



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.

Gay-Straight Alliances

Monthly Meeting
Sunday, March 18, 2012
2:30–5:30 PM

Kenilworth United Church of Christ

The March meeting will begin with a discussion of Gay-Straight Alliances in area schools and will include time for sharing. 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 monthly meetings are in the library, which is near the parking lot entrance. The facility is handicap accessible.

New Parents Meetings are scheduled as needed at a location convenient to those involved. These self-help one-on-one meetings deal 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.

Minnesota School District Settles Bullying Lawsuit

By Maria Elena Baca, Star Tribune (Twin Cities, MN)

The Anoka-Hennepin School District pledged March 5th to improve the treatment of gay and lesbian students as part of a settlement that closes a long legal chapter in its struggles over bullying and sexual orientation.

The 5-1 school board vote, which resolves both a federal civil rights investigation and a lawsuit filed last summer by six former and current students, was received with cheers and hugs among plaintiffs and their supporters. The suit had said the district did not adequately respond to persistent physical and verbal harassment based on real or perceived sexual orientation.

The settlement creates a five-year partnership between the school district and the federal departments of Justice and Education to help create programs and procedures to improve the school climate for all students.

Michael McGee, father of plaintiff Damien McGee-Backes, praised the affected students for coming forward. "If it were not for their courage and determination to tell their stories and to stand up and say, 'Enough, I deserve better; we all deserve better,' we would not be on the precipice of not only creating change in the Anoka-Hennepin School District, but also proving a model for change nationally," McGee said.

Anoka-Hennepin officials said that, with help from the U.S. departments of Justice and Education, the district

will set a new state standard for anti-bullying efforts.

"Our gay students deserve to feel safe and be safe, just like everyone else in our public schools," said Superintendent Dennis Carlson. "When we have finished this process, we believe we will have developed a model that all school districts can follow."

The lone school board member to vote against the agreement, Kathy Tingelstad, resigned after the vote, citing concerns about the plan's cost, federal intervention in local school practices and the precedent set for other districts.

Under the agreement, the six students will be paid one lump sum of \$270,000 by the district's insurance carrier. In addition, the district must:

- Retain a consultant on sex-based harassment to review its policies and procedures.
- Develop and implement a plan for preventing and addressing sex-based harassment of students in middle and high school.
- Enhance training of staff and students on the issue.
- Retain a mental health consultant to address needs of students victimized by harassment.

"This partnership will strengthen the support that the district provides to all students, including students who are gay or perceived to be gay," said school board Chairman Tom Heidemann. He added that the consent decree builds upon the work the district already has done to step up its anti-bullying efforts, including staff training.

The district had maintained that staff members acted appropriately, but said agreeing to the settlement seemed a better path than continuing litigation.

"At the end of the day, the board would rather focus our limited resources on educating kids and keeping them safe," said Heidemann. The agreement, he said, "likely saved the district millions of dollars and many years of ongoing litigation."

Last month, the school board scrapped its Sexual Orientation Curriculum Policy, which required staff to remain neutral on issues of sexual orientation. The district said replacing it with a Respectful Learning Environment Policy stemmed from staff confusion about the old policy, not the lawsuit, but its repeal had been among its demands.

The basis of the suit, filed on the students' behalf by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, was the contention that the district had violated the students' constitutional right to equal protection under the law.

The settlement comes after national scrutiny of the state's largest district over its handling of issues involving bullying and sexual orientation. In 2009 and 2010, the district was wracked by the suicides of several students. Parents and friends identified some as gay or who had been perceived as gay; some had been bullied.

Over the past school year, the district has increased staff training to counter bullying of all kinds. It adopted a policy that more specifically defines bullying, harassment

Lifetime Members

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

Benefactor Member

Bob Patterson

Sponsoring Members

Sheila Dickinson
Terri Julian
Ronda Marvel
Mark Meyer and Delwyn Milander
James and Mary Ellen Walsh

Supporting Members

Anonymous
Babs Conant and Camille Cox
Shawn & Arnold Cribari
Loretta & Richard Gucwa
Paula Welch Jack
Donald Kreger & Ron Ehmke
Jeffrey McConnell & Fred Dansereau
Janice Moore
Kathleen & George Steigauf
Linda Stefaniak
Dennis Stuart & Roger Seifert

and expected staff response. The process leading to adoption of the new respectful learning policy revealed deep divisions in the community. Advocates for GLBT students and staff argued that any policy could squelch expression and label individuals, while the Parents Action League said removing the neutrality policy would open the door to gay activism in the classroom.

