



Buffalo / Niagara

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www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org

We meet because we have learned that someone very close to us is Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgendered.

We try to help one another deal with this information in a positive manner.

Although we do not agree at all times, we try to be understanding.

We offer help to those who seek it, but do not force ourselves on others.

We strive to maintain anonymity while sharing on a level that is comfortable for all of us.

We encourage all to attend meetings for their own benefit as well as that of the group.

It is our hope that when each of us reaches a point of understanding and acceptance, we realize that this is when others need us the most.

Buffalo Monthly Meeting

Sunday, May 15, 2011
2:30–5:30 PM

The May meeting will begin with a brief business meeting but the main meeting topic will be a presentation and discussion about area Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) and LGBT youth issues by Marvin Henchbarger, Executive Director of Gay and Lesbian Youth Services of Western New York. 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.

Teens – Gay or Straight – More Likely to Attempt Suicide in Conservative Towns

By Lindsey Tanner AP Medical Writer

Suicide attempts by gay teens – and even straight kids – are more common in politically conservative areas where schools don't have programs supporting gay rights, a study involving nearly 32,000 high school students found.

Those factors raised the odds and were a substantial influence on suicide attempts even when known risk contributors like depression and being bullied were considered, said study author Mark Hatzenbuehler, a Columbia University psychologist and researcher.

His study found a higher rate of suicide attempts even among kids who weren't bullied or depressed when they lived in counties less supportive of gays and with relatively few Democrats. A high proportion of Democrats

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was a measure used as a proxy for a more liberal environment.

The research focused only on the state of Oregon and created a social index to assess which outside factors might contribute to suicidal tendencies. Other teen health experts called it a powerful, novel way to evaluate a tragic social problem.

"Is it surprising? No. Is it important? Yes," said Dr. Robert Blum of Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The study "takes our relatively superficial knowledge and provides a bit more depth. Clearly, we need lots more understanding, but this is very much a step in the right direction," he said.

Blum serves on an Institute of Medicine committee that recently released a report urging more research on gay health issues. Blum said the new study is the kind of research the institute believes has been lacking. The independent group advises the government on health matters.

The new study was published online in the journal *Pediatrics*. Previous research has found disproportionately high suicide rates in gay teens. One highly publicized case involved a Rutgers University freshman who jumped off a bridge last year after classmates recorded and broadcast the 18-year-old having sex with a man.

The study relied on teens' self-reporting suicide attempts within the previous year. Roughly 20 percent of gay, lesbian and bisexual teens said they had made an attempt, versus 4 percent of straight kids.

The study's social index rated counties on five measures: prevalence of same-sex couples; registered Democratic voters; liberal views; schools with gay-straight alliances; schools with policies against bullying gay students; and schools with antidiscrimination policies that included sexual orientation.

Gay, lesbian and bisexual teens living in counties with the lowest social index scores were 20 percent more likely to have attempted suicide than gays in counties with the highest index scores. Overall, about 25 percent of gay teens in low-scoring counties had attempted suicide, versus 20 percent of gay teens in high-scoring counties.

Among straight teens, suicide attempts were 9 percent more common in low-scoring counties. There were 1,584 total suicide attempts – 304 of those among gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

Hatzenbuehler said the results show that "environments that are good for gay youth are also healthy for heterosexual youth."

The study is based on 2006-08 surveys of 11th-graders that state health officials conducted in Oregon classrooms; Oregon voter registration statistics; Census data on same-sex couples; and public school policies on gays and bullying.

The researchers assessed proportions of Democrats versus Republicans; there were relatively few Independents. Information on non-voters wasn't examined.

Zachary Toomay, a high school senior from Arroyo Grande, Calif., said the study "seems not only plausible, but it's true." The star swimmer, 18, lives in a conservative, mostly Republican county. He's active in his school's gay-straight alliance, and said he'd never been depressed until last year when classmates "ostracized" him for being vocal about gay rights. Toomay said signs of community intolerance, including bumper stickers opposing same-sex marriage, also made him feel down, and he sought guidance from a school counselor after contemplating suicide.

Funding for the study came from the National Institutes for Health and a center for gay research at the Fenway Institute, an independent Harvard-affiliated health care and research center.

Michael Resnick, a professor of adolescent mental health at the University of Minnesota's medical school, said the study "certainly affirms what we've come to understand about children and youth in general.

