



The Pittsburgh PFLAGer

PFLAG Pittsburgh's Monthly Newsletter

Volume 18, Number 10

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Our Next Meeting:

Sunday, July 10, 2016

Meeting Information:

2:00PM Meeting Begins
2:15-3:30PM Small Group Sessions
3:45-4:30PM Educational Program

Third Presbyterian Church
5701 Fifth Ave.
Fifth & Negley Aves. 15232

Educational Program:

Brian Adams,
founder of
Stonewall Sports Pittsburgh

<http://stonewallpittsburgh.leagueapps.com/>

PFLAG VISION:

PFLAG envisions a world where diversity is celebrated and all people are respected, valued, and affirmed inclusive of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

PFLAG MISSION:

By meeting people where they are and collaborating with others, PFLAG realizes its vision through:

- Support for families, allies and people who are LGBTQ
- Education for ourselves and others about the unique issues and challenges facing people who are LGBTQ
- Advocacy in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ



PFLAG National Statement on Attack in Orlando

“As ambassadors of love and hope, PFLAG members will continue to support our extended family of LGBTQ people, families, and allies through these dark, anxious moments and beyond...”

WASHINGTON, DC—PFLAG National Executive Director Jody Huckaby today reacted to the unprecedented attack in Orlando, FL:

“As details continue to emerge from Orlando, our collective sadness, anger and grief is overwhelming. Our hearts are with those anxiously awaiting word of the safety of their loved ones, or who are already trying to cope with the unbearable loss of innocent lives. We thank the many first responders who saved, and continue to save lives.

PFLAG knows that the effects of this deliberate shooting spree that targeted an LGBTQ nightclub on Latinx Night will ripple across the country, reviving anxiety and painful emotions for anyone who has experienced hateful actions themselves or against loved ones because of who they are. We concur with President Obama’s message: This unprecedented massacre, this act of terror, this act of hate against people who are LGBTQ, was an attack on the fundamental belief in equality and dignity for all people.

At PFLAG, it tragically reminds us that our work is far from over. As ambassadors of love and hope, PFLAG members will continue to support our extended family of LGBTQ people, families, and allies through these dark, anxious moments and beyond. Let us join in unity to end violence and hatred.”

Please take advantage of these important resources:

- To find support or resources, including a PFLAG chapter near you, visit pflag.org
- If you have loved ones in Orlando--or are there yourself--please use the Facebook Check-In tool to stay, and keep others, updated: <https://www.facebook.com/safetycheck/orlando-shooting-jun12-2016/>.
- For those local to Orlando, The LGBT Center located at 945 N. Mills Ave is open and offering grief counseling (in English and Spanish) to those affected. You can also call the hotline at 407-228-1446.

###

Founded in 1972 with the simple act of a mother publicly supporting her gay son, PFLAG is the original family and ally organization. Uniting people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) with families, friends, and allies, PFLAG is committed to advancing equality through its mission of support, education, and advocacy. PFLAG has more than 400 chapters and 200,000 supporters crossing multiple generations of American families in major urban centers, small cities, and rural areas in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. To learn more, visit pflag.org.

Contact Info:

Website:

www.PFLAGPgh.org

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/PFLAGPgh

Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/PFLAGPgh>

Email:

info@PFLAGPgh.org

Phone:

(412)833-4556

Mail:

P.O. Box 5406
Pittsburgh, PA 15206



Chapter Officials:

President:

Kelley Moten

Past President:

Liz de Jesus

Treasurer:

Jim Tomson

Secretary, Newsletter and Web:

Mitch Hortert

Advocacy Chairpersons:

Mardie and Pat

Support Chairperson:

Allen Wolk

Education Chairperson:

Brandon Harper

Speaker's Bureau

Dianne Tomson

Chapter Librarian:

Kathy Paschke

At-Large:

Norman Brown and Donni Smith

Snacks

One simple way to help out at PFLAG Pgh is to bring a snack! It doesn't have to be a four-course dinner, just a snack that you'd like to share with the group! Any contributions are greatly appreciated.

Contributions?

Have a suggestion for the newsletter? Please respond to one of our emails with your ideas! We are always looking to provide the latest information to our chapter members and look forward to serving your needs in the future!

A Letter from Our President....

Dear Fellow PFLAGers,

Last month at Pridefest Pittsburgh, a woman came up to me as I was at our booth and she said, "Thank you for being here—for having the courage to make a difference." We made eye contact and it struck me that she was speaking from her heart; it wasn't just a line she threw around. I held her eyes, smiled and nodded because I couldn't speak.

