



## **Goal of Americans for Truth: Counteract homosexual 'agenda'**

August 25, 2006

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Staff writer

Area resident and conservative activist Peter LaBarbera is leaving his post as the Illinois Family Institute's executive director to pursue his goal of creating a national organization dedicated to "confronting the homosexual activist agenda."

In a few months, LaBarbera, 44, will re-launch an organization he founded in 1996: Americans for Truth. But now AFT's work will be dedicated solely to issues of homosexuality.

"Homosexual, bisexual and transsexual groups spend tens of millions of dollars every year to market and normalize their aberrant lifestyles," LaBarbera said in a statement announcing his decision. "Yet, after all these years, there is not a single, serious national group dedicated specifically to exposing and countering their agenda."

LaBarbera said that agenda "is anything that seeks to or has the goal of normalizing homosexuality as a societal good."

"It's basically anything on the side that says homosexuality is really just a mere alternative lifestyle and should be divorced from moral concerns, or it's actually a good thing," said LaBarbera, noting he believes "gays can change."

"We're saying that it is a sin in the context of biblical Christianity."

Glen Ellyn-based IFI has been active recently in leading a narrowly unsuccessful petition effort to place before Illinois voters an advisory referendum to define marriage as being between a man and a woman.

"The tendency lately, I think, has been for the whole fight almost to be on marriage, and to the detriment to other issues," LaBarbera said.

Consequently, LaBarbera is re-launching AFT as an organization dedicated to promoting the "pro-family" point of view on a wide range of homosexuality issues.

LaBarbera said organizations such as Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family, as well as the Family Research Council and the American Family Association, have big budgets and broad influence, but they aren't solely focused on issues of homosexuality.

**Meanwhile, "the other side" has established a wide variety of organizations that are dedicated entirely to address specific issues regarding homosexuality. Just to name a few, said LaBarbera, there are the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Lambda Legal, and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network.**

"The interesting thing from a strategic perspective is, on so many fronts I would say, there's not as much action as there needs to be on the pro-family side," said LaBarbera. "Whereas the gay side is pushing on every single front."

Leaders of Naperville churches that publicly support gay marriage and/or welcome members of all sexual orientations into their congregations, reacted to LaBarbera's announcement with disappointment.

"I think it's a shame," said the Rev. Emmy Lou Belcher of DuPage Unitarian-Universalist Church in Naperville. "It just means we have more work to do."

Belcher wondered what exactly was meant by "homosexual activist agenda," saying she wasn't sure such a thing existed anymore so than a "heterosexual agenda."

"The only agenda I know of among people I know who are homosexual is to have the same rights as everyone else," she said.

The Rev. Greg Skiba of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Naperville also questioned what LaBarbera meant.

"It's no surprise that people who are opposed to homosexuality are willing to start an organization to oppose what they call the homosexual activist agenda as a way to further their own agenda," he said.

But LaBarbera said AFT's message is about truth, not hate.

"It's time for Americans to unapologetically resist the demands of this lobby, and to counter the lies upon which it is built, the foremost being that certain people are inherently or 'born' homosexual, and that this is a civil rights issue."