



# 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, March 20, 2011**  
2:30–5:30 PM

At the March meeting, Dr. Alex Bitterman, an internationally recognized expert on branding will discuss the HRC Buying Guide and recent GLBT allied boycotts of Target, Mobil, and Best Buy. The presentation will be followed by an informal question and answer session and suggestions for responsible purchasing by GLBT and allied consumers. 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 Time Warner Channel 20.

The schedule for the next two months is:

Feb 7: Maybe We're Talking About a Different God / The Preacher's Son

Feb 14: Mom, Dad, ... I'm Gay

Feb 21: Making History in Massachusetts

Feb 28: Safe School Program for Youth in Massachusetts

Mar 7: A Little Respect

Mar 14: Choosing Children, Pt 1

Mar 21: Choosing Children, Pt 2

Mar 28: Our Brother, Dan

A description of the storylines can be found at:  
[www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org/video\\_project.shtml](http://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](mailto:pflag@bfn.org)

### Lifetime Members

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

### Sponsoring Members

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

### Supporting Members

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

and if you're reading on-line most sites have a button that easily allows you to share the article with us.

## NY Push For Marriage Equality

There is a new push being put on to pass a marriage equality bill in New York State. A representative from Governor Andrew Cuomo's office has contacted PFLAG looking for help. They have asked that chapters encourage their 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.

## In Shift, U.S. Says Marriage Act Blocks Gay Rights

Charlie Savage & Sheryl Gay Stolberg, The NY Times

President Obama, in a striking legal and political shift, has determined that the Defense of Marriage Act – the 1996 law that bars federal recognition of same-sex marriages – is unconstitutional, and has directed the Justice Department to stop defending the law in court, the administration said Wednesday.

Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. announced the decision in a letter to members of Congress. In it, he said the administration was taking the extraordinary step of refusing to defend the law, despite having done so during Mr. Obama's first two years in the White House.

"The president and I have concluded that classifications based on sexual orientation" should be subjected to a strict legal test intended to block unfair discrimination, Mr. Holder wrote. As a result, he said, a crucial provision of the Defense of Marriage Act "is unconstitutional."

Conservatives denounced the shift, gay rights advocates hailed it as a watershed, and legal scholars said it could have far-reaching implications beyond the marriage law. For Mr. Obama, who opposes same-sex marriage but has said repeatedly that his views are "evolving," there are political implications as well. Coming on the heels of his push for Congress to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" law barring the military from allowing gay people to serve openly, the administration's move seems likely to intensify the long-running cultural clash over same-sex marriage as the 2012 political campaign is heating up.

"This is a great step by the Obama administration and a tipping point for the gay rights movement that will have ripple effects in contexts beyond the Defense of Marriage Act," said Anthony D. Romero, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union. "It will reach into issues of employment discrimination, family recognition and full equality rights for lesbian and gay people."

But some conservatives questioned Mr. Obama's timing and accused him of trying to change the subject from spending cuts to social causes. Others portrayed the Justice Department's abandonment of the Defense of

Marriage Act as an outrageous political move that was legally unjustified. "It is a transparent attempt to shirk the department's duty to defend the laws passed by Congress," Representative Lamar Smith, the Texas Republican who is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said in a statement. "This is the real politicization of the Justice Department – when the personal views of the president override the government's duty to defend the law of the land."

While the issue at hand is whether gay couples in the eight states that already legally recognize same-sex marriage may be discriminated against by the federal government, the administration's decision raised anew the more fundamental question of whether same-sex couples should have a right to marry.

Mr. Obama takes a nuanced position on same-sex marriage, and the White House was careful to say on Wednesday that his position on that issue – he favors civil unions – remains unchanged. Many advocates of same-sex marriage, though, perceived the administration's new legal stance as a signal that Mr. Obama would soon embrace their cause.