"They are both subtly and profoundly affected by what goes around them," he said, including the social climate and perceived support.

Popular Gov. Andrew Cuomo Launches Campaign To Legalize Gay Marriage In New York

By Andrea Stone, Huffington Post

New York could become the next state to legalize gay marriage if a media and lobbying push launched and spearheaded by Gov. Andrew Cuomo can succeed where previous efforts have not.

After weeks of closed-door meetings in Albany, the Democratic governor and his staff have assembled a roster of A-list political strategists and wrangled sometimes-warring gay rights groups into a single coalition, called New Yorkers United for Marriage, that aims to pass gay marriage legislation this year.

Supporters of gay marriage say advocates want to avoid the poor legislative and political planning that doomed a similar bill two years ago.

Cuomo campaigned for governor last year on a promise that he would shepherd same-sex marriage into the statute books. In his first state of the state address, Cuomo declared, "We believe in justice for all, then let's pass marriage equality this year once and for all."

Officials close to Cuomo would not speak on the record about their efforts to coordinate a media and political campaign on the issue. The governor's spokesman, Richard Bamberger, said, "This is an important issue for the administration, and the governor is

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Saturday June 11 (8 pm) - Orchard Park Pres. Church
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Sunday June 12 (7 pm) - Temple Beth Zion
805 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY

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committed to working with New Yorkers to get the marriage equality legislation passed."

In 2008, when Cuomo was New York attorney general, former New York governor David Paterson ordered state agencies to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other jurisdictions. But when a bill to legalize gay marriage came to the legislature in Albany the next year, it passed the Democratic-controlled Assembly but was defeated in the Republican-led Senate by a vote of 38 to 24.

Since then, Cuomo has made marriage equality "almost a mission," said Richard Socarides, a former New York lawyer who now runs the Washington-based gay advocacy group Equality Matters.

[Cuomo] "feels this is part of where New York should be - at the forefront," said Evan Wolfson of the group Freedom to Marry. "The governor will use the bully pulpit

but he also will talk in one-to-one conversations to legislators.”

Five states – including neighboring Massachusetts, Connecticut and Vermont – and the District of Columbia allow same-sex couples to wed. California briefly did until voters passed Proposition 8, which defines marriage for the state as between a man and a woman. A federal judge in San Francisco overturned Prop 8 last August, but the decision has been appealed and will likely be decided in the U.S. Supreme Court.

“This is a very high-stakes play for Cuomo,” said Socarides, who is among activists who have met with the governor about the issue. “If he is successful, he will be a hero and he will work very hard to get it. But if success is just not possible, he’ll have to lower expectations quickly and expectations among insiders are already extremely high.”

The new push in New York comes after Cuomo’s recent triumph in delivering on time a budget full of cuts that nonetheless was passed by the legislature. Local media called that close to miraculous at a time when protesters have besieged other state capitals over spending.

A new Siena College Poll pegged Cuomo’s approval rating at a hefty 73 percent and said he started his second 100 days as governor with “rock star status.”

The same poll found much wider support for gay marriage than just two years ago, when a bare majority were okay with gays and lesbians getting married. Today, 58 percent of New Yorkers support marriage equality for gays while only 36 percent opposed.

The national landscape around gay marriage rights has also changed. A slight majority of Americans now say same-sex marriages should be recognized. Congress has repealed the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. And the Obama administration’s Justice Department has announced it will no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act that bans federal recognition of gay marriage and allows states to ignore the validity of same-sex marriage licenses granted in other jurisdictions.

“There has been a sea change in public opinion just in the last year and a half,” said Brian Ellner, who heads the national Human Rights Campaign’s marriage efforts in New York.

There also has been a new appreciation among advocates that they must not repeat the mistakes of 2009. “The last time around there were miscalculations, miscues among the advocates and with the legislative leadership that really doomed the effort,” said Socarides. “No one was really responsible, no one knew who was responsible for what and the whip counts (of legislators) were not good. Gov. Patterson’s role was unclear at best. You had a ship without a captain.”

Socarides said the governor has issued marching orders to the groups that they must cooperate with each other or face defeat again. “He brought the Jets and

Sharks together,” he said, referring to the rival gangs from the Broadway musical *West Side Story*.