It's not just the big events like the Orlando shootings, transgender policies or pending civil rights legislation that makes me glad to be involved with PFLAG, it's the one-on-one moments. It's that conversation with a mom whose child just came out as transgender, and letting her know she's not alone. It's meeting extended family—aunts and grandparents who want to know how to help their nephews and granddaughters. It's meeting and getting to know people who are finally comfortable with who they are after years of hiding.

Don't ever doubt the power, influence and value you have as members of PFLAG. You don't have to be retired, rich or finished with your journey in order to help lead PFLAG Pittsburgh by becoming a board member. You just have to be willing to share your opinion and give a little of your time. There are no special qualifications beyond a desire to help sustain our organization. Please reach out to me or any of our board members if you're thinking about becoming more involved.

Kelley Moten

Kelley Moten
PFLAG Pittsburgh President

Our Annual Membership Drive...

As a nonprofit organization, we are in existence due to the generous donations that you provide to us. One way you can give is by renewing your membership with PFLAG Pittsburgh. You can do this several ways: One is by going on to our website (<http://www.pflagpgh.org>) and utilizing the payment options on our homepage. You may also make a donation at one of our monthly meetings. \$15 of your membership goes to PFLAG National and the remainder stays here with us at PFLAG Pittsburgh.

Any and all donations are greatly appreciated and we thank you for all that you do for us whether it is monetary or by your generous volunteerism. Here at PFLAG Pittsburgh, we greatly appreciate YOU!

LGBTQ Groups Call for Unity in Wake of Orlando Shooting

Released: Monday, June 13, 2016

We the undersigned organizations working on the front lines of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) movement share in the profound grief for those who were killed and many more who were wounded during Latin Night at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Their lives were lost or forever altered in this devastating act of violence targeting LGBTQ people. Our hearts go out to all the family and friends touched by this horrific act. We know their lives will never be the same again.

This national tragedy happened against the backdrop of anti-LGBTQ legislation sweeping this country and we must not forget that in this time of grief. Unity and an organized response in the face of hatred is what we owe the fallen and the grieving. Collective resolve across national, racial and political lines will be required to turn the tide against anti-LGBTQ violence. Our response to this horrific act, committed by one individual, will have a deep impact on Muslim communities in this country and around the world. We as an intersectional movement cannot allow anti-Muslim sentiment to be the focal point as it distracts from the larger issue, which is the epidemic of violence that LGBTQ people, including those in the Muslim community, are facing in this country.

The animus and violence toward LGBTQ people is not news to our community. It is our history, and it is our reality. In 1973, 32 LGBTQ people died in an arson fire at an LGBTQ Upstairs Lounge in New Orleans. More than forty years later, similar acts of anti-LGBTQ violence are commonplace. Crimes motivated by bias due to sexual orientation and gender identity were the second largest set of hate crimes documented by the FBI in 2015 (over 20 percent). Murders and violence against transgender people globally have taken more than 2000 lives over the last nine years. Bias crimes against US immigrant populations, which include significant numbers of LGBTQ people, have increased over the past decade as anti-immigrant rhetoric has escalated.

For those of us who carry multiple marginalized identities, the impact of this violence and discrimination has even more severe consequences. These intersectional identities and their ramifications are apparent at every level in the Orlando tragedy, which disproportionately affected Latino/a members of our communities, and has xenophobic consequences that threaten LGBTQ Muslims. According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), there were 24 reports of hate violence related homicides in 2015, and 62% of those victims were LGBTQ people of color. Transgender and gender nonconforming people made up 67% of the homicides, the majority of whom were transgender women of color. The violence against transgender and gender nonconforming people has continued into 2016 with 13 reported individual homicides this year alone. NCAVP research on hate violence shows that LGBTQ people experience violence not only by strangers, but also in their everyday environments by employers, coworkers, landlords and neighbors. The Orlando shooting is simply an extreme instance of the kind of violence that LGBTQ people encounter every day.

As LGBTQ people who lived through the AIDS crisis, we know what it looks like and feels like to be scapegoated and isolated in the midst of a crisis that actually requires solidarity, empathy and collaboration from all quarters. We appeal to all in our movement and all who support us to band together in rejecting hatred and violence in all its shape shifting forms. Let us stand united as a diverse LGBTQ community of many faiths, races, ethnicities, nationalities and backgrounds.