Polls show the public is broadly supportive of equal rights for gay people – with the exception of the right to marry. Nearly 90 percent of Americans favor equality of opportunity in the workplace, and more than 60 percent favored overturning "don't ask, don't tell." But the public remains evenly divided on same-sex marriage.

Tobias B. Wolff, a University of Pennsylvania law professor who has advised Mr. Obama on gay rights issues, said the decision may have bought the president some time with gay rights leaders, many of whom have been deeply critical of his position on the marriage issue.

"He has said that he has been struggling with the issue, and I think he has earned a certain benefit of the doubt," Mr. Wolff said.

But the move also sharpened criticism of Mr. Obama from the right. Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa, said the shift was "clearly based more on politics than the law."

While Mr. Obama has called for Congress to repeal the marriage law, in court his administration has supported the constitutional right of Congress to enact such a measure. But his legal team was forced to take a second look at the sustainability of that position because of two recent lawsuits challenging the statute. The Justice Department must file responses to both suits by March 11. For technical reasons, it would have been far more difficult – both legally and politically – for the administration to keep arguing that the marriage law is constitutional in these new lawsuits. To assert that gay people do not qualify for extra legal protection against official discrimination, legal specialists say, the Justice Department would most likely have had to conclude that they have not been historically stigmatized and can change their orientation.

## 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](http://www.buffalogaymenschorus.org)

## *Gentle Moves*

MOVEMENT FOR THE MIND. BODY. AND SOUL

### Suzanne Evans

716.574.5503

[suz32dana@yahoo.com](mailto: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



The development floored Edith S. Windsor, an 81-year-old widow who filed one of the two new lawsuits in New York. Ms. Windsor is seeking the return of about \$360,000 in estate taxes she had to pay because the federal government did not recognize their marriage when her wife died two years ago. The couple married in Toronto. "It's almost overwhelming," Ms. Windsor said in an interview. "I don't know what it means in terms of what follows. But the very fact that the president and the Department of Justice are making such a statement is mind-blowing to anybody gay or anybody who is related to anybody gay. I think it removes a great deal of the stigma. It's just great."

If the courts agree with the administration's view of how to evaluate gay-rights claims of official discrimination, it could open the door to new legal challenges to many other government policies that treat

gay people unequally – including federal laws that make it easier for noncitizen spouses to apply for legal residency and state laws governing who may adopt a child.

While it is rare for an administration not to defend the constitutionality of a statute, it happens occasionally. Congress may opt to appoint its own lawyers to defend the law, or outside groups may try to intervene. And while the Justice Department's lawyers will no longer defend the law in court, Mr. Holder said the administration would continue to enforce the act unless Congress repeals it or a court delivers a "definitive verdict against the law's constitutionality."

The administration's change in position grew out of an internal debate, first reported in January by The New York Times, over how to respond to the two lawsuits filed last year that challenged the 1996 act. The same-sex marriage reversal followed weeks of high-level deliberations, first in the Justice Department's Civil Division, and then at the White House.

The lawsuits were brought by people including Ms. Windsor, whose same-sex marriages are recognized as legal by state law, but who have been denied certain federal benefits granted to opposite-sex married couples. The plaintiffs, represented by the A.C.L.U. and GLAD – Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders – contended that such treatment violated their right to equal protection of the law.

In previous cases, the Justice Department defended the act by citing precedents that directed judges to uphold any law that treats gay people unequally unless a challenger can prove there is no conceivable rational basis for the act. But the two new cases were filed in districts covered by the federal appeals court in New York, one of the few circuits that lack such a precedent.

As a result, the administration, for the first time, confronted the difficult question of how much protection gay people, as a group, should receive against official discrimination.

Mr. Holder said Justice and White House officials had concluded that gay people qualified for the greater protection afforded to a handful of classes, like race or gender. Under that test, discrimination is presumed to be unconstitutional, and Mr. Holder said it was untenable to keep defending the marriage law.

