

**THE BANNER OF THE DESERT**  
**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG**  
**PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER**  
**OUR TWENTY-NINTH YEAR    July, 2009    Volume 29, No. 7**

**Meeting Reminder**  
**Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup>**  
**2:30 p.m.**  
**Cathedral City Library Community Room**

Come join your PFLAG friends in an open forum discussion of your concerns or current topics. It's always fun and education to share thoughts.

**Directions to the Cathedral City Library**

The library address is 33-520 Date Palm Drive. The cross street is Ortega Drive (Ortega Drive changes its name at the corner where the Library and Post Office are situated to Dave Kelley Drive). From Palm Springs and points west you can reach Date Palm off Ramon Road and from the east from Hwy 111 or Gerald Ford Drive.

**A Message From The Editor**

*-Mike Balasa*

It seems like a variation on swine flu, but the only victims are "family values" politicians. What's wrong with these guys who demean and abuse gays and lesbians who they claim are a threat to families? Don't they think that they should feel some responsibility to act like they have some principles and be a bit less hypocritical? Any list of fallen "holier-than-thou" politicians would include Larry Craig of Idaho; David Vitter of Louisiana; Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House; John Ensign of Nevada; and most recently, Mark Sanford of South Carolina. I don't take any delight in their disgrace. It does our side no good when these guys fall. The RAG's (religious anti-gay groups) don't seem to care, and they just find another politician that will pander to their anti-gay prejudice. I also think that we should have some pity for these wounded souls. Most of us don't see the world in simplistic terms as the RAG's are apt to do. These politicians are for the most part charismatic men with great hair and expensive suits. They meet lots of attractive people in their jobs and must face many temptations. I also suspect that these guys are under lots of stress and a sexual dalliance might be the way they escape from unhappy and frustrating lives. Watching Gov. Sanford on TV this week, I couldn't help but see how dysfunctional this man appeared. He seemed confused and shocked: as if he just woke from a nightmare. It was obvious to me, that this guy had an emotional breakdown.

I think there are some lessons to be learned from these pathetic souls. For us, we need to realize that much of the anti-gay rhetoric is not from deep seated religious convictions but

rather callous, cynical vote getting. We should always demand that these politicians show some humility and not be so glib in their so called “family values” rhetoric.

The most important lessons; however, are not for us, but rather, for the RAG’s.

First they should realize how they are being used by these politicians. They give their money and votes to people who don’t seem to have personal morality at all. I wonder how many of these right-wing politicians call their RAG supporters “suckers” when talking to close friends. Secondly, the RAG’s ought to examine their behavior as well. They see the world in simplistic terms and give people little flexibility in dealing with personal crises. There is a reason that RAG’s have more divorces, teen births, family abuse and neglect than the general public. They are unreasonable and callous in dealing with human conditions. For example, they tend to abandon their gay children and don’t believe in realistic sex education. I doubt the RAG’s will ever learn anything - they are too smug in their inflexibility. In the meantime, dear PFLAG friends, - go in peace, compassion and understanding.

### **Meeting Place for PFLAG**

Finally, we can return to the Cathedral City Main Library for our monthly meetings. We owe a debt of gratitude to the board of Gay Associated Youth and Greg Wetmore for allowing us to use their facility for over a year. A special thanks to the Cathedral City Library staff for allowing us to use their temporary facility for the months of April and May.

### **Will New York Be the Next State to Approve Same-sex Marriages?**

The New York state senator, Thomas K. Duane, who introduced the Same-sex Marriage Bill in the senate, said that he is optimistic that the bill will pass before the end of the session. Governor David Patterson promised that he would sign the bill. The issue was thrown into limbo when a leadership struggle erupted in the state senate when two Democrats threatened to join the Republican caucus. That issue is still unresolved, but Senator Duane told a crowd at the annual New York City Pride Parade, “I am very optimistic—I probably should say I’m cautiously optimistic—but I’m very optimistic that same-sex marriage will be a reality in this state. I believe it is doable by the end of this session”. He also said, “I don’t think anyone has changed their hearts on the issue of marriage at all. It’s certainly my strong position, the governor’s strong position, my conference’s position, and, I believe, that there’s support within the Republican conference as well to bring it to the floor.