Signed,

Arcus Foundation
Believe Out Loud
BiNet USA
Bisexual Resource Center
Center for Black Equity, Inc.
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals
The Council for Global Equality
Courage Campaign
Equality Federation
Family Equality Council
Freedom for All Americans
Freedom to Work
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
Gay Men's Health Crisis
The Gill Foundation
GLAAD
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality
GLSEN
Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network
The Harvey Milk Foundation

Human Rights Campaign
interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth
The Johnson Family Foundation
Lambda Legal
MAP
Marriage Equality USA
Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of La Raza
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Minority Aids Council (NMAC)
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance
National Religious Leadership Roundtable
The New York City Anti-Violence Project
Out & Equal Workplace Advocates



**To read the entire list, please visit: <https://www.pflag.org/press-releases/lgbtq-groups-call-unity-wake-orlando-shooting>*



PFLAG Pittsburgh News



PFLAG Board Membership/Officers

Although PFLAG Pittsburgh's board officer elections are not until September, it's never too early to think about serving on the board of PFLAG Pittsburgh. There are numerous opportunities and we're always looking for new faces and different perspectives! Every two years, PFLAG Pittsburgh membership elects a President, Executive Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary as well as members-at-large. If you are interested, please send us an email! Below are descriptions of the executive officers. Next month, we will include other board member descriptions.



From PFLAG National:

Chapter leadership sets the tone for the success of your chapter. All chapters need at least three officers: a president, secretary, and treasurer. This is a requirement of nonprofit organizations in most states and it is a great best practice for financial transparency and to ensure checks and balances. Diversity must be part of your chapter leadership. A combination of straight parents of LGBTQ people, people who are LGBTQ, straight allies, people of different ages, genders, races, ethnicities, abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds provides greater perspective on the issues. Having a chapter that is inclusive of differences is vital to fulfill our mission of support, education, and advocacy for all.

President:

- Works with the treasurer to develop a budget
- Presides over board and membership meetings
- Represents PFLAG in the community
- Works as a liaison to the Regional Director and Field Coordinator
- Performs other duties related to the overall leadership and maintenance of the chapter

Secretary:

- In charge of maintaining minutes from board meetings and the annual meeting
- Works with the chapter president and treasurer to maintain chapter records
- Sends out notices and reminders to members about upcoming meetings and events

Treasurer:

- Oversees the chapter budget
- Maintains financial records and receipts
- Manages the distribution of funds
- Provides a detailed financial report at each board meeting and a summary at membership meetings
- Completes necessary financial paperwork

PFLAG Pittsburgh Sponsors Dinner at Shepherd Wellness

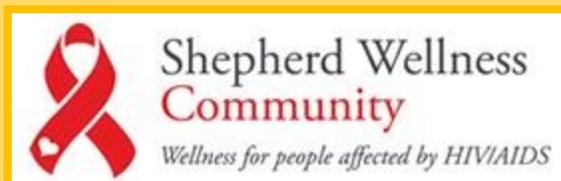
It's nearly that time of year again for the PFLAG sponsored Wellness Dinner at SWC on Friday, July 15, 2016. All Wellness Dinners will be held at SWC's Bloomfield Center at 4800 Sciota Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15224.

Volunteers should sign up online by clicking the following URL:

http://wellness.ivolunteer.com/event_127

Volunteers can sign up for the following job:

- 6 volunteers on Friday, from 5:45-9:00 p.m. Volunteers can arrive any time after 4:00 p.m. and will be finished by 9:00 p.m.
- If you would like to sign up a volunteer who doesn't have access to a computer, please call 412.683.4477 ext. 12 and they will add them manually to the list.





About PFLAG Academy Online:

PFLAG Academy Online brings free, monthly, PFLAG members-only training opportunities with core educational programs right to your computer screen. Benefit from PFLAG's great learning options, informed staff, and input from other participants without leaving home. All you'll need is a computer (or mobile device) and the drive to move equality forward!

In the coming months, be on the lookout for brand new sessions, including one on conflict resolution as well as core-skill building sessions on creating a thriving chapter, support group facilitation, and more! You may also email info@pflag.org or your [Field Manager](#) for more details about how to access past sessions on-demand so you can use PFLAG Academy Online as a resource for developing the leadership pipeline for your chapter.

Additional Information:

- [ReadyTalk Registration Information](#)
- [How do I know that my computer will be able to connect?](#)
- [Other Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) about webinars.](#)

Local LGBTQ+ Leaders Gather to Meet with the FBI

Local leaders from the LGBTQ+ Community, including persons who identify as LGBTQ+ and straight allies met on Wednesday, June 22, 2016 with the FBI in order to begin a conversation surrounding federal hate crime protections, reporting information to the FBI and collaboration on how they can work together to strengthen the community.