---

## House Democrats To Push Legislative End To DOMA

Sam Stein, Huffington Post

In light of the Obama administration's decision to drop its legal support for the Defense of Marriage Act on the grounds that the president considers it unconstitutional, Democrats will be launching a renewed effort to formally overturn the federal gay-marriage ban through congressional action.

Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-N.Y.), a senior Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, told The Huffington Post that

he will be introducing the Respect for Marriage Act, which would repeal DOMA, "very soon" and with "quite a few cosponsors."

The idea is to take advantage of the headwind created by the Department of Justice's Wednesday announcement and push for a permanent solution over the legality of laws that prohibit gay marriage. Until Congress acts, or the Supreme Court issues a ruling, DOMA – which prohibits federal recognition of same-sex marriages performed in states – continues to be enforced.

"The president's move is another step in the increasing realization that there is no conceivable justification for DOMA, that it is motivated, was motivated, purely by irrational considerations and fear and that there is no rational basis that will stand up to a constitutional challenge," said Nadler. "Hopefully, that will make it somewhat easier to pass legislation in Congress."

But the climb remains steep. House Judiciary Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas) criticized the administration's decision not to defend DOMA in a statement shortly after the announcement was made, calling it "irresponsible." And as chair of the committee, Smith has wide latitude over what bills get a hearing.

And yet the reaction to the DOMA news within the Republican Party has been fairly muted. House Speaker John Boehner's office put out a statement that skirted the substance of the issue, instead hammering the president for trying "to stir up a controversial issue that sharply divides the nation." And while Smith himself offered strong support for the philosophical foundation of the law, his office said it did not have ultimate say as to whether they'd step in to defend the law in court -- that would fall on Boehner.

**UPDATE:** Sen. Dianne Feinstein's (D-Calif.) office emailed The Huffington Post to note that she plans to offer similar legislation in the Senate to effectively end DOMA.

"As a Member of the Judiciary Committee, it is my intention to introduce legislation that will once and for all repeal the Defense of Marriage Act," Feinstein said in a prepared statement. "My own belief is that when two people love each other and enter the contract of marriage, the Federal government should honor that. I opposed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. It was the wrong law then; it is the wrong law now; and it should be repealed."

---

## Maryland Senate Approves Same-Sex Marriage

Annie Linskey & Julie Bykowicz, The Baltimore Sun

Maryland's Senate passed a landmark measure Thursday February 24<sup>th</sup> that would allow same-sex couples to wed, pushing the controversial issue to the House of Delegates, which appears nearly evenly split on the issue.

The Senate voted 25-21 to approve the Civil Marriage Protection Act after two days of largely restrained and respectful discussion. Senators on both sides of the issue characterized the debate as "historic," and many said they had struggled with how to vote.

"I'm just thrilled," said Sen. Richard S. Madaleno Jr., the Senate's only openly gay member. "I'm so excited that we were able to get this done."

Discussion in the House of Delegates began the next day, with a committee hearing that could be far more rancorous than anything the Senate has seen.

Del. Don H. Dwyer Jr., a chief opponent of the legislation, promised this week to "take off the gloves" when he discusses gay marriage. The Anne Arundel Republican's bill to outlaw recognition of any union not between a man and a woman is also scheduled to be heard Friday.

"The Senate has been congenial. The House is going to be a lot more volatile," predicted Del. Keiffer J. Mitchell Jr., a Baltimore Democrat and co-sponsor of the House version of the same-sex marriage legislation. "There are more personalities in the mix. I'm concerned about the tone."

Supporters said the Senate vote would bring comfort to thousands of gay and lesbian couples who believe that current law treats them as second-class citizens. Opponents warned that the bill would have unintended consequences, such as bringing a "homosexual worldview" into classrooms and diminishing the sanctity of marriage.