The new umbrella group, New Yorkers United for Marriage, includes Washington’s Human Rights Campaign and three state-based groups: Empire State Pride Agenda, Freedom to Marry and Marriage Equality New York. Those groups have clashed in the past, but now, with a popular governor championing their cause, they seem determined to put their differences aside to achieve their goal.

Jennifer Cunningham, a long-time Cuomo confidante and one of New York City’s most powerful lobbyists, was hired to head up the media campaign and help convince skeptical state senators in Albany. Her firm, SKD Knickerbocker, includes Hillary Rosen, a member of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation board and a long-time power player.

SKD Knickerbocker co-founder Josh Isay also is on board. He has been a go-to guy in New York Democratic circles ever since he managed Sen. Chuck Schumer’s upset win over Republican Senate incumbent Al D’Amato in 1998.

The strategists and their allies plan to send organizers into at least 15 legislative districts belonging to Republicans and moderate Democrats upstate, on Long Island and in New York City.

Supporters of gay marriage estimate they netted two more favorable legislative votes in the last election when they targeted lawmakers who voted against them.

Ross Levi of Empire State Pride Agenda said several state senators who voted no last time are now reported to be on the fence and will get special attention from advocates. They include New York City Democrats Joseph Addabbo Jr., and Shirley Huntley and Republican James Alesi from the Rochester area.

“We are going to garner all the resources we can,” Levi said, adding that he looked forward to coordinating efforts with the other groups. “A strong united community working together is going to be a great asset in accomplishing our goal,” he said.

Pushing through gay marriage could also be an asset in attracting progressive primary voters in any future Cuomo for president campaign. For now, though, the governor and his allies just want to see the first marriage ceremonies between same-sex couples performed in the state by this summer.

“New York is clearly the biggest prize in this battle so far,” Socarides said. “Right now, with the situation in California tied up in a lawsuit that looks like it will take years to resolve, New York is the biggest prize that remains and if we can win in New York, it will be an important turning point in the marriage effort.”

Marriage View Change of Heart

By Helen A.S. Popkin, The Today Show

Who says people don’t change? After five years of writing anti-gay blogs, making anti-gay YouTube videos and

going on the National Organization for Marriage's "Summer of Marriage," NOM Facebook administrator Louis Marinelli deleted the organization's Facebook page, taking all 290,000 "fans" with it.

Marinelli originally launched the Fan page to promote his own initiative, Protect Marriage: One Man, One Woman, according to gay rights website GoodAsYou.org. He stayed on as administrator until April 8th, when he submitted his resignation. In a blog post titled "I now support full marriage equality," Marinelli explained why: "Having spent the last five years putting all of my political will, interest and energy into fighting against the spread of same-sex marriage as if it were a contagious disease, I must admit that it is hard for me to put the following text into words let alone utter them with my own voice. Whether it is an issue of disbelief, shame or embarrassment, the one thing that is for sure is that I have come to this point after several months of an internal conflict with myself. That conflict gradually tore away at me until recently when I was able to for the first time simply admit to myself that I do in fact support civil marriage equality."

That's civil marriage, mind you, performed and recognized by the State – as opposed to "holy matrimony," which Marinelli maintains is about a man and a woman. He doesn't mention anything about the enormous tax burden and extra insurance costs gay couples still carry, civil marriage or not.

Marinelli does describe, in emotional detail, an internal journey that began when he met real live homosexuals and lesbians protesting NOM's cross-country campaign against gay rights and could not help but notice they were just as human as he. This fact was reinforced by an online dialogue with a gay rights blogger who contacted him and ongoing conversations with same-sex marriage supporters in another Facebook group.

"I soon realized that there I was surrounded by hateful people; propping up a cause I created five years ago, a cause which I had begun to question," he writes, and one might assume he's referring to NOM, the largest anti-gay marriage organization in the U.S.

Marinelli's blog doesn't go into detail about his Facebook fan page purge, and it appears NOM doesn't use a third-party archival service – and therefore must build its previous 290,000 following back from scratch.

Proposition 8 Supporters Say Ruling Should Be Voided

By Maura Dolan, Los Angeles Times

In another jab at the federal judge who ruled against Proposition 8, sponsors of the gay marriage initiative asked a district court to set aside the ruling on the grounds the judge was in a long-term same-sex relationship that posed a conflict of interest.