Representatives from the Delta Foundation, Gay and Lesbian Community Center, Judah Christian Fellowship, Persad, PFLAG, Proud Haven, and Sister's United met for approximately 2 hours with Special Agent Scott Smith and Darin Turpin of the FBI.

Special Agent Smith discussed that since the recent tragic events in Orlando, the FBI wanted to reach out to the leaders within the LGBTQ+ community to expand their outreach and availability. He reported that plans were being made prior to June 12, 2016; however, they quickly became a top priority.

Special Agent Turpin stated that the goal of the meeting was to create a relationship and begin to identify contact people both within the community and the FBI in order to work effectively together. He reported that as of June 22, 2016, the FBI offices in Pittsburgh, have not received reports regarding hate crimes that have been carried out against the LGBTQ+ community. As discussion was held on what is a hate crime v. what is not.

The main takeaway from the meeting: If a report is not made to the FBI, they do not know about issues within the community. Mr. Smith and Mr. Turpin encouraged those in attendance to reach out to individuals serviced by the respective organizations and provide them with the needed information in order to submit a report to the FBI so that it can be properly investigated.



Western Pennsylvania PFLAG Chapters

The Western Pennsylvania PFLAG chapters met for the first in three years to discuss a variety of topics and plan to meet again in October 2016! Representatives from Butler, Greensburg, Meadville, and Pittsburgh PFLAG Chapters were present for the two-hour long meeting.

Since the last meeting in 2013, Western Pennsylvania has seen two chapters close (Erie, New Castle) and there is a group working to start a chapter (Meadville). It is important to note that you do not have to be a chapter leader to attend these meetings. If you would like to be involved, please email our chapter secretary, Mitch at MRHortert@gmail.com.



PFLAG Pittsburgh's June 27, 2016 Board Mtg. Agenda

In an attempt to continue with our organization's transparency, below is the outline from our June 27, 2016 board meeting. If you have questions about the items or would like to get involved with a project, please contact one of the above listed board members for more information.

- **Meeting Commenced at 7:30pm**

- **Attendance:**

- Present: Kelley Moten (President), Jim Tomson (Treasurer), Mitch Hortert (Secretary), Allen Wolk (Support Chair), Diane Tomson (Speaker's Bureau), Liz de Jesus (Past President), Mardie and Pat (Advocacy Chairpersons)
- Absent: Kathy Paschke (Librarian), Brandon Harper (Education Chairperson), Norman Brown (At-large), Donni Smith (At-large)

- **Reports:**

- **Treasurer:**

- **Support:** Distributed via email.

- **Education:**

- July – Brian Adams, founder of Stonewall Sports Pittsburgh
- August – Devin Browne, founder of GSA at Brashear High School
- September – OPEN
- October – Arlene Bratz, on Intersex
- November and December – OPEN
- Checking with Ito Aya see if he can get someone from Dreams of Hope into one of the OPEN spots
- Kelley got contact information for the following organizations willing to come do a program for us:
 - Dress for Success
 - Family Links
 - Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

- **Speakers Bureau:**

- **Advocacy:**

- **Library:**

- **Old Business:**

- Pride 2016!
 - Huge success! Beautiful day! Great turnout!
 - Heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped! Should we name individuals in July
 - Made \$200.00 (Kelley counted in front of husband & kids). Kelley has check for Jim to
 - Suggestions for next year:
 - 400 bottles of water
 - assign definite shifts, 3-4 people each
 - provide an email sign-up sheet
 - take much less literature
 - free candy always good
 - not sure we need the extra table
- Sales tax exemption: Kelley still working on this.
- Shepherd Wellness dinner July 15 th , Mardie, me, so far. Sign up now! 4 openings for prep 2:30-5:00, 4 for serving 5:45-9:00 as of 6/19.
- Discussion & vote on board members attending newcomers' small group tabled.

- **New Business:**

- Electing Officers:
 - According to bylaws, nominations for officers should happen at July chapter meeting. Additional nominations may be made at August meeting. Voting takes place at September chapter meeting via paper ballots unless only one nominee (then voice vote allowed). New term begins October 1 st , 2016. Nominating Committee to be chaired by president. Can we say the entire board is the
 - Nominating Committee?
 - Should we offer an incentive for board members such as paying their dues or giving them each a T-shirt?
 - Officer descriptions: see bylaws.
- Regional meeting update (Mitch)
- Clarification of church availability
- Ideas for when the traditional or advocacy groups don't have enough participants: perhaps create a list of specific discussion topics or questions?