Opponents did not have the votes to mount a successful filibuster. At 6 p.m., Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Garagiola, a Montgomery County Democrat and the bill's lead sponsor in the Senate, called for a vote to limit debate to one hour, a motion that passed easily with 30 votes. Final passage 30 minutes later brought applause from supportive senators.

The prospect of legalizing same-sex marriage has dominated the General Assembly session, with several lawmakers predicting that the vote would be remembered well after they retire. The measure gained momentum this year with the addition of two supporters to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, providing for the first time enough votes to bring the bill to the chamber floor.

Gov. Martin O'Malley, a Democrat, has said he will sign the legislation if it reaches his desk, which would make Maryland the sixth state to legalize gay marriage. The District of Columbia allowed same-sex unions last year. At least two other states are taking up the issue.

But approval in the House of Delegates is far from assured. The bill in that chamber has 58 sponsors; 71 votes are needed for passage. And if it is passed, opponents would almost certainly petition for a referendum, giving Maryland voters the final say.

"In the larger equation, this is an idea whose time has come," said Sen. Jamie B. Raskin, a Montgomery County

Democrat who led the floor debate. "But the suspense continues."

Madaleno said thousands of Maryland couples are "wishing for this" bill to pass. The Montgomery County Democrat spoke on the floor about his partner, Mark Hodge, whom many of his fellow senators have come to know. "We made a commitment to each other," Madaleno told his colleagues. "He in my heart is my spouse. ... I wouldn't ask any of you to call your spouse your 'partner.'"

The bill would repeal a 38-year old provision in Maryland law that defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman. The General Assembly crafted the definition in 1973 in reaction to "a growing movement to protect the rights of homosexuals," according to a Baltimore Sun article at the time. The issue sparked far less controversy then. It was opposed by a single Republican senator, who viewed the provision as an "unnecessary restriction on an individual's freedom," according to a 1973 Sun article.

The Senate floor debate started in earnest the day before passage, when opponents offered a series of amendments that they said were needed to ensure that religious groups would not be forced to participate in same-sex wedding ceremonies. Supporters of the bill accepted some of the amendments. Religious groups would not have to provide same-sex couples with benefits, such as insurance, that they offer only to members. But when religious groups offer services to the wider public — such as adoption — they would have to include same-sex couples. Opponents, many of whom said they would never support the underlying bill, said the amendments did not go far enough to protect those with religious objections to same-sex marriage.

Sen. E.J. Pipkin, an Eastern Shore Republican with a libertarian bent, said the state is moving unnecessarily quickly on same-sex marriage. He would have preferred that Maryland try civil unions first. "This bill is complicated," Pipkin said. "This bill has major ramifications. ... We are moving too far too fast." An earlier effort to turn the legislation into a civil unions bill failed overwhelmingly in committee. Nobody offered the option as a floor amendment on Wednesday.

Sen. Bryan W. Simonaire, said the "journals of history" will record Feb. 24, 2011, "as the day traditional marriage died in Maryland." The Anne Arundel County Republican said his "gravest concern" is that legalizing same-sex marriage would cause a decline in traditional marriages "as it loses its sanctity to many." A possible unintended consequence, he said, was that schoolchildren in Maryland would be taught "the homosexual worldview."

His comments prompted Sen. Karen S. Montgomery to recall the dire predictions about how children would be affected when public schools were integrated. "We are

repeating old arguments and have to move on," the Montgomery County Democrat said.

Senators said they had heard opinions from constituents on both sides of the issue. Several noted that their districts strongly oppose the measure. But Sen. Ron N. Young, a freshman Democrat from conservative Frederick County, said he has not been swayed by the opposition. "There are times when you have to do what is right," Young said. "We are here not just to be representatives, we are here to be leaders. If I lose an election over this vote, so what?"

Advocates on both sides reacted quickly. "We are deeply disappointed in the members of the Senate who have made the irresponsible decision to dismantle our state's definition of marriage," said Kathy Dempsey, a spokeswoman for the Maryland Catholic Conference.

