

**THE BANNER OF THE DESERT**  
**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG**  
**PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER**  
**OUR THIRTIETH YEAR    FEBRUARY, 2010    Volume 30, No. 2**

**Next meeting: February 21st, 2010**

**2:30 p.m., Cathedral City Library**

**33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City, CA**

This will be an open forum meeting where you are invited to discuss PFLAG issues, either personal or general. These meetings are important to many of our members and are always interesting. Light refreshments served.

For driving instructions call our information line at (760) 202-4430.

**SAVE THE DATE:**

The May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 meeting of PFLAG will be a pool party at Don and Ed's. More information in the May newsletter.

**A Message From The Editor -**

*Mike Balasa*

The trial in the US District Court challenging the validity of Proposition 8, has come to a close. Judge Walker has 90 days to reach his conclusion. However the judge rules, the case will then be sent to a panel of Federal judges on appeal. Just like the California State Supreme Court case against Proposition 8, most experts believe that the evidence presented by the Olson and Boies was overwhelmingly convincing that Proposition 8 was based on prejudice and serves no state interest. Despite the conviction that the California Supreme Court would rule against Proposition 8, the court backed away from making a firm commitment to full equality in marriage, denying the LGBT community the right to use the "term" marriage. The question is: will Judge Walker find a way to similarly skirt the issue and leave Proposition 8 intact?

Several legal scholars have suggested that despite the facts and arguments presented by Olson and Boies, Judge Walker will find a way to "weasel" out of a firm decision. That the judges in the appeal will also find a way to put off a decision as well. The courts are fearful of getting too far ahead of the general public on sensitive cultural issues. While the courts ruled in 1954 that segregation of schools was illegal and in 1967 that mixed race couples could not be denied the right to marry, the supreme court in 1986, ruled that state sodomy laws were constitutional and it took 17 years before that ruling was overturned.

Currently there are 29 states where same-sex marriages are banned by state constitutions and only 5 states that allow same-sex marriages. Each year as the older generation dies, the younger generation is much more tolerant of equal marriage rights. Some studies suggest that in just five years, if current trends continue, the majority of voters in most states will be in favor of marriage for all.

The future will favor our cause, but for several more years we will face many more disappointments. PFLAG is far from obsolete.

## **Another Federal Lawsuit May Be As Important As the California Case Against Proposition 8**

Gill vs. Office of Personnel Management a case filed in March of 2009 in a Federal Court in Boston, challenges the Defense Of Marriage Act the prohibits legally married same-sex couples from receiving Federal benefits. Winning this case would allow same-sex couples to file joint income tax returns, receive social security survivor benefits and Federal employees in same-sex marriages would share health insurance. Several legal scholars believe this case, much more limited in scope than the Olson and Boies suit, has a better chance of being successful. Its focus is on the fairness of denying federal benefits to a class of citizens whose marriages are recognized by state law.

The general public, regardless of religious beliefs about same-sex marriage, have a better understanding and sympathy for issues that involve financial matters. A favorable ruling on this suit would then make a stronger case for same-sex marriage in states where the issue could be determined by a small percentage of independent voters. It would have been easier to defeat Proposition 8 if the issue were equal Federal benefits.

The case of Gill vs. Personnel Management was filed last March by the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders in Boston. The courts have not yet set a trial date.

## **Will “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Be Reversed?**

In President Obama’s first State of the Union address, he mentioned that he would push for abolition of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”. Secretary of Defense Gates announced the formation of a Pentagon committee to study the best way to implement changing the current law and allowing openly gay and lesbian persons to serve. Observers believe, the measure will move slowly but the law will be replaced sometime in 2011.

The Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law, released a report that an estimated 66,000 gays and lesbians are currently serving in the military and 13,000 are deployed in war zones.

## **California Initiative Process Has Abused Minorities Many Years Before Proposition 8**

Proposition 8 seemed liked an aberration - a law passed by the majority of voters that only effects a minority. Targeting minorities is contrary to the basic premise of the US Constitution’s Bill of Rights. Many of the first persons to emigrate to the New World were persons associated with a religious minority who were seeking relief from persecution by state mandated religions. In 1964, Californians showed that a majority

doesn't always use good judgment in voting for issues involving minorities: voters passed Proposition 14, an initiative that repealed legislation banning racial discrimination in the sale and rental of property. This horrible misuse of the initiative process was overturned by the California Supreme Court.

## **Same-sex Marriage Around The World**

You might not be able to get married in California but the number of places around the world where you could seems to be growing monthly. Starting in May the mountainous country of Nepal will ratify its new constitution that legalized same-sex marriage. A leader of the country's gay rights movement, Sunil Babu Pant, has launched a travel agency offering a wedding ceremony on Mount Everest. Pant reports that, "The government is hoping to increase the number of tourists from 400,000 to one million next year and has taken a positive attitude to welcoming gay and lesbian visitors to help meet their ambitious target."

Portugal's Parliament passed a bill that would legalize same-sex marriage. President Anibal Cavaco Silva is likely to ratify the bill despite the fact that he belongs to the Conservative Party that opposed the bill. The bill's passage was facilitated by the reigning Socialist government; because, they included same-sex marriage in the manifesto they campaigned under. This made it unnecessary to go through a referendum process. Portugal will join Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Canada, and South Africa where same-sex marriages are permitted.