Laurie Thompson, spokeswoman for the Parents Action League, called the settlement a "travesty." The lawsuit, she said in an e-mail, was not about bullying but was meant to "abolish conservative moral beliefs about homosexuality. Making schools safe for 'gay' kids means indoctrinating impressionable, young minds with homosexual propaganda."

But plaintiff Dylon Frei, an Anoka High School freshman, said he was proud that the board approved the settlement, saying everyone deserves a good high school experience. "It's gotten better," he said, adding that he hadn't been bullied in about a month and a half. "That has never happened before. I see change coming, and I'm really glad about it."

Oklahoma's First Openly Gay State Senator

The Huffington Post

Oklahoma elected its first openly gay state senator, with State Rep. Al McAffrey soaring to a landslide victory Tuesday night.

The 63-year-old McAffrey, a Democrat, beat Republican opponent Jason Reese with more than 66 percent of the vote, according to NewsOK.

"Al's election to the State Senate is another milestone for LGBT Oklahomans, and we are proud to support his campaign," said Chuck Wolfe, president and CEO of the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, which had endorsed McAffrey. "There are still a number of states that have never elected any openly LGBT state legislators, so Oklahoma can be proud that Al has been elected to both the House and the Senate."

The Dallas Voice reports that McAffrey, a father of three, was elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 2006, and easily won re-election in both 2008 and 2010. During his time in office, he was a leader on legislation supporting senior citizens, education issues and access to affordable health care.

"Tonight, the people of Senate District 46 have put their faith in me to represent them in our state legislature," McAffrey wrote on his official Facebook page. "I do not take their faith in me lightly or for granted. I am committed to fighting for the values that define our district: fairness, equality and moving Oklahoma forward."

A father of three, McAffrey has also been a "tireless advocate and supporter" of HIV/AIDS awareness, according to his website.

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

We Tell The Story

Friday, June 8th at 8:00 PM

St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral – 128 Pearl St, Buffalo, 14202

Saturday, June 9th at 8:00 PM

University Presbyterian Church – 3330 Main St (at Niagara Falls Blvd.)

Sunday, June 10th at 5:00 PM

St. James United Church of Christ – 76 Main St, Hamburg, 14075

Tickets & info: 883-1277

www.buffalogaymenschorus.com

Gentle Moves

Dance Inspired Therapeutic Movement Classes

- Increase Your Flexibility • Tone Your Muscles
- Improve Your Posture and LIFT YOUR SPIRITS!

• Group Classes and Private Lessons Available

Suzanne Evans

716.574-5503

suz32dana@yahoo.com

St. John's Grace Episc. Church

51 Colonial Circle

Buffalo, NY 14222

Ohm Ultra-lounge

948 Main Street at Allen St, Buffalo, NY

- Huge patio
- Free parking across the street
- Open for lunches Mon thru Fri. 11am to 2pm.
- Have your special events with us

www.facebook.com/ohmultralounge

MARK J. PESZKO

Attorney at Law

515 BRISBANE BLDG.
BUFFALO, NY 14203

TEL (716) 855-1921
FAX (716) 854-7692

MJPESZKO@AOL.COM

'Don't Say Gay' Bill Advances

By Chas Sisk, The Tennessean

A bill to restrict teaching about homosexuality before high school cleared its first hurdle in the state House of Representatives, setting the stage for a second year of debate on the appropriate way to handle discussion about gays and lesbians with schoolchildren.

The House Education subcommittee approved the so-called "Don't Say Gay" bill on a voice vote mid-February, renewing a debate that roiled the legislature last spring over whether elementary and middle schools should be allowed to initiate discussions about homosexuality. The panel accepted the version of the bill that passed the state Senate late in last year's session.