The gay-rights group Equality Maryland filled the Senate galleries with dozens of supporters to witness the final vote Thursday. "It's a moment for all of us," said Executive Director Morgan Meneses-Sheets.

The spotlight now shifts to the House of Delegates. The day after the vote, the House Judiciary Committee began hearing testimony from supporters and advocates. A majority of the committee members are co-sponsors of the legislation, which all but ensures that it will be forwarded for consideration by the entire 141-member body.

Its fate on the House floor is uncertain, though chief sponsors and gay-rights activists said they are optimistic. "I think we'll get the votes we need to pass it," said House Majority Leader Kumar P. Barve, the lead sponsor. The Montgomery County Democrat said delegates plan to pass the Senate's version of the bill to avoid becoming mired in debate between the chambers. House Speaker Michael E. Busch, an Anne Arundel County Democrat, has been supportive of allowing same-sex couples to marry, though not outspokenly so. The House traditionally has been the more liberal of the two chambers on social issues. But Republicans gained six seats in the November election. Dwyer and Mitchell predicted that a vote on the House floor would be close.

"I think there will be supporters of the bill in the House who will have second thoughts," said Dwyer, who called himself the face of the opposition. Already one of the legislation's original 59 co-sponsors has asked that his name be removed. Del. Melvin L. Stukes said he thought the House bill, titled the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act, would have given same-sex couples the right to join in civil unions. The Baltimore Democrat learned in recent weeks that it would grant full marriage benefits, which he said he has never supported. "I don't want to deny anybody their human or civil rights," he said. "But to me, marriage is a moral issue. I could pull out the Scriptures on it. I'm very sorry that I got on the bill."

Several Democrats from conservative-leaning areas, including Dels. Norman H. Conway of the Eastern Shore

and Michael H. Weir Jr. of Baltimore County, have said they will vote against the bill. And some black lawmakers with strong ties to their churches, including Dels. Cheryl D. Glenn of Baltimore and Emmett C. Burns Jr. of Baltimore County, are against it.

House Republicans voted weeks ago to oppose any legislation that would change the state's definition of marriage. But it is not clear that all Republicans would vote against the measure. Some Republicans said that they prefer to remain silent for now.

In the Senate, former Minority Leader Allan H. Kittleman, whose district includes Howard and Carroll counties, gave up his leadership post after fellow Republicans expressed anger at his support for civil unions. He ultimately scrapped his civil unions bill and voted to support same-sex marriage. He was the only Senate Republican to cast a "yes" vote.

Del. Veronica L. Turner said she is torn about how to vote and needs to learn more about the legislation. The Prince George's County Democrat said she will try to excuse herself from the Health and Government Operations Committee on which she serves to listen to the debate in the Judiciary Committee. "I need to hear both sides for myself," she said. "I want to make sure I'm very educated about this before making my decision."

---

## More companies covering transgender surgery

Lisa Leff, The Associated Press

When Gina Duncan decided to undergo the medical treatment that would make her a woman, she had plenty to fear. The reactions of her children, her professional colleagues and friends. How her body would respond to hours on the operating table. If, at the end of it, she would look female enough so strangers wouldn't gawk.

What the Orlando mortgage banker didn't have to be anxious about was how she would pay for two of her surgeries. Her employer of 10 years, Wells Fargo, included breast augmentation and genital reconstruction as coverable expenses under its employee health plan. Duncan was told the San Francisco-based bank already had had 16 other employees transition to new genders and assigned a benefits specialist to walk her through the process.

"They had a template in place, and it was surprisingly supporting and mentally encouraging," said Duncan, 55, who four years later still works for Wells Fargo. "So much of what I'd heard involved people who ended up losing their job, losing their family, losing their friends, becoming destitute."

With little fanfare, more and more large corporations, including Coca-Cola, Campbell Soup and Walt Disney, have expanded their insurance coverage to meet the needs of transgender workers. The trend follows a concerted push by transgender rights advocates to get employers and insurers to see sex reassignment the way

the American Medical Association does – as a medically indicated rather than an optional procedure.

