

OUTREACH

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TOGETHER WE CAN!

Ever since those unhappy days in 2007 when it became obvious that the Human Rights Campaign was willing to discard the transgender community for a notional and ultimately irrelevant political gain on the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act, members of the transgendered community have been in a difficult position. It became very apparent then that transgendered folk could not simply assume that some leading national or state-level umbrella organizations representing every element of the LGBT community would act in the best interest of their transgendered brothers and sisters.

It is to the immense credit of Equality Illinois and to Rick Garcia that this particular Beltway position was immediately rejected out of hand here in our state, and was later by organizations across the country as well. However, this failure of leadership in our nation's capitol should not lead transgendered Americans to give up on active participation within the broader LGBT movement, to simply retreat into our own spheres. Instead, we need to see this for what it was: a symptom of the desperate need for gender-aware Americans of every stripe to become engaged. Not only



Gay & Straight: Activating Change Together

should we be invested in creating our own representative organizations to foster a better-developed sense of transgendered community; it is also our responsibility as citizens to deal ourselves in and actively participate in those LGBT organizations that already have skin in the game, and who have a proven track record for acting in the interests of not just gay Americans, not just lesbian Americans, but on behalf of all LGBT Americans.

The goal now is for everyone within the transgendered community and the broader LGBT and allied community to work in concert, not just to achieve common objectives in terms of rights and needs, but to better educate one another on the specific issues that affect just one component of the rainbow or another, and to understand that while we do not all confront the same challenges, we must recognize that we all face the same struggle for acceptance. One of the most important things that we might achieve through Allied for Equality is to recognize that we do not work together just for one

group's gain, or merely for our own group's gain. Instead, we fight for everyone's benefit, to guarantee the rights and protections that are our birthright as Americans, and which we stand to lose if we fail to actively assert our rights as human beings and citizens.

This is not a challenge for gays, lesbians and our allies alone, but for transgenders as well. As we now know only too well, trans folk cannot assume we'll be spoken for. As relatively rare as gender-aware folk are, the only way to foster a sense of common cause with the gay, lesbian and allied community is to be active within it, and active within wider society as a whole. The better we do in making ourselves visible within these wider communities, the better we'll be able to forge that sense of unity, to better bridge the inevitable misunderstandings and differences which can too easily divide us.



-Christina Kahrl

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CAROLINE'S CORNER

As promised, your second installment of the Allied for Equality newsletter has arrived just in time for Spring! I wanted to take a slightly different approach and have guest columnists as contributors for this edition as I am a firm believer that different perspectives on various issues makes us a stronger LGBTQA community.

It may not always be outwardly evident, but the amount of allies that commit to fighting for LGBT equality grows everyday. For example, we have collected hundreds of letters in support of civil union legislation in the last couple of months alone, half of which have been signed by allies from across the state. If you know someone who wants to get involved, invite them to be part of Allied for Equality or have them contact me. If YOU want to contribute to the next newsletter, let me know! Hopefully I will see some of you at the various festivals this summer. -Caroline

Allied for Equality is a joint project of:

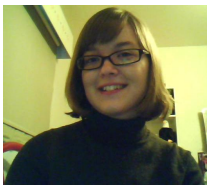


Equality Illinois and



Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE NEWS



The military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is an important LGBT issue that has been in the news a lot recently. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is a policy that discriminates against homosexuals serving in the armed forces. Since its inception in 1993, 13,500 soldiers have been discharged under its provisions. All activity surrounding this outdated and discriminatory policy points toward its repeal. On March 3, the Senate introduced a bill to repeal the arcane policy that no longer makes sense in our modern society. According to a

February 8 Washington Post/ABC poll on the matter, 75% of Americans believe that the policy is arcane and that gays should serve openly in the military. Aside from support from the American people, high-ranking military officials agree that the policy needs to be repealed. On February 2, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen, called for the repeal of "Don't ask, Don't tell." In addition, President Obama re-addressed this concern in his State of the Union address this past January.

The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy forces soldiers to hide who they are. They should be concentrating on fighting on the battlefield, not fighting with themselves as they try to hide their true identity. Three-star Retired Lieutenant General Claudia Kennedy said, "we need to recognize that loyalty and selfless service are exhibited equally, by service members of every color, gender and sexual orientation." If Congress is serious about winning the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, they should be concentrating on keeping good soldiers, not discharging them for arbitrary, bigoted ideas. Now, I'm certainly not a warmonger and I don't exactly support the surge, but if the President insists on going ahead with it, he should let everyone who is *qualified* fight in the armed forces regardless of sexual orientation. What I'm most concerned about is ending policies that discriminate against those in the LGBT community.

-Mary Egan

3 THINGS YOU CAN DO

- Employment Non Discrimination Act** (ENDA—H.R. 3017 / S. 1584): Please CALL the Capitol switchboard (202-224-3121), ask for your Representative and tell them to pass ENDA or contact Caroline to get a template of the letter we have been collecting asking Congress to support the bill! ENDA would protect LGBT individuals from discrimination in the workplace.
- Civil Union Bill** (SB 1716): The Illinois General Assembly is back! Tell your Representative and Senator that Illinois can't wait any longer. CALL your legislators or contact Caroline to get a template of the letter we have been collecting asking the Representative/Senator to support the bill. **Mark your calendar for LOBBY DAY on April 22nd** (more info will be available on www.eqil.org soon).
- The Military Readiness Enhancement Act** (H.R. 1283 / S. 3065): Call the Capitol switchboard (202-224-3121), and ask your U.S. Representative or Senator to co-sponsor this Act. For more info go to www.sldn.org. This Act would repeal the federal law banning military service by openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual Americans, Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

VICTORY: Thanks to all who called and emailed the Illinois Senate Judiciary Committee. Thanks to you SB 3447 did NOT get called. This bill *would have* carved out exceptions to the IL Human Rights Act, allowing certain employees and tax exempt organizations to discriminate against Illinoisan on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or religion.



Panelists discuss their relationships at the CAAN sponsored Marriage Forum in Plainfield, IL



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UPCOMING EVENTS

March PFLAG Meetings:

Please go to www.pflagillinois.org for a COMPLETE listing of meetings and info

PFLAG Hinsdale: Mar 7 from 2-4pm
(Unitarian Church of Hinsdale-11 W. Maple, Hinsdale)

*meets the 1st Sunday of each month

PFLAG Aurora/Fox Valley Mar 14 from 2-4pm (New England Congregational Church-406 W. Galena Blvd, Aurora)

*meets the 2nd Sunday of each month

PFLAG DuPage: Mar 21 from 2-4pm
(St. Paul Lutheran Church-515 S. Wheaton Ave, Wheaton)

*meets the 3rd Sunday of each month

Equality Illinois Events

For more info visit: www.eqil.org

First Friday's: Apr 2 from 6-8pm (Sidetrack-3349 N. Halsted, Chicago)

Women's Event: Apr 3 from 4-7pm (Mary's Attic-5400 N. Clark, Chicago)

Equality Across America, Midwest Conference: (for more info email UniteFightMidwest@gmail.com): Mar 12-14, (Columbia College-600 S. Michigan Ave, Chicago)

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INVITE YOUR FRIENDS!

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Facebook: search "Allied for Equality"