Attorneys for ProtectMarriage, the group that sponsored the 2008 ballot initiative, said in a legal motion that Chief Judge Vaughn R. Walker, who retired from the San Francisco-based district court earlier this year, had a duty to disclose his relationship and step down before deciding whether a ban on same-sex marriage violated the federal Constitution.

"Judge Walker's ten-year-long same-sex relationship creates the unavoidable impression that he was not the impartial judge the law requires," said Andy Pugno, a lawyer for ProtectMarriage. "He was obligated to either recuse himself or provide full disclosure of this relationship at the outset of the case. These circumstances demand setting aside his decision."

Walker, 67, a Republican appointee, was widely known within San Francisco's legal community to be gay. He brought his partner to bar events and introduced him to others as his partner. Some publications, including The Times, wrote about his sexual orientation prior to his ruling, but until recently, ProtectMarriage had not made an issue of it.

A spokeswoman for ProtectMarriage said Walker's conflict was not his sexual orientation, but the fact that he was in a serious same-sex relationship that could conceivably lead to marriage.

"Under governing California law, Judge Walker currently cannot marry his partner," Pugno said. "But his ruling in this case, if ultimately upheld, would give him a right to do so."

Erwin Chemerinsky, law school dean at UC Irvine, said there was "no chance whatsoever" that a court would void Walker's ruling against Proposition 8 on the grounds that he should have disclosed his personal relationship.

"This is an offensive personal attack on Vaughn Walker," Chemerinsky said. He likened the legal maneuver to an argument that black judges cannot decide race discrimination cases or female judges preside over cases involving sex bias.

Chad Griffin, who founded the group that launched the lawsuit against Proposition 8, called the request to nullify the ruling one of "a string of desperate and absurd motions by the Proposition 8 proponents who refuse to accept their loss in district court."

Griffin, a political strategist, suggested ProtectMarriage might be using the motion as a fundraising or public relations tool. ProtectMarriage is financing the costly legal battle, which is expected to eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

This motion asks U.S. District Court Chief Judge James Ware, who has replaced Walker, to set aside Walker's ruling. Walker presided over a 12-day trial last year in which witnesses testified about the nature of sexual orientation and the history of marriage.

The motion follows an attempt earlier in April by Proposition 8's backers to rebuke Walker for what they

said were broken promises and defiance of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In that move, ProtectMarriage asked the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to order Walker to return video recordings of the trial after the group learned he was showing a snippet from testimony during lectures on whether trials should be taped for public viewing. The U.S. Supreme Court had barred Walker from showing video recordings of the trial outside the San Francisco courthouse.

ProtectMarriage has appealed Walker's ruling to the 9th Circuit. The federal court, trying to decide whether the group even has the right to lodge an appeal, has asked the California Supreme Court to decide whether initiative sponsors under California law have legal authority or "standing" to defend ballot measures in court. The state court is expected to decide the issue later this year.

Conjugal Visits Allowed for Inmates and Partners in Same-Sex Marriages, Civil Unions

By Glenn Blain, NY Daily News

State prison officials are allowing conjugal visits for gay inmates involved in same-sex marriages or civil unions. Recent regulation changes will also allow gay prisoners to take leave from their cell when their loved one is terminally ill. "If they seek a furlough based on the partner, it's likely it would be granted," said Peter Cutler, spokesman for the Department of Correctional Services.

"We've been doing it," Cutler said of the leave policy, which previously applied to only traditional marriages.

Cutler said the regulation, which appeared in the state Register recently, formalizes a policy change initiated in 2008 by then-Gov. David Paterson, who ordered New York State agencies to recognize same-sex marriages that were legally performed in other states and civil unions. Cutler could not explain why it took so long for the regulation to be finalized in the Register, which lists recent rule-making activities by state agencies.

Cutler was unaware of any inmate in a same-sex relationship who has had a conjugal visit, known officially as family reunions. About 20 of the state's 67 correctional facilities allow conjugal visits.

Gay marriage advocates welcomed the move, saying any recognition of same-sex relationships is a positive step – even when it occurs in the prisons.

"The more the state is consistent with that status of law the better off we are," said Ross Levi, executive director of the Empire State Pride Agenda.

The Pride Agenda recently joined forces with the Log Cabin Republicans, the Human Rights Campaign and a handful of other advocacy groups to form New Yorkers United for Marriage. The group is coordinating its efforts with Gov. Cuomo's office in a bid to win approval of gay marriage before the end of the state's legislative session in June.