New York would be the sixth state to legalize same-sex marriage. Rhode Island, the only New England state without same-sex marriage, is expected to take up the issue in the fall.

### **The Latest on Proposition 8**

Enthusiasm for a 2010 initiative campaign to repeal Prop. 8 seems to be losing steam. Our local political guru, George Zander, President of the Stonewall Democrats and newly appointed Equality California field manager for the Coachella Valley, said that polls on the issue of same-sex marriage haven’t changed and 2010 is much too soon. George also has fears about ever putting GLBT civil rights to a vote of the majority.

In the meantime the case filed by legal stars, Ted Olson and David Boies, asking the federal court to overturn Prop. 8 on the basis of the US Constitutions Due Process and

Equal Protection Clause, will be heard in the US District Court of Northern California on July 2nd. The presiding judge will be Chief Judge Vaughn Walker, a George H. W. Bush appointee. Judge Walker is considered by legal observers as “unpredictable” and is prone to strict, if quirky, interpretations of the law. Rumors also abound that Judge Walker is gay.

Attorney General Brown has publicly stated that he will not defend Prop. 8 as he believes that it does violate the US Constitution. Ken Starr the lawyer who defended Prop 8 in front of the California Supreme Court is expected to lead the argument against same-sex marriage. Brown, however, will ask Judge Walker not to grant an immediate injunction against Prop. 8, that would allow same-sex marriages to resume. Brown said that if the Federal Supreme Court should uphold Prop. 8, the newly married couples could find their marriages annulled (the present 18,000 legally married couples prior to the passage of Prop. 8 would not be effected).

ACLU, Lambda Legal and the National Center for Lesbian Rights have filed amicus briefs with the court, indicating that the main legal GLBT support groups have decided to support the Olson/Boies suit.

### **Marriage Equality March On Washington**

Palm Springs resident, and political activist, Cleve Jones, has announced plans for a march on Washington on October 11th, National Coming Out Day. As of this time, the Banner has not received any more details about how to get involved. Stay tuned.

### **Is the Obama Administration Ignoring GLBT Concerns?**

At the June 26th fund raiser for the Democratic National Committee, Vice President Joe Biden assured attendees that he understood the anger of many gays and lesbians toward the Obama administration and pledged to, “put some pace on the ball”. Biden said, “I don’t blame you for your impatience. I hope you don’t doubt the President’s commitment”.

Despite the fact that 50 protestors were present outside and many GLBT leaders boycotted the event, the DNC raised a million dollars, a higher sum than last year’s event. Biden told the gathering that the administration appointed 60 LGBT persons, including nine that required senate confirmation. He promised timely action on the Defense of Marriage Act; Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; the Lieberman-Baldwin Bill on health benefits; a ban on workplace discrimination; and, adoption benefits for all.

First Lady, Michelle Obama, is quoted as saying in her speech, “We are all only here because of those who marched and bled and died from Selma to Stonewall in the pursuit of a more perfect Union.”

Meanwhile two days before the above event, the White House issued a statement that his administration will not take unilateral action to end military discharges of gay service members. A letter signed by 77 Congressional members urged President Obama to take immediate action to stop investigations of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” violations.

Obama did take unilateral action on another matter just one month ago. Current law requires that when an American citizen marries a foreign national and dies within two years of the marriage, the spouse is automatically deported. President Obama deferred all deportations for two years, giving Congress time to fix the law.

GLBT leaders are mystified that the Obama administration seems uncaring about GLBT issues, and evidently uncaring about discontent from grass root supporters.

### **Thanks to Don Koch and Captain Ed Masucci For Hosting the June Party**

The June meeting/potluck was fun with lots of good food, conversation, and pool activity. Don and Ed proved to be gracious hosts.