Opponents say it will not curb talk about homosexuality among grade school kids but will send the signal that it should be stigmatized. But several lawmakers argued that it would protect parents' right to educate their children about their beliefs on their own terms. "The basic right as an American is my right to life, my right to liberty and my right to the pursuit of happiness," said state Rep. John DeBerry, D-Memphis, arguing to keep the subject of homosexuality out of elementary school classrooms. "Within that includes being able to run my home, raise my children as I see fit and to indoctrinate them as I see fit."

The vote sent the measure to the House Education Committee, which could take the measure up as soon as next week. The vote also kept the bill on a path to be voted on by the full House before the legislature adjourns in the spring.

The measure, labeled "Don't Say Gay" by its opponents, has proved to be one of the most emotionally charged bills to go before the Tennessee legislature in recent years. Gay and lesbian groups have led opposition to the bill, but many Nashville high school students — particularly those involved in gay/straight alliance organizations at Hume-Fogg, Martin Luther King and University School of Nashville — have turned out as well.

Several dozen students, many of them wearing purple T-shirts, lined the rows of seating in the hearing room Wednesday to show their disagreement with the measure. Their numbers led the subcommittee to relocate the hearing to a larger room.

"To me, they're sending a message that in society gay people aren't really equal," said Thomas Kibby, a Hume-Fogg student. "This law would be kind of moving backwards."

Lawmakers discussed the measure for about half an hour Wednesday. The bill's original sponsor, state Rep. Bill Dunn, R-Knoxville, opened up by adding an amendment that lined up the House version with the version that passed the Senate last year. He said the new wording should dispel "hysteria" that has surrounded the issue. "What this amendment does is keep us in line with current curriculum," he said. "This bill, if amended, does not prohibit the use of the word 'gay,' it does not

change the anti-bullying statute, and it does not prohibit a school guidance counselor from discussing the issues of sexuality with a student."

But the Rev. Thomas Kleinert, pastor of Vine Street Christian Church in Nashville, said the bill would discourage discussions about a subject that children hear about constantly. "Our children have to deal with that complexity long before they've reached sufficient maturity," he said. "Silence in the classroom only adds to the cloak of pain and shame, whereas open, age-appropriate conversation may give them a chance and the courage to talk to an adult they trust."

The only member of the subcommittee to speak against the measure was House Minority Leader Craig Fitzhugh, D-Ripley. "I really don't know the purpose in bringing this legislation again," he said. "It looks to me to be a solution looking for a problem."

Supporters alluded to the emotion of the issue, but they said the principle at stake was ensuring that children receive appropriate instruction in a publicly funded setting. "We put 'phobia' on the end of words, and then we automatically demonize someone who has an opposing view," DeBerry said. "What this bill does is it says everybody has the right to train their children."

Washington State Governor Signs Same-Sex Marriage Bill

By Joel Connelly, seattlepi.com Staff

An emotional Gov. Chris Gregoire signed legislation making Washington the seventh state to legalize marriage between same-sex couples, declaring it was time "to make history in this great state." Gregoire's voice broke as she described conversations with her two daughters, who told her that marriage equality was "the civil rights issue of their generation... Thank you to that younger generation and my two daughters."

The governor presided at a ceremony in Olympia, joined by legislative leaders and the longtime same-sex partners of such lawmakers as Sen. Ed Murray and Reps. Jamie Pedersen and Laurie Jinkins.

The law goes into effect on June 7, unless opponents succeed in gathering 120,577 valid voter signatures to force a referendum in November. If so, marriage equality would be held up pending a decision by Washington voters.

Gregoire predicted that Washington, for the second time, would vote to ratify a major piece of gay/lesbian civil rights legislation. Washington voted in favor of Referendum in 2009, becoming the first state to ratify an "everything but marriage" domestic partner law. "Washington will say yes because a family is a family," Gregoire declared. "It is time to give our loving gay and lesbian couples a chance to have a married life in the state of Washington."

Gregoire told of receiving a letter from a 16-year-old girl who had just come to grips with her sexual orientation. In the future, said the governor, the young woman will

"not have to get on bended knee and ask, 'Will you civil union me'." Kids in schools will not have to have their parents seen as "somewhat different than other loving parents," Gregoire added. "I'm proud that our same-sex couples will no longer be treated as separate but equal," the governor said.

