



THE BANNER OF THE DESERT
THE NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG
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Next meeting: January 15th, 2012
2:30 p.m., Cathedral City Library
33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City, CA

Our speaker will be Mattie Leyden who runs a transgender support group at The Center in Palm Springs. She served in the Marines and saw action in the first Gulf War. She also is a member of the GLBT Outreach Committee to the Palm Springs Police Department, and will conduct transgender information training for the officers. Light refreshments served.

Save the date: February 19th PFLAG meeting 2:30 p.m.
Cathedral City Library Community Room

A Message From The Editor - *Mike Balasa*

Last January, I predicted that the 9th District Federal Court would uphold Judge Walker's decision that Proposition 8 was unconstitutional and that marriage equality would resume in California in 2011. Whoops! Wrong again. "Don't ask, Don't tell" was repealed but earlier than I predicted. My predictions are so lame, that many experts believe that the January prediction editorial is a complete waste of time. I'm getting closer to getting something right so here I go one more time.

I did predict last January that after the 2012 election, Congress would address the issue of equal Federal benefits for same-sex couples recognized in their states as civil or married partners. I still believe that is going to happen. It's not likely that Congress will address the marriage issue.

The 9th District Court will sustain Judge Walker's finding in 2012, and same-sex marriage will resume in California. It seems likely that their decision will be appealed to the Supreme Court, but the issue of standing still hasn't been reconciled by the courts. If

the finding only applies to marriage in California, then there might not be an appeal. We shall see how the decision is worded and interpreted.

Finally, many polls suggest that voters are not concerned about the social issues of marriage or GLBT civil rights. I suspect that the Republican presidential candidate is going to have to cater to the extreme right base to get their enthusiastic support. It will be difficult for the Republican candidate to appeal to the independent voter and still take hardliner stances on GLBT civil rights. The candidate will take the strategy of the National Organization of Marriage, and run anti same-sex marriage ads trying to scare parents that the safety and well being of their children are threatened by “homosexual marriage”. They will also claim that same-sex marriage threatens religious liberty. Appealing to prejudice is going to happen. Hope I’m wrong as usual.

The Federal Government Discrimination Against Same-Sex Spouses Imposes An Unfair Burden

Same-sex couples pay substantially more in taxes than heterosexual couples. An analysis by CNNMoney found that the penalty against same-sex couples could cost as much as \$6,000. The 1996 Defense of Marriage Act forces same-sex couples to file as singles. An example provided by H&R Block to CNN includes a same-sex couple with an annual income of \$100,000 - one works and the other is a stay at home spouse. The working partner files as a head of household and must pay taxes on the value of the partners health insurance premium. The “head of household” designation has disadvantages: more income is taxed and standard deductions are lower. The couple would end up paying \$15,199 in taxes, \$4,543 higher than a married opposite-sex couple.

Other penalties for same-sex couples include higher taxes on inheritance, capital gains when selling a house and on gifts.

Colorado Girl Scouts Support Transgender Child

A seven year old child was denied membership to a Colorado Girl Scout Troop because the child was born as a boy but identifies as a girl. The child’s mother said, “... no one would know he’s a boy unless they pulled his pants down”. The leaders of the troop resigned and disbanded the group when they were told by the state organization that they had to admit the girl. The state organization released a statement, “If a child is living as a girl, that’s good enough for us. We don’t require any proof of gender.”

The troop leader that ousted the girl said, “This goes against what we believe”. She went on to say that it was confusing and dangerous to expose the transgender child to the girls.

The troop leaders are associated with a fundamentalist group, the Northlake Christian School based in Louisiana. They plan to start another girl group with the American Heritage Girls, a Christian organization that was founded in 1995 when the national Girls Scout organization allowed chapters to not use the word, “God” in their pledge.

Several Major GLBT Issues Pending In 2012

For Californians, the issue to watch is the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decision on Proposition 8. The tangled procedure is now back in the hands of the Circuit Court of

Appeals after the California Supreme Court ruled that proponents of Proposition 8 had standing to challenge Judge Walker's ruling that Proposition 8 was unconstitutional. Now the 9th Circuit Appeals court has to decide if, according to Federal laws, the proponents have standing to appeal Judge Walker's decision to the Federal court. The court hasn't said when that decision will be made.

The make up of the U.S. House and Senate after the next election will have profound consequences for the issue of GLBT civil rights. Barney Frank (Massachusetts) is retiring at the end of his term in November. There are currently four openly gay members of Congress: Frank, Tammy Baldwin (Wisconsin), Jared Polis (Colorado) and David Cicilline (Rhode Island). Frank is leaving and Baldwin is running for the Senate (she would be the first elected gay senator). There are; however, three openly gay candidates running in November, Mark Pacon who is replacing Baldwin in Wisconsin, Mark Lias from Seattle and, our own candidate, Mark Takano from Riverside. The results of the election will determine the fate of DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act). If DOMA is overturned, then the next step is giving Federal benefits to same-sex couples.

There are a number of cases working their way through the courts challenging states' anti-discrimination laws. Right wing anti-gay groups are claiming that their religion requires them to discriminate against GLBT persons. If a president is elected who agrees with the anti-gay groups, then future Supreme Court judges might be appointed who share the view that not all citizens have a right to equal protection under the law.

In the November election several state initiatives around the country will test voters willingness to accept marriage equality. North Carolina and Minnesota will vote on amendments to ban same-sex marriage. Maine currently allows same-sex marriage but an issue will be on the ballot to strike down the existing law. In Washington State, signatures are being collected to put marriage equality on the ballot.

