



**THE BANNER OF THE DESERT**  
**THE NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG**  
**PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER**  
**OUR THIRTY-FIRST YEAR    December, 2011    Volume 31, No. 12**

**PFLAG Holiday Potluck Party**  
**December 18<sup>th</sup> --- 2:30 P.M.**  
**At the home of**  
**Sly Zelnys and Christine Hammond**

PFLAG will provide paper plates, cups, utensils, etc. Don Koch and Ed Masucci have volunteered to bring a turkey and dressing. Drinks will be provided. We suggest hors d'oeuvres, salads, vegetable side dish or dessert. Bring a friend or relative. This has been a well attended event over the years, and a chance to meet the many wonderful members of our PFLAG family.

For driving instructions--please call the PFLAG information line:  
(760) 202-4430

**Save the date: January 15<sup>th</sup> PFLAG meeting 2:30 p.m.**  
**Cathedral City Library Community Room**  
**A Message From The Editor - *Mike Balasa***

It irritates me when I read about the pandering of the Republican presidential candidates to the anti-gay right wing. Mitt Romney, who when governor of Massachusetts was sympathetic to GLBT issues, just signed a promise to support a constitutional amendment to limit marriage to "one man and one woman". The

reactionary anti-gay right is not a substantial minority, but they vote and are a major factor in primary races. To win, a candidate has to court their vote.

Once the primaries are over and a candidate has to face the general public, the social issues tend to fade into the background. You can't win an election by pushing social issues too far. We see it every election. Both Democrats and Republicans do their best to keep the focus on other issues. When speaking to their base, the candidates will still make promises; especially, if polls show that over 50% of the public agrees with them. In the last election it was safe to either be against same-sex marriage or at least appear non-committal. Remember, even President Obama said he was against gay-marriage but supported equal benefits. "Don't ask, don't tell" was easy to support as polls showed a vast majority of voters supported its repeal.

In the coming presidential race, I believe it is safe to say that the Republican nominee will probably take the line that they are against same-sex marriage but support equal benefits, and President Obama will be emboldened (based on current polls that show a majority now favor same-sex marriage) to say he favors it.

The irony of it all is that, once in office, the politicians seldom support their promises on social issues. President Bush said he would sign a constitutional amendment to limit marriage, but when it was introduced in the Senate, his administration did nothing to push it. The lesson from all this is that we have to keep working to change attitudes. Advocacy is our only hope. Win the people's hearts and the politicians will follow.

## **Proposition 8 Update - The Drama And The Complications Continue**

The California Supreme Court ruled in November that supporters of Proposition 8 had standing to appeal Judge Walker's ruling. Judge Walker had ruled earlier this year that Proposition 8 was unconstitutional. His decision was then appealed to the Federal 9th Circuit Court. The panel of Federal judges then sent the issue back to the California Supreme Court to rule on the standing issue. Now the issue is back to the 9th Circuit Court and they have to rule on whether or not they will give standing to the Proposition 8 supporters. Usually, only officials representing the state have the standing to defend state law in either a state or federal court. The panel of judges from the California Supreme Court based their decision on the standing of Proposition 8 supporters on the logic that if only the state had standing, then any initiative could be reversed by the court merely by the state's refusal to defend it. The decision was driven by the state court's desire to not jeopardize the initiative process.

Lawyers for both sides have filed legal papers with the 9th Circuit Court on the standing issue. If the 9th Circuit Court decides that the Proposition 8 supporters do not have legal standing to appeal Judge Walker's finding, then same-sex marriage will resume in California and the Proposition 8 supporters will not be able to appeal that decision to the Federal Supreme Court. If the 9th Circuit Court upholds the standing of

the supporters then they will begin deliberations on the main issue: is it unconstitutional to deny same-sex persons the right to marry. Many gay civil rights supporters would like to have the judges rule directly on that issue rather than the technicality of standing. That would then force the issue to the U.S. Supreme Court and their decision would affect same-sex marriage throughout the country. That would be risky, however, as the current make up of the court tends to be conservative.