Opponents show no sign of slackening their opposition. "We ARE going to exercise our right to referendum and reject this law," declared the website of the Family Policy Institute of Washington.

As Gregoire signed Washington's bill into law, the New Jersey State Senate voted 24-16 to legalize same-sex marriage in the Garden State. State Assembly approval is expected. But Republican Gov. Chris Christie says he will veto the legislation.

Ex-Sen. Rick Santorum, a scathing critic of marriage equality, will meet this afternoon in Olympia with opponents of the bill Gregoire signed into law. The Republican presidential candidate holds a rally with supporters tonight at the Washington State History Museum in Tacoma.

The Family Policy Institute and the Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle had asked followers to call on Gregoire to veto the marriage equality bill. A statement by diocesan bishops, critical of the law, was included Sunday in Catholic parish bulletins.

Other faith groups in the state have endorsed marriage equality. Episcopal Bishop Greg Rickel has described it as a "conservative" step in which society recognizes and encourages fidelity in human relationships. The Faith Action Network has lobbied for the legislation. Churches hosted meetings at which Washington United for Marriage mobilized support for the legislation. Under the law, no church or religious denomination is required to marry same-sex couples – or anybody. "This bill preserves freedom of religion for our churches: Absolutely nothing changes in the state of Washington," said Gregoire, herself a practicing Catholic.

New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Iowa, Vermont, New Hampshire and the District of Columbia currently allow same-sex couples to marry. New York approved marriage equality last year in a manner replicated by Washington. A Catholic governor – Andrew Cuomo – championed the legislation. Four Republicans in the New York State Senate provided crucial backing, as did four GOP members of the Washington State Senate.

Washington has passed three landmark gay/lesbian civil rights bills during Gregoire's tenure as governor. The first civil rights bill was passed in 2006, after a 19-year effort. Domestic partnership was approved two years later.

"Years from now, our kids will look back and ask what all the fuss was about," joked Rep. Pederson. Pedersen pointed proudly to "my partner and future husband Eric," who stood a few feet away, baby in hand.

Sen. Ed Murray has worked 17 years on civil rights and marriage equality. He came to the Legislature after the death of State Sen. Cal Anderson, Washington's first gay lawmaker, who had worked eight years on civil rights legislation. "My friends, welcome to the other side of the rainbow," said Murray. "No matter what the future holds, nothing will take this moment away from us."

Maryland Governor Signs Marriage Bill

By Lou Chibbaro Jr., The Washington Blade

With a crowd of same-sex couples and the eight openly gay and lesbian members of the Maryland Legislature standing behind him, Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley signed the Civil Marriage Protection Act, which calls for legalizing same-sex marriage in the state.

House of Delegates Speaker Michael Busch (D-Anne Arundel County) and Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller (D-Prince George's and Calvert Counties) joined O'Malley in signing the bill before a crowd of hundreds of supporters who packed the lobby of the state capital building in Annapolis.

"We are all Americans. And all of us at end of the day want the same thing for our children. We want them to live in a loving, caring, and committed home that is protected equally under the law," O'Malley said minutes before signing the bill. O'Malley made no mention of a voter referendum expected to be placed on the ballot in November calling for killing the bill before it becomes law. But his brief remarks at the bill signing ceremony appeared to reflect the themes that Annapolis observers expect O'Malley to use to defend the bill before voters in the fall.

"For a free and diverse people, for people of many faiths, for a people committed to the principle of religious freedom, the way forward is always found through greater respect for the equal rights of all, for the eminent dignity of all," O'Malley said. "Religious freedom was the very reason for our state's founding and the heart of religious freedom is the freedom of individual conscience," he said. "If there is a thread that unites all of our work here it is the thread of human dignity, the dignity of work, the dignity of the job, the dignity of every child's health, the dignity of every individual."

After signing the bill at a table placed at the foot of a curved, marble staircase where dozens of supporters stood, O'Malley handed the legislation to Busch and Miller, who placed their signature on the document. Miller voted against the bill; Busch voted for it. "The bill is signed," O'Malley declared, triggering a burst of applause and cheers from the crowd.