In the US, the town of Deerfield, New Hampshire, voted against a referendum to ban same-sex marriages in that state.

## **Hawaii Fails to Pass Civil Unions Bill**

Leaders in the Hawaii House of Representatives decided to table the Civil Union's Bill on January 29th. The bill had passed the senate with a veto proof majority and supporters were hopeful that the house would also provide a veto proof majority as well. Senate leaders, however, found that they could pass the bill but not with the numbers need to prevent a governor's veto. This motion effectively kills the bill for this session.

## **Hate Crimes Against Gays and Religious Groups Increased**

FBI data shows that the number of hate crimes reported in the US were up in 2008 by two percent. The number of hate crimes based on sexual orientation were up 11 percent and hate crimes based on religion were up 9 percent. Racially motivated hate crimes fell nearly one percent; although, this category remain the largest gross number. Data shows that 1/3 of the crimes are vandalism or property damage, 1/3 involved some form of intimidation and 1/3 were physical attacks against people. Of the 7,783 hate crimes reported to the FBI, seven were murders.

Hate crime statistics are often difficult to gather, as proving a crime is motivated by hate can be difficult and many jurisdictions purposely down-play or ignore hate crime complaints.

## **United States Anglican Church Continues To Insist On Equality**

The world Anglican Church is deeply divided on sexual orientation issues. Most of the Anglican Bishops in developing countries maintain a conservative theology and are adamantly opposed to measures favoring the GLBT community. The first openly gay man consecrated as a bishop, Gene Robinson of New Hampshire, caused an uproar in the Anglican Community. The Archbishop of Canterbury, spiritual leader of the 77 million Anglicans, has failed to please either side of the issue with his attempts to keep the church united by not taking a firm stand for either side.

In December the second out gay person, Mary Glasspool, was elected to the post of assistant bishop for the Los Angeles diocese.

## **Ted Haggard Is No Longer Gay Says His Wife**

Counseling and prayer has again “cured” Ted, reports his wife in a recently published tell all book. This is good news for all GLBT supporters, as it didn’t look good for the gay community to count among their numbers a hypocrite and liar such as the ex-mega-church-anti-gay-right-wing-pastor, Ted Haggard. Win one for our side.

## **Do We Have PFLAG Neighbors?**

Yes we do! There are active chapters in both Riverside and Temecula Valley. Riverside’s next meeting is Sunday, February 14th, at 6:30 P.M.. They meet at the St George’s Episcopal Church, 950 Spruce Street, in the Coleman House located on church property. Their contact number is 951-500-6904.

Temecula Valley holds meetings on the first Monday and fourth Monday of each month. Also, “Club Escape” at Aloha J’s is going weekly, every Wednesday of every month from 9:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M. One must be 21 to enjoy “Club Escape” and a major portion of the proceeds from the party goes to the benefit of PFLAG. Their next meeting on Feb. 8th at 6:00 P.M. is for GSA/gay youth support and at 7:00 a transgendered support group. On Feb. 24th at 6:00 P.M.: coming out support group and at 7:00 the monthly PFLAG meeting for everyone. Temecula Valley meets at the Cultural Arts and Music Center, 27455 Tierra Alta Way. Go to [pflagtemecula.org](http://pflagtemecula.org) for more information.

## **Scientists Find A Single Gene That Can Change Gender Traits**

A gene found in mice can change sexual traits by simply being turned off. When the gene was turned off in adult females, their ovaries began to turn into testes and they started to produce a level of testosterone found in healthy male mice. The gene manipulation has

implications for revolutionizing gender reassignment therapy and improve treatment for babies born with a mixed gender.

## **Thoughts On How To Talk To Religious Parents About Their Gay Children**

Bruce Maughan is National Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary for Affirmation, the GLBT organization for persons associated with the Mormon faith. We were privileged to have his words of wisdom at our last meeting. He discussed how we can talk to parents with religious convictions that make it difficult for them to accept their GLBT children. While his comments were aimed primarily at Mormon parents, his list of questions are applicable to any parents holding firm religious anti-gay beliefs.

The questions suggested by Bruce:

1. Do they still love their child?
2. What kind of relationship do they want with the child in this life and hereafter. Breaking off contact (by parent or child) limits the relationship they can have. Suicide is the ultimate break in the relationship.
3. Now knowing that a child is gay or lesbian, do they believe the child is evil? Or does the child in many or almost all ways still live the high moral and ethical standards of the church.
4. If the child is engaged in a sexual relationship (or they think that is happening), they can ask how they would react if one of their heterosexual children were having sex outside of marriage. They can try to react no differently toward their gay child. The church strongly disapproves of all sex out outside of marriage.
5. Do they believe that God has revealed all there is to know about gays and lesbians, the cause, and its eternal meaning and consequences? Maybe a bit of humility would help avoid reaching unwarranted conclusions.

Resources:

<http://www.affirmation.org/> The official web site for gay and lesbian Mormons but of interest to any GLBT supporter.

<http://www.Ldsfamilyfellowship.org/index.htm>

A website for families with GLBT members.

<http://www.keepthemandlovethem.org/>

A new Affirmation web site with resources for people who learn someone close to them is gay.

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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**