Cuomo has said legalizing gay marriage is a priority for his administration. Advocates hope his support will translate into enough political pressure to win over the GOP-controlled state Senate.

The Senate soundly rejected legislation legalizing same-sex marriage. The Democrat-controlled Assembly has repeatedly approved the measure.

A recent Quinnipiac Poll showed 56% of New Yorkers support legalizing gay marriages.

"We continue to believe the environment for legalizing same-sex marriage remains strong," Levi said.

Equal Time for "Traditional Values"

By Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed

The Texas House of Representatives has passed a budget bill that would require any public college with a student center on "alternative" sexuality to provide equal funding to create new centers to promote "traditional values."

While the Senate has yet to adopt a version of the budget bill, the inclusion of the measure in the overall budget bill and the dominance of social conservatives in Texas politics means that the measure could well be enacted. The House vote in favor of the amendment on the campus sexuality centers was 110-24.

Many Texas public colleges – as is the case at many colleges elsewhere – have centers within student affairs departments that serve gay and lesbian students. These centers sponsor programming, refer students who need counseling or support groups, and serve as advocates for gay and lesbian students on their campuses.

Representative Wayne Christian, a Republican, proposed the amendment, which would apply to any public colleges with a center "for students focused on gay, lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, transsexual, transgender, gender questioning, or other gender identity issues." According to *The Dallas Morning News*, lawmakers "cracked jokes and guffawed" during debate, with one representative asking Christian what "pansexual" means. Christian urged the lawmaker to visit the centers at the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University to find out.

Lawmakers supporting the bill have said that they favor only equal time for all kinds of sexuality.

But the Young Conservatives of Texas, a group that worked with Christian on the legislation, did so with the hope that public colleges would respond to a law, if the bill passes, by ending support for existing centers. Tony McDonald, senior vice chairman of the group and a law student at UT Austin, said in an interview that "we could try to get these groups defunded" in a law, but that the equal funding approach was viewed as more likely to pass (perhaps with the same impact).

McDonald said that he doesn't believe universities should be funding centers on any sexuality or values – traditional or otherwise. He said that students "who want

to promote a homosexual lifestyle” can do so “on their own time and with their own money.”

Requiring the creation of traditional values centers would “give the left a taste of its own medicine,” he said. He charged that these centers “are encouraging folks who consider themselves homosexuals to go on considering themselves as such. That’s the point of the centers, and that’s not something Texas taxpayers should spend their money on.”

While supporters of the centers have said that they are needed to provide support for students who are in a minority on campus, McDonald said that it is actually traditional students who lack power. “If I were to walk through UT law school with a shirt on that said, ‘Homosexuality is immoral,’ if I were to do that, there would be an uproar. People would be upset, and it would be considered out of place and not acceptable to do that. I’d probably get a talking to. But if you go through campus to promote homosexuality, that is the norm.”

While McDonald said he hoped that, if the bill is enacted, public colleges eliminate existing sexuality centers, he said that there are good programs that could be sponsored by a traditional values center. He said that they might offer programs to encourage chastity or marriage between male and female students, for example.

The budget measure is prompting derision from Texas liberals. A column in *The Texas Observer* began this way: “Imagine the plight of the heterosexual student stepping on to a college campus for the first time. How will he fit in? Should he tell his new roommate about his alternative hetero lifestyle? Will he be bullied, just like he was in high school, where he was mercilessly teased for being a sexual deviant? Where does a straight person turn?”

While centers in Texas await the outcome of the budget bill, the debate has already accelerated at Texas A&M University, where the leadership of the Student Senate is pushing the university to go on record by saying that it would not increase student fees to create traditional values centers, but would cut the existing Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center in half to finance a new center. In debate over the issue, advocates for traditional values centers said that straight students who may be questioning their sexuality need a center just as much as gay students do. Students said it was important to create “an equal playing field” for those who may disagree with the gay center.

Lowell Kane, program coordinator for the gay center at Texas A&M, said that he could not comment on the state legislation. But he said it was hard for him to accept the idea that gay students somehow have it better than their straight counterparts because of the center at Texas A&M or elsewhere. He noted that in various surveys of gay students about how welcoming the university is, Texas A&M does not do well.