"We understand people simply get appendicitis, and it is something our community deals with through insurance," said Andre Wilson, who counsels companies on transgender issues as a senior consultant with San Francisco-based Jamison Green & Associates. "That's what we need to understand about transsexualism. Not everybody will be diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder, and in fact, few people will be. But the people who are diagnosed with it really need treatment."

Among the corporations providing transgender-inclusive health benefits are some leading Wall Street and Main Street brands. American Express, Kraft Foods, AT&T, Yahoo!, Eastman Kodak, Sears, Morgan Stanley, Price Waterhouse, General Motors and State Farm are among 85 large businesses and law firms that cover the cost of at least one surgery, according to a 2010 survey by the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay rights group. The number is expected to spike this year, when HRC adds availability of surgery-inclusive medical benefits for transgender employees or transgender dependents to the criteria in its annual corporate diversity report card. To maintain the coveted 100 percent rating when the next Corporate Equality Index is published in the fall, companies will have to offer at least one insurance plan that covers at least \$75,000 worth of surgery and other treatments recommended by a patient's doctor. "A lot of people are pretty surprised that alongside the cosmetic and experimental treatments that are excluded from mainstream plans, you can see very broad exclusions related to transgender care," said Deena Fidas, associate director of HRC's Workplace Project. "In raising the bar...we are addressing the root cause of the problem."

Stephanie Battaglino, an assistant vice president at New York Life Insurance, has been working with a senior executive at her company to add transgender health benefits to the employee insurance plan. Battaglino, 52, started her transition five years ago, becoming the first New York Life employee to do so openly. To finance her surgeries, which were on a list of procedures not covered by insurance, she borrowed from her 401(k) account. "I've often said to friends, 'My transition at work went really, really smoothly, and if I had to do it again, the only thing I would change would be if I had my surgery covered,'" she said. "To know it was covered and completely reimbursed would have cast everything in a much different light." New York Life has been open to the changes and expects to have the expanded coverage in place soon, Battaglino said. But that doesn't mean the learning curve has been easy to negotiate. The company initially was uncomfortable agreeing to \$75,000 of allowable coverage, she said. But she said that concern was alleviated when it was explained that only two or three employees would likely need the benefits.

"The big misconception is we are going to go broke and all these transgender people are going to come out of the woodwork asking for gender reassignment surgery," she said.

Once she was diagnosed and decided to seek treatment two years ago, Sara Schnorr, a partner in the Boston law firm of Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge, "poked around" to see if another firm already paid for sex reassignment as part of its group health insurance. "When you go to work every day, if you are gay or lesbian, you look no different," Schnorr said. "But if you are transgender, you have to make some pretty big changes to your physical appearance. It's not really like you can be stealth about it." Schnorr decided to stay with the firm where she had worked for 31 years and to come out to her partners. Before she went on leave for her first surgery, which would feminize her facial features, they agreed to secure a rider to the firm's insurance policy that would allow her to be reimbursed for at least genital reconstruction and breast augmentation. "I was ecstatic," she said. "For me, this is yet another example of how human this law firm is in wanting to take care of its employees."

Some businesses see covering the cost of transgender surgery as not only an important human resources statement, but good business sense. "Wells Fargo elected to offer this benefit to be competitive as an employer and also to support our comprehensive corporate commitment to diversity," company spokesman Mary Eshet said.

Joanne Herman, the author of "Transgender Explained For Those Who Are Not," said both corporate America and insurers need to understand that genital surgery is not the be-all and end-all in making a person's appearance match the way he or she feels inside. For men becoming women, undergoing facial reconstruction may be even more important because it will affect how they are perceived and treated in public, Herman said. The same is true for female-to-male transsexuals and breast surgery. Yet standard insurance plans typically dismiss both as cosmetic, even though people with untreated Gender Identity Disorder are at high risk of suicide and those who get treatment become better workers. "If you are transsexual, living as anything other than that is a very bleak experience. It's amazing how much happier I am, how much more productive, social and involved I am as Joanne," she said.