Many of the same-sex couples in the audience held young children in their arms and embraced one another as O'Malley handed a collection of pens he used to sign the measure to well-wishers who rushed up to the governor to shake his hand. Officials with Marylanders for

Marriage Equality, the coalition of LGBT and straight allied groups that coordinated the effort to pass the bill in the legislature said that, while celebrating their legislative victory, they were gearing up for the referendum fight.

Most agreed that O'Malley's signature on the Civil Marriage Protection Act was the kick-off for what political observers predict will be an acrimonious referendum campaign in which opponents, as they have in other states, will warn that legalizing same-sex marriage would result in the "teaching" of homosexuality in elementary schools.

Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, which initiated the Marylanders for Marriage coalition, said he was hopeful that the same-sex marriage law would survive a referendum. He pointed to public opinion polls showing Maryland voters support legalizing same-sex marriage by a slim majority over those who oppose it. "We recognize there is a great deal of work to do between now and November and we stand ready and committed to do the work," he said.

"The changes in the hearts and minds of people on this issue are moving so rapidly. A year now is like a decade in this fight," he said. "So the strength of this legislative victory and this being a presidential election year and the turn out being what it will be, I'm optimistic about the prospects for winning." Lesbian House of Delegates member Heather Mizeur (D-Montgomery County) and her gay colleagues, Delegate Peter Murphy (D-Charles County) and Delegate Luke Clippinger (D-Baltimore City) agreed with Solmonese's assessment.

The state Board of Elections on Wednesday approved the language for the referendum petition; opponents are awaiting written confirmation from the board to begin gathering signatures, according to an AP report. Petition drafts filed by opponents Delegate Neil Parrott and the Maryland Marriage Alliance contain typos but are otherwise compliant, according to the AP.

Opponents were expected to gather the required number of petition signatures needed to place the referendum on the ballot for the November election. The referendum campaign received a boost last Friday, when the Fox TV station in Baltimore, WBFF, posted a prominent link to the website gathering signatures for the referendum on its homepage. Scott Livingston, news director at WBFF, denied any corporate involvement in promoting the referendum campaign. "We are not endorsing any element of this debate," Livingston told the Blade. "We see it as a political process. Our goal is letting viewers understand they have a voice in the debate." He added that the site has now been "modified. The link that previously sent readers directly to the petition site now goes to a new page within the WBFF site that also includes a link to Equality Maryland's website. The change followed what Livingston characterized as a "handful" of complaints from WBFF viewers.

Gay Marriage Backers Find Success Emphasizing Love and Family

By Ricardo Lopez, Los Angeles Times

Proponents of gay marriage, who traditionally frame the cause as a matter of equality and civil rights, are increasingly invoking something else: family. And the tactic seems to be working.

In February three state legislatures passed statutes making gay marriage legal, and in each case the appeal to family connections was a central feature. "We need to ask ourselves: How would it feel to be a child of a gay couple?" asked Washington's Democratic governor, Chris Gregoire, who signed the state's legislation Feb. 13 after having announced her support for it a month earlier. "How can we tell these children that their parents' love is seen as unequal under Washington law?"

A Washington state lawmaker who voted for the bill recalled her own marriage. "I was married for 23 years to the love of my life and he died six years ago," said Republican Rep. Maureen Walsh in a video that went viral. "How could I deny anyone the right to have that incredible bond with another individual in life?"

In New Jersey, 15-year-old Madison Galluccio told state lawmakers debating same-sex marriage what it's like being the adopted daughter of two gay dads. "A lot of people think that my family is different," she testified before an Assembly committee. "You gave us a civil union. I don't know what that is... It's very hard for me to explain to my friends. It's very hard that I can't tell them, 'Oh yeah, I have gay dads and they're married just like your parents.' But they're not." Almost two weeks later, New Jersey lawmakers passed a bill legalizing same-sex marriage, but it was swiftly vetoed by Republican Gov. Chris Christie, who wants the issue decided by referendum.