## **Candidates Appear At Forum Sponsored By Anti-Gay Organizations**

A forum sponsored by Focus on the Family and the National Organization of Marriage in Iowa was attended by Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, Herman Cain, Ron Paul, Rick Perry and Michelle Bachman. Mitt Romney didn't attend as he has already written off Iowa, because of his unpopularity with the more extreme conservatives who decide primary elections. The forum was organized by the notorious anti-gay scold, Bob Vander Plaats, a Sioux City businessman who was successful in ousting three Iowa Supreme Court justices whose ruling brought same-sex marriage to Iowa. Vander Plaats has been quoted as equating homosexuality to polygamy and adultery and called gay people a public health risk worse than second hand smoke.

The Family Leader, Vander Plaats' group, has issued a 14 point anti-gay marriage pledge that has been signed by all the candidates except Ron Paul and Newt Gingrich. The group will not endorse a candidate that hasn't signed.

## **Washington State Gearing Up For A Major Battle To Legalize Same-Sex Marriage**

Political leaders in Washington State believe that 2012 is the year to push a same-sex marriage law through the legislature. Democrats, who tend to support GLBT issues, make up a substantial majority in both houses: 27 to 22 in the Senate and 56 to 42 in the House. State Senator Ed Murry an openly gay man said, "We are going to push it. I believe 2012 is the best chance we've ever had to make marriage equality a reality."

Some of the more conservative Democrats are not solid on GLBT issues, and to win them over a concerted effort to sway voters in suburban and rural areas will be necessary. Leaders of the newly formed same-sex marriage coalition are devising strategies to sway state voters. Town halls are scheduled for several areas where same-sex couples will share their personal stories and explain why marriage is important to them and their families.

GLBT leaders expect the issue to eventually end up as a very contentious initiative issue.

## **How Have GLBT Candidates Fared In The November Elections?**

Across the USA the November elections demonstrated the trend for communities to elect openly gay candidates. This is a clear message of the growing positive attitude towards GLBT friends and neighbors.

The lesbian Mayor of Houston won reelection in that race with 51% of the vote. Annise Parker faced five opponents making her one-round victory even more remarkable. Houston also elected an openly gay city council person, attorney Mike Laster.

The nation's youngest mayor is an openly gay 22 year old man, Alex Morse, a graduate of Brown University with a degree in urban studies. He is now the mayor of Holyoke, Massachusetts.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, a lesbian, LaWana Mayfield, won the city council race to be the first openly gay elected official in that city.

Indianapolis, Indiana, elected their first openly gay City Council member, Zach Adamson.

Largo, Florida, elected a gay council person replacing a person who tried to fire the city's transgender city manager.

In Missoula, Montana, lesbian Caitlin Copple defeated an incumbent who voted against a GLBT non-discrimination ordinance.

Chris Seelbach won a city council race in Cincinnati.

In Tacoma, Washington, Ryan Mello won a city council race.

Many of these candidates were running in areas that are considered to be "conservative" areas with large numbers of anti-gay religious conservatives.

## **Bill Introduced In US Senate To Allow Same-sex Benefits**

On November 19th a bill was introduced in the US House to allow the government to provide benefits to federal employees who have same-sex domestic partners. Openly gay Representative, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin introduced the bill that has 53 co-sponsors. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida was the only Republican sponsor. A similar bill introduced last year never got out of committee.

## **Salon Picks Sexiest Men Of 2011**

Zach Wahls now has the bragging rights to being one of the sexiest men of 2011.

Zach, a 19 year old engineering student, made the news when he appeared before an Iowa State House committee to argue against a constitutional amendment to overturn same-sex marriage. Zach gave a passionate defense of his two moms and his YouTube video was seen by millions.

## **EQCA SPOKESPERSON ZANDER TALKS TO PFLAG**

*By Bob Warburton*

Equality California spokesperson and long time Palm Springs political guru George Zander spoke to PFLAG at our monthly meeting held November 20th. EQCA is the largest LGBT Rights organization in the Country, having been in operation in one form or another for 12 years. According to its mission statement EQCA is interested in “achieving equality and securing legal protections for LGBT people. Sponsors legislation and coordinates efforts to ensure its passage...builds coalitions, develops community strength...”