### **The Original Adoptive Parents**

Dan Savage, gay author and adoptive father, made the following observation, “We evolved when life was nasty, brutal and short—or nastier, more brutal, and shorter - and childbirth was a deadly business. The presence of childless adult females who were unlikely to die in childbirth themselves and healthy males without children of their own - upped the odds of the tribe/clan/family’s young. Gays and lesbians are the original adoptive parents.”

### **PFLAG Information Cards**

You may have noticed that included in “The Banner” envelope are PFLAG information cards. We hope that you will use them to give to individuals who might be interested in joining us. You can also tack them up on bulletin boards at your favorite grocery store, community bulletin board, etc. If you would like to have more, they are available at our monthly meetings or call the information line if you would like us to send you some in the mail.

### **Contact President Obama**

I have used the White House e-mail address listed below to express my concern on issues. I suspect that some low level staffer reads the message and compiles a list with your concerns summarized in a message to some other mid-level advisor who eventually tells the President that on a certain day there were 20,000 messages and 2000 wanted him to do something about “Don’t Ask - Don’t Tell” or some such issue. However, if no one writes anything, then Obama might assume that the issue isn’t generating any interest. It is best to keep the messages and phone calls going to any of your elected officials. Many politicians I have talked to in what I thought was a candid conversation said that personal messages gave them impetus to take on an issue or support an issue that they might otherwise not care about. To contact the White House you can call 202-456-1111 or go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

### **Lambda Legal to Support Same-sex Married Couples**

All the same-sex married couples in California who took advantage of the window of opportunity between June 16 and November 4th, have a friend in Lambda Legal. That fine organization has launched Marriage Watch: California a service to assist same-sex married couples who encounter discrimination or disrespect for their married status. In mid June the Community Regional Medical Center in Fresno kept a lesbian girlfriend from seeing her partner in the emergency room. While the couple were not legally registered partners, they did have documents to show that each partner was legally authorized to make medical decisions. A lawsuit has been filed by the couple claiming discrimination. While they weren't legally married their case does show that problems do exist.

### **A Major Question - Why Is The Word Marriage So Important To Same-sex Couples?**

The California Supreme Court Ruling maintained that same-sex couples could not use the word "marriage" in describing their union, but, the court insisted, same-sex partners were to have all the same rights, dignity and respect as heterosexual partners. Many voters are now wondering why is the word "marriage" an issue when that is the only difference. Several PFLAG members have reported hearing that sentiment and have found it difficult to argue the point that the Supreme Court Ruling was hurtful to the GLBT community.

How does one argue against the ruling?

The best answer is to point out that when marriage was legal for same-sex couples, the wedding ceremonies did provide a meaningful experience and friends and families of the couples were apt to see the same-sex wedding with greater respect and acceptance than before, when the uniting was called a "civil union". The real issues are respect and dignity. Providing a separate route and procedure for same-sex couples does not provide equal dignity and solemnity to the union. This is not an abstract concept. There is still much prejudice against the GLBT community, and the separate procedure enforces the notion that there is something less about the "civil union" or "registered partner" designation. The RAG's (religious anti-gay groups) used the argument in the Prop. 8 campaign that schools would have to teach that gay and lesbian unions were as sacred as heterosexual marriages. Of course, that is what equal respect and dignity means. Our side should directly challenge the RAG's by stating that it is the right of GLBT people to expect their unions to be recognized by schools, governments, hospitals, etc., with the same importance as any marriage.

Another argument: the federal laws that protect and provide benefits and privileges to heterosexual couples all use the term marriage. In the quest for federal equal rights, it is necessary to designate all unions, same-sex and opposite-sex unions as equal in as many states as possible. There will never be an end to discrimination against the GLBT community until the government, both state and federal, get rid of all laws that further discrimination; especially, the Defense of Marriage Act and Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

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

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

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

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

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

**Check One: Yearly Dues**

**Family Membership \$50** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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**611 S. Palm Canyon Drive 7-262**

**Palm Springs, CA 92264**