board support from New Yorkers than ever before, with a recent poll showing a solid majority of 58% in favor. As individuals across the state learn more about the issue, that number continues to climb. Support for marriage spans all demographics, with a majority of support among independent voters and a virtual tie among Republicans in the state. The state Assembly has twice passed marriage legislation, and all 81 pro-marriage legislators who sought reelection in 2008 won, including each of the Republicans who voted in favor of the bill.

The call for equality is picking up steam across the nation as well, with a majority of Americans now in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage for the first time. This growing group of supporters is not calling for the legalization of half-steps or civil unions. They're calling for marriage. A civil union is not a marriage, nor is it an adequate substitute for one. To suggest otherwise is a cruel fiction. Even if all of the inherent confusion and complexities could be resolved and civil unions could somehow provide couples with the same rights and responsibilities of a true marriage, the separation of the two institutions creates a badge of inferiority that forever stigmatizes the relationships of committed same-sex couples as different, separate, unequal and less worthy.

Time and time again, the U.S. Supreme Court has held that marriage is one of the most fundamental rights that we enjoy as Americans under the Constitution. It's a right older than the Bill of Rights and older than our political parties. It is the foundation of society. The time to grant the right of marriage to all New Yorkers is now.

Donors to G.O.P. Are Backing Gay Marriage Push

By Nicholas Confessore and Michael Barbaro, The NY Times

As gay rights advocates intensify their campaign to legalize same-sex marriage in New York, the bulk of their money is coming from an unexpected source: a group of conservative financiers and wealthy donors to the Republican Party, most of whom are known for bankrolling right-leaning candidates and causes.

Their behind-the-scenes financial support — about \$1 million in donations, delivered in recent weeks to a new coalition of gay rights organizations — could alter the political calculus of Albany lawmakers, especially the Republican state senators in whose hands the fate of gay marriage rests. The donors represent some of New York's wealthiest and most politically active figures and include Paul E. Singer, a hedge fund manager and top-tier Republican donor, as well as two other financiers, Steven A. Cohen and Clifford S. Asness.

At the same time, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, a billionaire businessman and philanthropist who has been a major contributor to Senate Republicans in New York, plans a significant push for same-sex marriage: giving at least \$100,000 of his own money, hosting a fund-raiser at an Upper East Side town house, traveling to Albany to lobby lawmakers and giving a speech on the issue.

The new donations represent roughly two-thirds of the same-sex marriage coalition's fund-raising, making New York the rare state where a lobbying campaign in favor of legalizing gay unions is not being financed primarily by liberal donors and Democrats. The support is likely to jolt the traditional financial and political backers of gay rights causes, who now find themselves in the unfamiliar position of being outraised and outspent in New York.

The donations are financing an intensive campaign of television advertisements and grass-roots activism coordinated by New Yorkers United for Marriage, a group of same-sex marriage advocates. The campaign is aimed chiefly at persuading several members of the Senate Republican majority to join most Senate Democrats in backing same-sex marriage, which was defeated in the Senate in 2009. The State Assembly, controlled by Democrats, has repeatedly passed same-sex marriage bills. The newly recruited donors argue that permitting same-sex marriage is consistent with conservative principles of personal liberty and small government.

Mr. Cohen, who runs SAC Capital Advisers and has become increasingly active in Republican fund-raising, described his views simply: "We believe in social justice for all Americans."

"I'm a pretty straight-down-the-line small-government guy," said Mr. Asness, who described himself as a libertarian who favored less government intrusion in both markets and personal affairs. Mr. Asness, a frequent Republican donor, has praised Tea Party activists on his blog and last year attended a conference of right-leaning donors held by Charles and David Koch, among the leading conservative philanthropists in the nation.

"This is an issue of basic freedom," Mr. Asness said.

Some of those involved have made what might be termed the pro-business argument for same-sex marriage, arguing that the legalization of same-sex marriage would help keep New York economically competitive. One of the donors, Daniel S. Loeb, who has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to Republican candidates for federal office in the last two years, said he hoped to make clear to Republicans that same-sex marriage had a broad coalition of support. "I think it is important in particular for Republicans to know this is a bipartisan issue," Mr. Loeb said. "If they're Republican, they will not be abandoned by the party for supporting this. On the contrary, I think they will find that there is a whole new world of people who will support them on an ongoing basis if they support this cause."

The involvement of Mr. Singer is the most striking, given his devotion to conservative candidates and philanthropy: He is chairman of the Manhattan Institute, a right-leaning research group, and one of the most generous Republican donors in the country. But he also has a personal stake in the issue: he has a gay son who married his partner in Massachusetts, where same-sex marriage is legal.

Mr. Singer is coordinating much of the Republican fund-raising for same-sex marriage in New York, according to people familiar with the matter, donating \$425,000 of his own money and personally soliciting an additional \$500,000 in donations. At the same time, he has hosted private meetings to make the case for legalizing gay weddings in New York to other conservatives.

Bill Smith, deputy executive director of the Gill Action Fund, a political organization that supports gay rights, called the contributions from Republican donors "a sea change."

Some of the donors were recruited by Ken Mehlman, a contributor to the coalition and a former chairman of the Republican National Committee, who has since announced that he is gay. Some of the new contributors have been active in national politics and presidential fund-raising, but are venturing into state politics for the first time. Their involvement offers Republicans in New York the prospect of help in next year's legislative elections and a potential source of longer-term support for a party that has struggled to field well-financed candidates for statewide office in recent years.

Mr. Bloomberg, a Republican-turned-independent, is the most politically centrist of the donors. The mayor has long supported same-sex marriage and spoke passionately about the subject in 2009, when the Legislature last tackled the topic. But his donations to state Republicans have occasionally stirred skepticism among gay rights advocates. And until now, the mayor has given little of his personal fortune to the cause — he

made a \$5,000 donation to the Human Rights Campaign, a national gay rights group, in 2010. This year, his involvement has deepened considerably. Aides to Mr. Bloomberg said he viewed the marriage issue in a larger context: Freedom, he argues, is New York's "competitive advantage" and its brand, and he has become committed to vigorously defending it, as he did amid criticism of a proposed Islamic center near ground zero.

"At the core this very rational mayor is somebody who believes that government has no business in getting involved in, taking sides in or making value judgments about who you love," said John Feinblatt, the mayor's chief policy adviser.

Mr. Bloomberg traveled to Albany to lobby Republican lawmakers, and held a high-dollar fundraiser, featuring the singer Rufus Wainwright, to raise money for the same-sex marriage cause at the Upper East Side headquarters of his foundation. Mr. Bloomberg also delivered a speech on the subject at the Cooper Union. "This is the moment," Mr. Feinblatt said of the mayor's involvement. "If you want your beliefs to count and your voice to count, this is the time."

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