In Maryland, where Democratic Gov. Martin O'Malley signed its bill into law, a Republican lawmaker had a change of heart over gay marriage after coming face to face with couples sharing their stories. Wade Kach, left scrambling for a seat in a packed committee hearing last month, found a spot near the witness table. "I saw with so many of the gay couples, they were so devoted to one another. I saw so much love," said Kach, a member of the House of Delegates. "When this hearing was over, I was a changed person in regard to this issue."

Putting a human face on same-sex marriage reflects a strategic change — one that can pack an emotional wallop and, as Kach's experience shows, win over the undecided or even opponents. The message "used to be one that focused on rights, parity in benefits," said Fred Sainz, vice president of communications and marketing for the Human Rights Campaign, a national gay rights group based in Washington, D.C.

Since about 2008, Sainz said, same-sex marriage activists have begun "talking about love, honor and commitment." The emphasis on family and love was

prompted, in part, by two dispiriting defeats for same-sex marriage advocates at the ballot box. California voters approved Proposition 8, which banned gay marriage, in 2008. A year later, Maine voters overturned a gay marriage law there. Framing the discussion in legal terms was not resonating with undecided voters and lawmakers, Sainz said.

The strategy is playing out in North Carolina, Minnesota and Maine, states where voters will decide the highly charged social issue in the fall.

Volunteers are sharing personal testimonials during nightly phone banks and urging undecided voters to think of any gay people they might know before they cast their votes, said Gia Vitali, spokeswoman for Minnesotans United for All Families, a group that is hoping to defeat a proposed state constitutional amendment to define marriage as between one man and one woman. "These are our neighbors, friends and family," Vitali said. "They are in our community, and our campaign wants to highlight the fact that we don't want to treat them any differently."

Meanwhile, groups opposed to gay marriage have largely followed the same script, arguing that "traditional marriage" provides children with the most ideal parenting environment. They also argue that the issue is not one of civil rights because homosexuality, they say, is a choice.

"Our messaging hasn't changed because it's based on truth and reality," said Brian S. Brown, president of the National Organization for Marriage. "It's not that complicated. You don't need sophisticated talking points to present a common-sense truth."

As state legislatures debated the issue in recent months, some gay marriage opponents testifying before lawmakers condemned homosexuality as a sin and warned that legalizing such unions would lead to polygamy and the promotion of homosexuality in schools.

"The scare tactics historically seem to work well for them," said Richard Socarides, a Democratic strategist who served in President Clinton's administration. But Socarides — and other strategists — note that even some opponents of gay marriage have, over the years, softened their tone somewhat.

On its website, the National Organization for Marriage offers talking points against gay marriage, observing that "extensive and repeated polling" demonstrates that the most effective message is: "Gays and lesbians have a right to live as they choose; they don't have the right to redefine marriage for all of us."

And the group warns, referring to same-sex marriage as SSM: "The language to avoid at all costs is 'Ban same-sex marriage.' Our base loves this wording. So do supporters of SSM. They know it causes us to lose about 10 percentage points in polls. Don't use it."

Strategists say the debate over gay marriage has changed for several reasons, among them evolving public opinion. A Field Poll of California voters, for

example, found that 59% of respondents favored allowing gay marriage while 34% opposed it. Three years ago, the poll found that 52.3% favored allowing same-sex unions while 47.7% were opposed. Such changes are fueled in part by more accepting depictions of gay and lesbian individuals in mass media. And having more people come out as gay, particularly celebrities, has liberalized public perception.

"Call it the 'Will and Grace-ification' of American culture," said Dan Schnur, director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at USC. Schnur, a former Republican strategist, said those opposed to gay marriage are avoiding the strident anti-gay language common a decade ago as they try to appeal to independents. "The harsher language is a great way of rallying your troops," he said. But, he adds, "It makes others nervous."

22 U.S. Senators Call For Marriage Equality Plank in Democratic Platform

By Chris Johnson, The Washington Blade

A group of U.S. senators is joining the wave of LGBT rights supporters calling for an endorsement of marriage equality in the Democratic Party platform.

