

**THE BANNER OF THE DESERT**  
**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG**  
**PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER**  
**OUR TWENTY-NINTH YEAR    December, 2009    Volume 29, No. 12**

**This month's meeting will be a  
Holiday Potluck  
December 20<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m.**

**At the home of Stuart and Barbara Lynn**

Everyone is invited to the annual PFLAG holiday party. PFLAG will provide turkey, ham, home made bread and beverages, plates and cutlery. Please bring a share dish. Recommendations: appetizers, salads, side dishes and desserts. For driving instructions, please call the information line 760-202-4430.

**A Message From The Editor -**

*Mike Balasa*

The Federal lawsuit to overturn Proposition 8 is in the Northern California District Court and is moving forward. The lead attorneys in the case, Olson and Boies, had a recent victory when the judge ruled that Proposition 8 advocates must allow Olson and Boies access to their internal memos. They are going to use the memos to show that the motivation for supporting Proposition 8 was not just religious beliefs about marriage but also animosity to gays and lesbians. Experts in Supreme Court matters are predicting that the lawsuit will reach the Supreme Court sometime next year, and that the Supreme Court will rule very narrowly on the suit. The result will be on the constitutionality of Proposition 8 and will apply only to California. The Supreme Court is not likely to make a sweeping reform of marriage law either for or against same-sex marriage; preferring that the issue continue to be challenged at the state level through the ballot or state courts.

Observers of the defeat for same-sex marriage in Maine have concluded that the loss was due to the argument that allowing same-sex marriage will result in children being taught that same-sex marriage is normal and desirable. Parents were frightened into thinking that the schools would be teaching young children about gay and lesbian sex. Supporters for same-sex marriage did not find a way to counter the lies and scare tactics. They must face the issue squarely.

Here in California, Equality California has opened field offices in several areas including one in Palm Springs. Volunteers are going out in groups to knock on doors all over the Coachella Valley. I hope that they take the message to the voters that schools are not required to teach about same-sex marriage, but if the issue comes up there is nothing scary about it. Gay and Lesbians are normal people who care and love each other, and they deserve to have their unions valued.

**Repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell**

A bill has been introduced in the US Congress to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell". The

bills title is: Military Readiness Enhancement Act. Everyone is encouraged to write or call Congressperson Mary Bono or your Congressperson asking to support this bill. You can call the Bono office at 760-320-1076 or go to the web site <http://Bono.house.gov> to leave her an e-mail message.

## **Uganda Legislature Studying Proposed Bill That Would Execute Gays and Lesbians**

The author of a bill now in the Ugandan legislature is a Ugandan fundamentalist preacher named, Martin Ssempe. Ssempe has been entertained in the White House by former president George Bush and has appeared frequently with his close friend, Rick Warren, the mega church pastor from Lake Forest, California and author of “The Purpose Driven Life”. Warren, when questioned about the murderous bill proposed by Ssempe, refused to condemn the legislation, claiming that he didn’t think it was appropriate to pass judgment “or interfere in the political process of other nations.”

Ssempe’s bill would require any person in authority such as a school teacher or medical doctor to notify authorities within 24 hours of anyone they suspect of being a homosexual. There would be jail time for any person who failed to file their suspicions with the police. Any person found to engage in homosexual acts would be given life in prison or executed if engaged in “aggravated homosexuality”.

The Commonwealth of British Nations has threatened to suspend Uganda’s membership if the legislation passes. Stephen Lewis, the former UN envoy on AIDS in Africa, said in a speech in Trinidad that, “these clauses have a powerful Orwellian flavor and reflect a twisted world of sexual paranoia. Can you imagine a father or mother turning in a son or daughter? Can you imagine a teacher ratting on a student? But that is exactly what the law requires. I’ve truly never seen its like before. The proposed law would demonize homosexuality and intensify stigma driving gays underground and making it much more difficult to prevent the spread of AIDS”.

Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni, has not made any statement condemning the proposed legislation. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton said in a press conference, “We have to stand against any effort to marginalize and criminalize and penalize members of the LGBT community worldwide.” Ms. Clinton announced that XIX International AIDS Conference set for 2012 will be held in the United States. The Conference has not been held here since 1990. (Thanks to alert Banner reader, Thomas Van Etten for his heads up on this issue)

## **The Next California Assembly Speaker Will Be An Out Gay Man**

The on-line version of the San Francisco Chronicle reported that the assemblyman most likely to be voted as the next Speaker will be out gay man John A. Perez, Democrat of Los Angeles. John Perez is also a cousin of the Los Angeles Mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa.

## **The Status Of Same-Sex Marriage**

The Washington, D.C., city council voted on Tuesday, December 1st, to legalize same-sex marriage. After months of debate the council passed the measure with a sound majority, 11 to 2. Mayor Adrian Fenty has promised to sign the measure when it arrived on his desk. The bill will then go to the US House of Representatives for review.

The New York State Assembly passed a marriage equality bill on December 1st, and it was sent to the Senate. A spokesperson for New York State Senator, Dale Volker, announced that the bill would be voted on sometime that day, but was put off until Wednesday. On Wednesday, the Senate did vote on the measure, but it was defeated by a larger margin than supporters expected. Up until this announcement, common opinion was that the bill was dead for this session.