- **Anything else?**

- **Meeting Adjourned: 8:29pm**

Letters to Our Senators

PFLAG Pittsburgh member and advocacy chairperson, Mardie Baldo wrote to both Senators Pat Toomey (R) and Bob Casey (D) of Pennsylvania asking our elected leaders to pass anti-discrimination laws. Below are their responses:

Dear Ms Baldo:

Thank you for taking the time to contact me about S. 1858, the Equality Act. I appreciate hearing from you about this issue.

I am a proud cosponsor of the Equality Act, introduced by Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon on July 23, 2015. This legislation would amend existing federal civil rights laws to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in education, employment, housing, credit and Federal jury service. The bill would also amend existing laws to prohibit discrimination in public accommodations and federal funding on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

As your United States Senator, I strongly support the rights of LGBT individuals. This Nation was founded on the principles of freedom and equality, not for some, but for all. As a society and a government, we must continue to move toward the ideal of inclusion. I am committed to ensuring that our government provides equal protection under the law for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

In recent years, there have been significant changes, both changes of the law and changes of public sentiment, regarding same-sex marriage. In June 2013, the United States Supreme Court issued a decision in *United States v. Windsor*, finding Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) unconstitutional. This decision required the Federal Government to fully recognize legally married same-sex couples. Less than one year later, on May 20, 2014, Judge John E. Jones of the United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania struck down Pennsylvania's ban on same-sex marriage, finding the prohibition to be a violation of due process and equal protection guarantees, and issued an order barring Pennsylvania officials from preventing same-sex couples from obtaining marriage licenses. I supported both the Supreme Court's decision regarding DOMA and the Pennsylvania decision, as both were critical steps toward achieving equal rights for all Pennsylvanians and Americans.

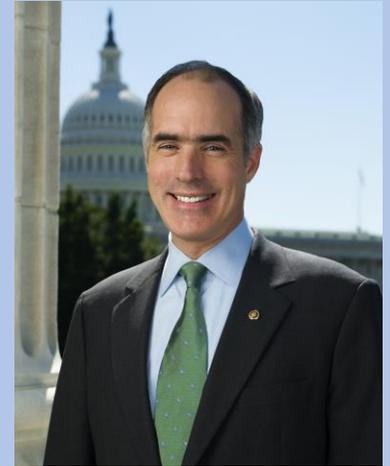
On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court issued a decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, finding that marriage is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution. As a result, all states are required to issue marriage licenses and recognize marriages performed in other states of same-sex couples. I believe the Supreme Court made the right decision that will ensure all couples are treated with dignity and are able to enter into marriage with the person they love.

Despite the Supreme Court's decision in favor of marriage equality in June of 2015, it is still legal under federal law and in many states, including Pennsylvania, to fire someone, or deny them access to public accommodations because they are gay or transgender. A loving couple could get married on a Saturday and then get fired when they get to work on Monday just because of who they are. That is contrary to our values and makes no sense to me.

I have heard from many Pennsylvanians about the importance of these protections. One letter I received from a seventh grader in Southeastern Pennsylvania stands out to me. In the letter the boy told me he "recently heard that LGBT individuals have no protections against being fired in Pennsylvania. I have two moms, one is a nurse and the other has been a teacher for 17 years. They are hardworking individuals who provide for my sister and me. I do not think it is fair to be fired for who you love." As a Senator, I cannot, in good conscience, take a position that denies these parents or children the full measure of equality and respect.

In addition to the Equality Act, I am also a cosponsor of the Respect for Marriage Act, introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein of California. This legislation requires all states, territories and Indian tribes as well as the entirety of federal law to respect any and all same-sex marriages.

I understand that many Americans of goodwill have strong feelings on both sides of this issue. As a supporter of religious freedom, I support same-sex marriage as a secular institution. No religious institution should be required to confer religious or sacramental approval contrary to the tenets of its faith. I also believe elected public officials have an abiding obligation to refrain from demonizing and dividing people for partisan or political gain. Rather, elected officials from both sides of the aisle should come together and find areas of agreement to do what is best for the country.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Letters to Our Senators (Continued)

PFLAG Pittsburgh member and advocacy chairperson, Mardie Baldo wrote to both Senators Pat Toomey (R-PA) and Bob Casey (D-PA) of Pennsylvania asking our elected leaders to pass anti-discrimination laws. Below is the continuation of their responses:

Continuation of Senator Casey:

I understand that many Americans of goodwill have strong feelings on both sides of this issue. As a supporter of religious freedom, I support same-sex marriage as a secular institution. No religious institution should be required to confer religious or sacramental approval contrary to the tenets of its faith. I also believe elected public officials have an abiding obligation to refrain from demonizing and dividing people for partisan or political gain. Rather, elected officials from both sides of the aisle should come together and find areas of agreement to do what is best for the country.