The Washington Blade received statements from the offices of 22 Democratic senators — including Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.), Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Chris Coons (D-Del.) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) — expressing support for including a marriage equality plank in the Democratic Party platform. The Blade solicited statements from all 53 Democratic senators and will update this article on the web as more senators respond. (See <http://tinyurl.com/7kzz3gg> for this story and the senator's statements.)

The senators follow the lead of Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), who on Tuesday became the first U.S. senator this year to get behind the idea of including same-sex marriage in the Democratic Party platform. Shaheen, who's also a co-chair of President Obama's national campaign committee, said she backs a plank in support of marriage equality proposed by the LGBT organization Freedom to Marry.

In addition to calling for an inclusion of marriage equality in the Democratic Party platform, the language also backs overturning the Defense of Marriage Act and passing DOMA repeal legislation known as the Respect for Marriage Act in addition to opposing state constitutional amendments aimed at blocking gay couples from marriage rights.

The 22 senators are Michael Bennet (D-Colo.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Chris Coons (D-Del.), Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Al Franken (D-Minn.), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), John Kerry (D-Mass.), Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), Patty Murray

(D-Wash.), Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Mark Udall (D-Colo.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.).

The platform committee is set to discuss and agree upon language in the Democratic Party platform when it gathers for the Democratic National Convention Sept. 3 in Charlotte, N.C. Officials with Democratic National Committee have declined to comment on whether the platform will be "marriage-equality inclusive."

A number of senators issued statements to the Blade saying they want marriage equality in the Democratic Party platform without offering an explicit endorsement of language as proposed by Freedom to Marry:

Current Marriage Equality Efforts

By Zack Ford, thinkprogress.org

ILLINOIS: A marriage equality bill was recently introduced in the Illinois House, but it's unclear that it will have much success. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has said he would support the measure, and Gov. Pat Quinn (D) has stopped short of openly supporting it himself, but has said he'll help build a majority.

RHODE ISLAND: Advocates are calling for marriage equality to be reintroduced in Rhode Island after last year's effort led only to the creation of civil unions. Given residents can marry in all neighboring states, it is unsurprising that in the first four months they were available, only 39 couples obtained civil unions.

COLORADO: Colorado is again reconsidering legalizing same-sex civil unions. The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced the legislation, but like last year, it is in the Republican-controlled House where the bill's fate will be decided.

WEST VIRGINIA: A lawmaker in West Virginia introduced a bill that would create same-sex civil unions. It's unclear if it has any chance of advancing.

NORTH CAROLINA: On May 8, North Carolinians will vote on a discriminatory constitutional amendment

banning all legal recognition of same-sex couples, including marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships.

MINNESOTA: Minnesota's marriage inequality amendment isn't on the ballot until November, but over \$2 million have already been raised between both sides of the fight. This week, the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee defeated a legislative effort to rescind the ballot question, allowing the plebiscite to proceed.

MAINE: LGBT activists in Maine have succeeded in advancing a ballot initiative that would legalize same-sex marriage, the first time such a vote has been taken affirming the right instead of denying it.

NEW MEXICO: A proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage was recently defeated in committee. Though it has not been tested by the courts, the state's attorney general issued an opinion last year that New Mexico law allows for the recognition of same-sex marriages performed elsewhere.

PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA
2011-2012

Board of Directors

President: **Kristian Rickard**
Vice-President: **Suzanne Evans**
Secretary: **Michele A. Perry**
Treasurer: **Jeffrey J. McConnell**
Directors: **Ann Carrier**
Brian Carrier
John Covert
Brian LaBella

Newsletter Staff

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

Please circle item(s) ▾

JOIN US! PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA

Please join our PFLAG chapter to support our mission at whatever level membership you can:

▽ Lifetime Membership	\$ 500	▽ New	▽ Renewal	▽ Change of Address
▽ Benefactor Membership	\$ 250			
▽ Sponsoring Membership	\$ 100	▽ Advertising member (Business Card Advertisement		
▽ 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. **Circle here if you don't want to receive the PFLAG-Pole Newsletter ▾**

Make checks payable to **PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara** and mail to: P.O.Box 617 Buffalo, NY 14207
PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara is a non-profit 501(c)3 and donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law. **Please write clearly**

Name (s) _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone (____) _____ E-mail address _____