

Gay coalition asks Broward, city to denounce Mayor Naugle

August 2, 2007
By Brittany Wallman

A coalition of national gay rights groups is calling on the City Commission and Broward County Commission to denounce Mayor Jim Naugle's recent comments about gays.

In letters to both boards, the coalition argues that because the mayor made his controversial comments in his official capacity as mayor, that the city and county should officially and publicly respond.

"Otherwise your collective silence may be taken by others to mean that his comments actually do reflect the views of your city, not just the mayor's own personal and deplorable prejudices," reads the group's letter to the city and county commissions.

The coalition includes gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender groups rights groups and was signed by: Selisse Berry, executive director, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates; Jeremy Bishop, executive director, Pride At Work, AFL-CIO; Jennifer Chrisler, executive director, Family Pride; Jimmy Creech, executive director, Faith In America Inc.; Andrea Densham, interim executive director, Mautner Project, The National Lesbian Health Organization; **Matt Foreman, executive director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**; Neil Giuliano, president, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and former Mayor of Tempe, Ariz.; and Kate Kendell, executive director, National Center for Lesbian Rights.

Naugle could not be reached for comment on Thursday.

The controversy kicked off when the mayor told the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* for a July 4 article that he uses the term "homosexual" rather than "gay" because "most of them aren't gay. They're unhappy."

The article highlighted Naugle's assertion that a proposed \$250,000 single-stall robotic toilet for the beach -- a proposal that has since been nixed from the budget -- would discourage the "homosexual activity" he said plagues other public restrooms. City police, meanwhile, said they've made no arrests in the recent past and only a few in recent years, for sex in public restrooms.

Later in July, Naugle questioned whether Broward County should continue to invite gay tourists here while at the same time the county's HIV and AIDS rates are among the highest in the state and nation.

The coalition urged the two government bodies to reaffirm Broward County's invitation to gay tourists to come here.

Though members of both boards have told the *Sun-Sentinel* in recent weeks they weren't inclined to pass a resolution denouncing Naugle, the coalition says it expects "broad support."

Fort Lauderdale's City Commission is on a break until September. The County Commission meets every Tuesday.