In addition to issues regarding same-sex marriage, I have fought to protect LGBT individuals in schools and workplaces. This Congress, I introduced the Safe Schools Improvement Act to ensure that schools and school districts implement programs to prevent and respond to incidents of bullying and harassment. In 2013, I cosponsored and voted in favor of S. 815, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would have extended federal employment discrimination protections (which currently exist for race, religion, sex, national origin, age and disability) to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

On May 2, 2016, I also sent a letter, along with 39 of my Senate colleagues, to the Secretary of Education John King asking the Department of Education (ED) to issue clear guidance on protections for transgender students in public primary and secondary schools, public colleges and universities, and private schools that accept student loans or federal funds. On May 13, 2016, ED and the Department of Justice (DOJ) issued joint guidance further clarifying that schools who practice discrimination on the basis of gender identity, including restricting bathroom access, risk losing federal funding. I am pleased ED and DOJ have taken action to protect the rights of transgender Americans.

As your United States Senator, I will continue to support the rights of LGBT individuals throughout Pennsylvania and across the Nation. Again, thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. Please do not hesitate to contact me in the future about this or any other matter of importance to you.

For more information on this or other issues, I encourage you to visit my website, <http://casey.senate.gov>. I hope you will find this online office a comprehensive resource to stay up-to-date on my work in Washington, request assistance from my office or share with me your thoughts on the issues that matter most to you and to Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,
Bob Casey
United States Senator



Dear Ms. Baldo,

Thank you for contacting me about the Equality Act (S. 1858). I appreciate hearing from you.

As you know, Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced S. 1858 on July 23, 2015. Among its provisions, this bill would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit segregation of public facilities by sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. I understand your views on S. 1858 and I value your input. S. 1858 is currently pending before the Senate Committee on the judiciary, of which I am not a member. Please be assured I will keep your views on S. 1858 in mind should it come before the full Senate for a vote.

Thank you again for your correspondence. Please do not hesitate to contact me in the future if I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,
Pat Toomey
United States Senator.

LGBTQ+ Stories



Obama Names LGBT Landmark As National Monument

By Scott Horsely, [NPR News](#)

President Obama is designating a new national monument around the Stonewall Inn, the birthplace of the modern gay rights movement.

The Stonewall National Monument in New York City will be the first addition to the National Park System specifically highlighting the history of the LGBT community.

The monument covers nearly 8 acres in New York's Greenwich Village including a landmark gay bar, the Stonewall Inn. In June of 1969, patrons at the bar fought back against police persecution — an event that's widely seen as a watershed in the campaign for LGBT rights.

"Raids like these were nothing new, but this time the patrons had had enough," Obama said in a White House video announcing the new monument. "So they stood up and spoke out. The riots became protests. The protests became a movement. The movement ultimately became an integral part of America."

Obama had previously highlighted the significance of Stonewall in his second inaugural address, weaving the battle for gay rights into a larger tapestry of civil rights for women and African-Americans.

"That all of us are created equal is the star that guides us still, just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls and Selma and Stonewall," Obama told a cheering crowd on the National Mall in January 2013.

Designation of the Stonewall monument comes just days before the first anniversary of the 2015 Supreme Court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage in all 50 states. It also follows less than two weeks after 49 patrons at a gay bar in Orlando, Fla., were killed in a mass shooting.

Creation of the national monument, which also includes Christopher Park and the surrounding area, required some complex land swaps. It had the backing of state and local officials in New York.

"Stonewall is finally taking its rightful place in American history," said Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., who helped lead the effort. "We are faced with painful reminders daily of how much further we must go to achieve true equality and tolerance for the LGBT community, but honoring and preserving the stories of all of the diverse participants in Stonewall in our National Park System is a clear symbol of how far we have come."

To read more, please visit: <http://www.npr.org/2016/06/24/483385747/obama-names-lgbt-landmark-as-national-monument>



To the LGBT Community Centers During this Difficult Time: Thank You

By Naomi Goldberg of [The Huffington Post](#)

There are more than [200 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender \(LGBT\) community centers](#) in the United States. As LGBT communities in Orlando and across the country struggle to come to terms with the horror of the attack on Latinx Night at Pulse, the LGBT nightclub that was the scene of the largest mass shooting in our country's modern history, LGBT community centers have been there, as they have for more than 47 years when the first LGBT center, the [Los Angeles LGBT Center](#), opened its doors.