An Inside Report On Anti Same-sex Activist Training

A reporter, Dominic Holden, for the Seattle weekly "The Stranger" attended a training night for Focus on the Family (FOF) supporters to fight the effort to legalize same-sex marriage. The FOF made the mistake of holding the training session in a public building in Bellevue. Meetings held in public buildings must be open to the public. The meeting leader from FOF spent over an hour telling of the dire consequences of same-sex marriage, "Legalizing same-sex marriage would not simply entitle gay people to special rights, but rather gay marriage laws would expose Christians to an onslaught of lawsuits, boycotts and arrests." The FOF representative told the group that she ran for public office on a platform of repealing domestic benefits and received numerous death threats against herself and her family.

The strategy that FOF taught the activists is to target churches. Identify members of the congregation who agree with anti-gay positions and encourage them to approach their pastors to take action. They are to emphasize the talking points that: "1. public schools will teach that there is no difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships, (2) the idea that kids don't need a mother and a father will be reinforced, and (3) conscience rights will be lost as those who do not support same-sex marriage will be at odds with state law."

FOF will then target key senators who they think are on the fence and bombard

them with e-mails and visits to vote against putting marriage equality on the ballot.

Study Finds That Marriage Improves Health Of Gay Men

The “American Journal of Public Health” ran a research study indicating that when same-sex marriage was legalized in Massachusetts, the number of visits by gay men to health clinics dropped by 13%. Previous research found that gay men are more likely to suffer from depression and suicidal thoughts than straight men and that social exclusion may be responsible. They found that the married gay men had reduction in blood pressure problems, depression and “adjustment disorders”. The article concluded with the statement, “There is a known link between health and happiness.”

Can Marriage Be Saved

Demographic statistics indicate young people are marrying less and the trend is for marriage to continue shrinking. The anti-gay fundamentalists have warned us that allowing gays to marry will destroy the institution. They are wrong. In New York where same-sex marriage became legal in 2011, the New York City Clerk saw a 14% increase in marriages over the same period a year earlier.

ONCE AGAIN, REMEMBERING LOUIS ROVE

By Bob Warburton

For the last few months I have been thinking of writing an article on HIV/AIDS. 2001 is the 30th year anniversary of the discovery of the disease. Professionally I have been involved in the fight against the disease for 28 of those years. And for all the time I’ve lived in the Coachella Valley, I have been very proud of my work for the Desert AIDS Project.

Since 1994, with the exception of when I lived in Wyoming, I have worked with the Care Team, which has put together sick individuals with semi-pros in the field to bring the clients moral and some physical support. Here again, I was following in the footsteps of my Mom. She had been a “buddy” to a young man in Wyoming in the mid 1980’s and stood with him until he died.

So when I retired in 1994, I wanted to help people as my mother had helped her friend Don. As of 1994, the Desert AIDS Project was 10 years old, and experiencing growing pains. Remember, these were the bad old days before Protease Inhibitors, we only had 3 drugs deemed effective to fight HIV or opportunistic infections, and usually most of our clients died fairly horribly and fairly quickly.

My first meeting of this band of buddies was quite like triage in an emergency room. It was summer and evening, so this group was quite alone in a room on Vella Road. All the people there were long timers, and knew how serious their work was. Everyone had several clients, all with serious needs, and the talk was very serious.

That evening, and at every meeting, the chief volunteer was Louis Rove, who had worked in this position since the founding of the organization. He had had dozens of clients, and juggled many at this time. At the first meeting I learned Louis and I had much in common. Surprisingly, he saw my name and asked about my mother and father. They were friends and attended the Colorado School of Mines beginning in 1947 together.

Over the next few years I became close with Louis, just because we often found

ourselves at the same meetings or out with our clients. Luckily, the frenetic pace of our lives eased. By 1996 medication had improved and not all of our clients were terminal. Louis decided not to be quite as active by the late 90s, and was awarded the 1st Volunteer Emeritus for DAP. And yet, I continued to see Louis out with clients, as he had retired from record keeping, but not from helping people.

Louis is my absolute hero of the HIV years. I only learned Louis had passed at the age of 80 in 2003, after the fact. I learned Louis Rove was the father of Karl Rove, Presidential advisor to George W. Bush, just after the 2004 election.

In 2005 I wrote an article about Louis and pointed out that Karl and Louis were related. Most people who commented on the article said that many people knew of the connection. Even though there were strains on the relationship, toward the end father and son had had reconciled; however, Louis' Gay friends were not invited to the funeral. Later a new book was written by James Moore and Wayne Slater, which exposed the situation to the nation.

I did a GOOGLE search and learned that there has been more written regarding Louis and Karl Rove. Now I find that there is controversy as to whether Louis was Gay or not.

This is my take on history. I never slept with Louis, so I cannot say unequivocally one way or the other. What I can say is Louis was the epitome of a Gay man, full of compassion and caring. He cared for the sick and dying asking for no recognition. There is no reason not to be proud of Louis Rove and his legacy.

A Strategy For Winning Gay Rights

In an article appearing on Salon.Com, lawyer and philosopher, Linda Hirshman, argues that the only way GLBT civil rights and same-sex marriage can win at the polls is by using the "morality" argument. Hirshman argues that people who vote because of a moral position are not going to be swayed with logic and evidence. The only way to reach the anti-gay fundamentalist is by arguing that giving gays and lesbians equal rights, including marriage equality, is the moral position.

Ted Olsen, who argued overturning Proposition 8, told the court, "We believe that a conservative value is stable relationships and stable community and loving individuals coming together and forming a basis that is a building block of our society, which includes marriage."

Research indicates that younger "born again evangelicals", are increasingly tolerant of same-sex relationships.

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

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You may pay on line using PayPal at www.PSPFLAG.ORG or use the form below:

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