---

## **Military 'don't ask, don't tell' repeal training under way**

Larry Shaughnessy, CNN

All four branches of the U.S. military have begun the training required as part of the repeal of the ban on gays and lesbians serving openly in the armed forces, and expect to have it completed before the end of summer.

All four branches are following a three-step approach to the training as the military works toward removing itself from the "don't ask, don't tell policy."

The first part focuses on training experts – service members responsible for the administration of the new policy such as chaplains, lawyers and recruiters. The second step involves training senior leaders, including the highest-ranked officers and enlisted men and women in the services. Finally, the rank and file troops will be trained.

All uniformed military personnel and civilians in a position in which they supervise troops are required to undergo the training.

The Marine Corps was the first branch to begin training and expects to be finished before the end of May, according to Marine Corps spokesman Capt. Brian Block.

The Army started its training recently with Gen. George Casey, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, leading many of his four-star generals through the guidance during a meeting at the Pentagon. It plans to complete training for all soldiers by the middle of August, according to a statement published online.

The Air Force recently began its training as well and plans to have it complete by this summer, according to Maj. Joel Harper, an Air Force spokesman.

The Navy began its training earlier in February and has set a goal for completion by June 30.

Many service members will receive their training via computer, including slides, narration, vignettes and frequently asked questions. Hypothetical scenarios are included in the curriculum and are used to question service members on how the new law should be applied in those situations.

For example, a recruiter tells his superior that because of his religious beliefs he cannot process an openly gay recruit. The guidance suggests training, counseling and education should be the first course of

action, but if the problem persists, the recruiter could face disciplinary action.

The Defense Department has created more than a dozen such scenarios that could develop involving gay and lesbian troops. In each case, the emphasis on resolving problems focuses on the least-disruptive solution that keeps in mind not only the new law but also each service member's religious or moral beliefs.

Spokesmen for the military declined to say when their branch's leaders may be prepared to tell Defense Secretary Robert Gates that they are ready to implement a repeal of the ban.

At that point, Gates, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff and the president will certify that the Defense Department is ready to implement the repeal, ensuring that the move will not negatively affect the military's ability to fight.

Once that happens, there is a 60-day period before the law is repealed. Until then, the current ban remains in effect.

**PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA  
2010-2011**

**Board of Directors**  
*President:* **Kristian Rickard**  
*Vice-President:* **John Covert**  
*Secretary:* **Michele A. Perry**  
*Treasurer:* **Jeffrey J. McConnell**  
*Directors:* **Babs Conant**  
**Suzanne Evans**

**Newsletter Staff**  
*Editor & Design:* **Jeffrey J. McConnell**  
*Duplication:* **Jeffrey J. McConnell**  
*Distribution:* **Paula Jack**

<b>Please circle item(s) ▾</b>	<b>JOIN US!</b>	<b>PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA</b>
<b>Please join our PFLAG chapter to support our mission at whatever level membership you can:</b>		
▾ Lifetime Membership .....	\$ 500	▾ New      ▾ Renewal      ▾ Change of Address
▾ Benefactor Membership .....	\$ 250	
▾ Sponsoring Membership .....	\$ 100	▾ Advertising member (Business Card Advertisement
▾ Supporting Membership .....	\$ 50	\$100. Annually for 10 issues)
▾ 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. <b>Circle here if you don't want to receive the PFLAG-Pole Newsletter ▾</b>		
Make checks payable to <b>PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara</b> 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.		<b><u>Please write clearly</u></b>
Name (s) _____		Date _____
Address _____		City _____
State _____	Zip _____	Phone (____) _____
E-mail address _____		