In New Jersey, a poll by Quinnipiac University reveals that a gay marriage bill would have a hard time passing at the polls. Forty-nine percent of respondents would likely vote against same-sex marriage and 46 percent in favor. Six percent were undecided. The New Jersey legislators are struggling with the issue that still needs to pass the Senate Judicial Committee. Current Governor Corzine promised to sign the bill but incumbent Governor Christie has promised to veto it. Opponents have promised to initiate a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage if the bill passes this session.

Down south in Argentina, a judge ruled last month that two men who were given a marriage license would not be allowed to marry. Earlier, another judge ruled that the couple must be issued a marriage license under regional law. The case now goes to the Argentinean Supreme Court.

### **Banner Editor Has Perfect Record For Predicting The Future of Gay Civil Rights**

Not one of the many predictions made over the past few years by the Banner editor has come true. Last year he said that “Don’t ask, don’t tell” would be repealed by the end of 2009. The Banner editor could not be reached to explain his dismal record.

### **PFLAG Serves The Community**

During the past year the board and members of PFLAG have worked hard (all as unpaid volunteers) to meet the goals of PFLAG: Support to parents and GLBT persons, advocacy for GLBT civil rights and education.

Some of the achievements for 2009 are:

The newsletter is published each month, is posted on the PFLAG website and is distributed to organizations throughout the Coachella Valley.

PFLAG sponsors an outreach to the Gay Straight Alliances and organizes twice yearly meetings of GSA advisors and a workshop for GSA student leaders.

The PFLAG information line is available daily to help persons find resources or provide information. We receive calls from all over Southern California for persons who find us on-line.

We hold monthly meetings to give support to persons and frequently have speakers to further our education.

We maintain a current web site with information about our meetings, current and back issues of the Banner and links to helpful, supportive sites.

We have a presence in many areas including a police advisory board with the Palm Springs Police Department.

Our members are active in lobbying and meeting political leaders regarding civil rights.

This year we had a “Speaker’s Bureau” training, and are seeking venues to further our education mission. We have infrequent requests for speakers, but we have a goal of speaking more often in educational settings.

And, most importantly, our members talk to relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers and anyone they run into about the need for equality and respect for our GLBT relatives and friends.

### **IF You Really Care About The Sanctity Of Marriage, Then Outlaw Divorce**

A tongue-in-cheek, satirical effort to outlaw divorce has been undertaken by comedian John Marcotte. Said Marcotte, “Since California has decided to protect traditional marriage, I think it would be hypocritical of us not to sacrifice some of our own rights to protect traditional marriage even more”. Marcotte is a married father of two who hasn’t yet joined the 50% with at least one divorce.

### **Statement About The Loss Of Marriage Equality In New York**

The New York State Senate voted down a bill to legalize same-sex marriage. The organization Marriage Equality USA, MEUSA, worked hard to bring the bill before the legislature and the disappointment was severe. Pamela Brown, MEUSA Policy Director, said, “MEUSA would like to thank the tireless efforts of our sister organizations, Marriage Equality New York, in their work to attain marriage equality. Each year, we have marched together in simultaneous walks across the Golden Gate Bridge and Brooklyn Bridge in support of marriage equality. And we will keep on marching until the promise of liberty and justice for all rings true from sea to shining sea. As with New York Senator Malcolm Smith, MEUSA believes in the power of one. Senator Smith spoke out about how individuals across history have stepped up to make a difference, individuals like Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, Cesar Chavez, Mother Teresa, Harvey Milk, or Gavin Newsome. MEUSA encourages everyone to remember that we all can exhibit the Power of One through our own personal conversations we can make with our friends, family and co-workers. While our journey to full equality is taking longer than we would hope, we will get there and you can help. Through the Power of One, you too can make a difference. Change one vote, touch one heart, open one mind and together, we can win.”

### **Coachella Valley Marriage Equality Coalition (CVMEC) Seeks Collaboration With Churches**

Paul Zak, CVMEC member, and part of the Faith Outreach Team is looking for straight parents in various churches, temples and congregations who have gay or lesbian children. CVMEC wants to work with these parents in helping them to serve as resources for other members of their congregation who are struggling with their children’s sexual identity. CVMEC believes that by helping parents become more comfortable with their GLBT

children, they will be open to supporting GLBT civil rights and, especially, same-sex marriage.

If you fit this category or know of others who might be interested, contact the information line at 760-202-4430.

### **Thanks To All Of You Who Paid Your Yearly Dues**

Our yearly membership renewal notices were sent in October. Many of you have generously and promptly sent in your dues. For this we thank you. If you let this slip your mind, it is never too late. Part of your yearly dues pays your membership in National PFLAG. Local chapters do not receive funds from National PFLAG. Please help us continue our work. We need your support and encouragement.

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#### **PFLAG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Your membership supports our local Palm Springs/Desert Communities PFLAG chapter and includes membership in National PFLAG.

#### **PFLAG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone No.** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-Mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Check One: Yearly Dues**

**Family Membership \$50** \_\_\_\_\_ **Individual \$40** \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to PFLAG and mail to :**

**PFLAG  
611 S. Palm Canyon Drive 7-262  
Palm Springs, CA 92264**

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**PFLAG INFORMATION LINE: (760) 202-4430**

**EMAIL: [INFO@PSPFLAG.ORG](mailto:INFO@PSPFLAG.ORG)**

**WEBSITE: WWW.PSPFLAG.ORG**