Today, the [Movement Advancement Project](#) and [CenterLink](#) released the [2016 LGBT Community Center Survey Report: Assessing the Capacity and Programs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Centers](#). The report surveyed 143 LGBT community centers from 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, and provides a detailed picture of centers' staffs and boards, program priorities, constituencies and services, and financial information.

Most notably, the report finds that centers serve over 43,500 people per week, and many centers (33%) serve hundreds of people on a weekly basis without any paid staff. They are the places that people turn to for meals and for health care, and other vital services that LGBT people rely on, particularly seniors or low-income LGBT people. But LGBT community centers are more than services and staff. From Charlotte to Cincinnati, from Sioux Falls to San Diego, LGBT community centers are, in many ways, the heart of LGBT communities.

To read more, please visit: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/naomi-goldberg/to-the-lgbt-community-cen_b_10658748.html

Pittsburgh Public Schools Board Approves Transgender Bathroom Policy

By Lisa Washington of [KDKA-TV News](#)



PITTSBURGH (KDKA) — Transgender students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools District may now use whichever bathroom corresponds with the gender with which they identify.

The school board approved the new policy with a unanimous vote Wednesday night. The board hopes the plan will be in place by the start of the school year in the fall.

“The most important part of this is going to be principal training, teacher training, and our security guards and our nurses,” said board member Moria Kaleida. “But I think now that we passed this in time, we have plenty of time to plan over the summer and implement this correctly going into next year.”

Vanessa Davis helped write the policy. She said, “It really protects all students and affirms identities of particularly transgender, gender expansive students. And it really allows them to fully participate in their education.”

“There are transgender students in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools in this city. And those students now are really gonna have a much better experience in school,” Davis went on to say.

Board members say the policy has gotten a lot of support from the public, but not everyone is happy with Wednesday’s vote.

“I’m disappointed that the board didn’t take the request that we felt that we needed more discussion. The policy needed revision and clarification,” Cletus Marie Abate said. “I feel that the school district has to work in the best interest of all students in the district and not have a selective agenda.”

To read more, please visit: <http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2016/06/23/the-pittsburgh-public-school-board-approves-transgender-bathroom-policy/>

Why Mississippi’s Law on Religious Rights and LGBT Discrimination Got Blocked

By Emma Green of [The Atlantic](#)

This spring, the state’s legislature passed H.B. 1523, an extensive law written to protect people who believe any of the following: that marriage is between a man and a woman; that sex should only happen in the context of marriage; and that the words “male” and “female” refer to “an individual’s immutable biological sex as objectively determined by anatomy and genetics at time of birth.” The law claim these protections are a form of religious freedom.

It provides that religious organizations can refuse to rent out their social halls for a same-sex wedding, for example, and that clergy can refuse to perform a same-sex marriage ceremony. These groups can also fire a single mother who gets pregnant, or, in the case of religious adoption agencies, decline to place a child with a same-sex couple. Doctors and psychologists can refuse to get involved with gender-reassignment procedures or take cases that would violate their religious beliefs. Schools and other public agencies can create “sex-specific standards” for dress code, bathrooms, and more. State employees can also refuse to sign same-sex-marriage licenses, and they can’t be fired for saying they believe homosexuality is wrong, for example.

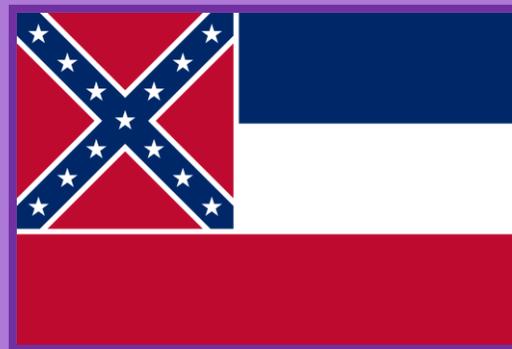
It is, without a doubt, the most extensive legislation of its kind to be passed into law since the U.S. Supreme Court’s same-sex-marriage decision one year ago. And for the most part, the country has been silent.