According to Zander, EQCA has been successful over the years sponsoring and seeing 85 bills passed in 11 legislative sessions. Recent successes include legislation allowing 12 to 17 year olds to obtain mental health care without having to come out to or have approval from their parents; and the FAIR Education Act, which mandates that LGBT, disabled, and Pacific Islander history be included in relevant classes and text books.

Zander said that as of now EQCA and we should be interested in efforts to repeal the FAIR Act by initiative. An earlier attempt this fall fell short of collecting sufficient voter signatures. However, under the sponsorship of the Traditional Values Coalition, anti-LGBT forces have modified their approach and now propose a ban on even mentioning the words “sexual orientation” in public schools. This initiative is proposed for the November 2012 ballot, and people will begin collecting signatures shortly. EQCA has plans to counteract this signature drive.

EQCA came of age in the 2008 “No on 8” campaign that culminated in voters denying the right to same gender marriage in California. Even though the struggle on this front is now in the courts and not really in EQCA’s jurisdiction, George explained where the matter lies now: the California Supreme Court was asked whether the people supporting Prop 8 had standing to defend Proposition 8 in the appeal process. The California Supreme Court has just ruled that the pro Prop 8 group does have that standing. Therefore, the matter now moves back to the Federal Courts to decide if the District Court finding of Prop 8 as unconstitutional and same gender marriage as legal will stand. Everyone is watching these happenings closely, and they likely will end up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Other items EQCA is spending much time on are the implementation of the repeal of the armed forces “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and how bringing full equality into the military is running into difficulties because of the Federal “Defense of Marriage Act.” They are offering help to service members who are being discriminated against.

George was also asked for his take on the various changes happening at EQCA. Long time Executive Director Geoff Kors of Palm Springs recently retired, and the man chosen to take his place, Roland Palencia, resigned after only three months service. Zander said from his knowledge of the situation, and having talked to Palencia recently, Palencia had not managed such a political organization, and just was not ready for that aspect of the job. The EQCA Board has brought in a human resources expert to help with reorganization before another Executive Director is hired. Zander said that every organization has difficulty raising funds in this economy, but with 600,000 members, ECQA is in a strong position.

For more information on EQCA you can go to their website [www.eqca.org](http://www.eqca.org) or contact George at (760) 409-0208.

## **Religious Advocacy Groups Spend Millions Lobbying In Washington**

A Pew study found that religious advocacy groups spent nearly \$400 million last year to influence policy. The data found that the largest amount of lobbying dollars was spent by conservative groups that tend to favor anti GLBT positions.

The Pew report said, “Groups that focus on social conservative concerns - pro-life issues, marriage issues, cultural issues - have grown over the past few decades significantly. Among them are the Family Research Council, Citizen Link - which is an affiliate of Focus on the Family – and the Traditional Values Coalition. One of the explanations for some of this growth is a sense of challenge or threat. So the National Organization for Marriage in our report has the most significant increase in budget in percentage terms. It’s grown dramatically, suggesting the salience of the defense of marriage to that organization.”

### **Please Consider Joining our PFLAG Chapter:**

Will you join and help us continue our work? Your membership supports our local Palm Springs/Desert Communities PFLAG chapter and includes membership in National PFLAG. Help us continue our website, information line, monthly newsletter, speaker’s bureau and outreach to youth and families. Your support makes it possible for us to purchase information booklets for teachers and counselors in local schools.

If you join National PFLAG, they do not send us any of your dues. If you join the Palm Springs/Desert Communities PFLAG, part of your dues will be sent to National and you

will be sent their periodicals and other publications.  
Support your local PFLAG.

**You may pay on line using PayPal at [www.PSPFLAG.ORG](http://www.PSPFLAG.ORG) or use the form below:**

**PFLAG MEMBERSHIP AND RENEWAL APPLICATION FORM**

**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**

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