“I’m sure there are instances where an individual heterosexual person might feel oppressed,” he said, and that’s wrong. But it’s also not the norm, he added. “What we are talking about is the difference between an individual instance and societal homophobia.”

“If you walk into any campus classroom or student health services, most of what you find is geared toward a heterosexual population and not a GLBT population,” Kane said. Noting the suicide last year of Tyler Clementi, a student at Rutgers University, Kane said, “I have never heard of any student who took their life because their college roommate outed them as being a heterosexual student.”

And turning to comments from students at Texas A&M, he added, “I have never had a student come up and complain that someone comes up and out of the blue calls them a ‘hetero’ and slapped them, but that happens to my students, who are called ‘dyke’ and ‘fag.’ “

Senate OKs two of three transgender rights bills

By Benjamin Spillman & Ed Vogel, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The Nevada state Senate approved two of three bills aimed at protecting the rights of transgender people in Nevada. Senate Bills 368 and 331, which would outlaw transgender discrimination in housing and public accommodations, were approved on votes of 13-8 and 11-10. Senate Bill 180, which would make it a hate crime to attack someone based on gender identity or expression, failed 10-11, with Sen. John Lee, D-North Las Vegas, joining 10 Republicans in opposition.

“I view this bill as not being about creating special rights,” said Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford, D-Las Vegas, during the debate on the three bills. “It is about explicitly extending equal protection of law to those who are often the target of discrimination.”

Activists in favor of the transgender bills said although they were disappointed in the failure of SB180, which had support from Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval, they were happy the Senate pressed forward with the other measures.

“It is a big, big victory for the community,” said Jan Gilbert, a lobbyist for the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada.

The bills now go to the Assembly, which recently voted 29-13 in favor of Assembly Bill 211, which would outlaw employment discrimination against transgender people.

Rep. Frank: Antigay Hatred Losing Steam

By Advocate.com Editors

Rep. Barney Frank has little faith there will be a federal remedy for gays seeking to marry anytime soon, but he

also believes marriage equality is quickly fading as a controversial issue while antigay prejudice becomes less acceptable in society.

In a May interview with *Playboy* on subjects ranging from health care reform to the legalization of marijuana, the Massachusetts congressman said, "Overall I think antigay prejudice is on its way out."

An excerpt from the interview:

Playboy: Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. Although states may allow same-sex marriage, only recently did Obama say the federal government would no longer defend DOMA in court.

Rep. Frank: There are lawsuits against it that I think will win anyway, because the federal government can't discriminate. Beyond that I don't see anything about gay marriage happening on a federal level. More and more states will go that way, though. When they do, people will see, as with health care and the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell," that there are no negative consequences. Places that have gay marriage have had none of the negative consequences that people warned us about. Zero. The divorce rate hasn't gone up. There have been no calamities. Marriage hasn't lost its meaning. Same-sex marriage as a divisive issue is losing its steam. Overall I think antigay prejudice is on its way out.

Playboy: Antigay sentiments are still expressed, often from the conservative right and especially from the Christian right. There are still hate crimes against gays

Rep. Frank: Yes, and we have to deal with them. We passed a bill to add crimes against gays and lesbians as hate crimes. Hate crimes, whether against gays or anyone else, can't be tolerated. Overall, antigay prejudice is diminishing. It won't be used by the far right the way it once was. It just doesn't work anymore. But I worry about what will replace it. I think they will increasingly focus on abortion, escalating it as their issue to inflame people. They'll work on whittling away the right to have an abortion, striking down any federal funding.

First openly gay candidate wins in Tokyo ward

By Natsuko Fukue, The Japan Times

Openly gay candidate Taiga Ishikawa won a seat in the Toshima Ward Assembly in Tokyo in the election on April 24th, marking a historic first. Before the 36-year-old writer and activist, no openly gay person had been elected to public office in Japan. The Toshima race saw 53 candidates vie for 36 seats, according to the ward office.

"I hope this news will give a hope to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people who still feel isolated from the society," said Ishikawa. "I will do my best to make Toshima Ward more friendly to LGBT people, young people and foreigners."

Ishikawa, an advocate of LGBT rights and former secretary to Social Democratic Party leader Mizuho Fukushima, published the book "Boku no Kareshi wa Doko ni Iru?" ("Where is My Boyfriend?") in 2002 under his real name. In 2004, he founded a nonprofit group that creates chances for LGBT people to make friends.

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