Now, a federal judge has blocked the law from going into effect, which was set to happen on July 1. Carlton W. Reeves, a Texas native who grew up in Yazoo City, Mississippi, and was appointed to the federal bench by President Obama in 2010, had some choice words for his fellow Southerners. “In physics, every action has its equal and opposite reaction. In politics, every action has its predictable overreaction,” he wrote. The Supreme Court’s same-sex marriage decision, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, “has led to HB 1523. The next chapter of this back-and-forth has begun.”

Mississippi is not alone in passing protections for religious individuals, clergy, and state employees; during the past year, state legislatures around the country have considered and occasionally passed their own, less extensive versions of this kind of legislation. North Carolina is now [fighting the federal government](#) over H.B. 2, a law that prohibits special public accommodations from being made for transgender people, including in public bathrooms.

This spring, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal [vetoed](#) a bill that would have potentially allowed religious organizations to refuse service to LGBT people. Kentucky recently [revised](#) the layout of its marriage license, following [the controversy over Kim Davis](#), the Rowan County clerk who refused to sign her name or attach the seal of her office to same-sex-marriage licenses. These are just a few of the many states where putative religious-freedom legislation has been drafted in the wake of the legalization of same-sex marriage.

To read more, please visit: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/why-mississippi-law-on-religious-rights-and-lgbt-got-blocked/489731/>



How does the LGBT Community React to the Orlando Shooting?

By Jae Alexis Lee of [Newsweek Magazine](#) and [Quora](#)

Every single day, I get up in the morning, I start reading over comments on my Quora content, checking my messages and looking at news that impacts specifically the transgender community but the broader LGBT community, as well. And every single day, I dedicate some time to writing on Quora about some of those issues. Words are powerful and I try, every day, to craft the best words I can to help people understand who we are and the issues we face because I believe to the very core of my being that knowledge is the only thing that will stop the hate, the fear and the violence.

I've been looking for the words, the powerful words that can give context or meaning to what happened. Words that could help people understand. Words that might help stem the tide of hate and fear and violence that leads to nights like this.

The problem is, I don't have words that are powerful enough to wrap around what happened on Sunday. There are words like tragedy and horrific that have been used so many times in the past to refer to shooting events like this that the words that should be powerful symbols for deep emotions are instead reduced to the expected ornaments on an event that feels, to many people, as familiar as the Christmas tree in the living room. I feel like the powerful words have been used up and so I don't know how to express the depth of loss and sorrow and fear that I feel after Orlando.



So here are the only words I have that can come close to expressing what Orlando feels like: Alecia, Erica, Laura, Tess, Tamara, Katie, Elliot, Ara, Emily, Lexa, Claire, Alexandra, Sophia, Stephanie, Cyndi, Lydia, Ward, Joe, Michelle...

See, in queer spaces, you frequently hear us talking about families of choice. For many of us, coming out comes with a cost of losing the families to whom we're related by blood and so we form close family bonds with other LGBT folk and close allies. The people on that list have been my brothers and sisters, close confidants, wise aunts, and so many more things. Those people are my family of choice.

So when I think about Orlando, I think about what it would be like to *lose those people*. I think about the hole in my life that would leave. I think about how it would feel, in one night, for so many of the people I care so much about to have been taken from us.

For people who aren't LGBT, it can be hard to understand the close bonds we have as a community and why this loss hits all of us so very hard. It can be hard to understand how many of us have a personal experience of surviving violence and why the feeling that *it could have been me* is so profound. The vulnerability we feel at having one of the few safe spaces we retreat from a hostile world to violated.... It can be hard to understand if you've never had to seek out a place to relax where you didn't feel like just being yourself would make you a target for violence.

I've looked for the powerful words and I keep finding them lacking because the only words that are powerful enough to express how much Orlando hurts are *names*. Because it's *that personal*. Because it cuts *that deep*.

I want, so very badly, to say what we should *do about it*... what actions we should take so we don't have to face this pain again, but I can't. Those words, whatever they might be, are hollow echoes of things that have already been said by many.

So I leave you with the only words I have left that I feel will do anything to stop the fear, the hatred and the violence: Never stop reaching out, never stop learning about people who are different from yourself, never stop forming the bonds of family with people who aren't related to you by an accident of birth. Never stop loving whoever it is you love, never surrender to the fear, never let yourself be deceived by the

lies and the stereotypes. Never accept that this is just the way things are. Never accept that hatred and bigotry are "valid opinions" and never, never feel like you can't do anything to stop another Orlando from happening because even if I have no powerful words to offer, *you are powerful* and *your words matter*. Your words matter and your actions, large and small, make a difference that is real.

Never ever be afraid to make that difference.

