



Rea Carey named executive director of the Task Force

July 11, 2008

Rea Carey, longtime leader and activist in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movement, has been appointed executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The Task Force was the first national LGBT rights organization and remains the community's uncompromising, progressive voice committed to building grassroots political power through advocacy, training, organizing and cutting-edge research and analysis.

"We were searching for someone who is both visionary and practical, has an understanding of our movement's history and can take advantage of new opportunities that lie ahead," said Alan Acosta, board co-chair. "There are very few people who have the right combination of voice, skills, passion, fearlessness and relationships in and outside the movement to take the Task Force to the next level. We've found that person in Rea Carey."

"For 35 years, the Task Force has been the organization that says the hard things, does the hard work and pushes the envelope in strategic ways," added board co-chair Mark Sexton. "We are confident that Rea is the right leader for the Task Force as we work toward our vision of a society that welcomes, respects and honors each and every lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender person."

Carey said she was honored and energized by the opportunity to lead the Task Force at a crucial time in the struggle for LGBT equality.

"I believe our movement is on the cusp of taking the gains of the last 40 years and translating them into permanent and society-changing advances," Carey said. "The last two years alone have shown astonishing progress in nondiscrimination laws and relationship recognition in the states. And yet, we have a long way to go in tackling other challenges such as economic and healthcare hardships faced by LGBT people, appropriate care for the growing number of LGBT seniors and helping progressive people of faith assert their belief in the humanity of LGBT people. And certainly, we as a movement will fail in the long run if we do not attend to the systemic barriers to our becoming a more racially diverse and dynamic force for change."

The appointment was announced by the Task Force board following a four-month national search to replace Matt Foreman, who left the organization in April for a senior position at the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

Carey, who had served as deputy executive director to Foreman for four years, was appointed acting executive director following Foreman's departure. Initially, she asked not to be considered for the permanent position, preferring to remain as deputy executive director. The board, however, asked her to reconsider in light of her exceptional performance as acting executive director.

"Rea proved to be an extremely strong and charismatic leader in the interim position," said Paula Redd Zeman, board member and co-chair of the search committee. "We have been impressed by her steady hand, her strategic mindset and her ability to make and carry out the tough decisions required in leading a national organization. Ultimately, the search committee decided that there's no place like home - Rea was the superstar that we had been seeking. The search committee approached Rea a second time and asked her to serve the organization and the LGBT community at this critical juncture. This time, she said yes."

With Foreman and Carey at the helm, the Task Force became an organization with more than 50 staff and a \$10 million budget. Under their leadership, the Task Force focused the work of the Policy Institute think tank to produce analysis that is even more useful to activists on the ground; served as the movement's progressive voice on Capitol Hill; helped a record number of states pass LGBT-positive legislation; and established the Academy for Leadership and Action to provide more cohesive and strategic leadership and skills development to activists nationwide.

Carey has worked extensively in HIV/AIDS prevention and in the LGBT community and has a longstanding relationship with the Task Force. In addition to her four years as deputy executive director, she has also served as a senior strategist overseeing the strategic planning process. In the 1990s, she was active in community organizing through ACT UP and OUT direct action groups, Lesbian Services of Whitman-Walker Clinic and as a co-founder of Gay Men and Lesbians Opposing Violence. Carey was the founding executive director of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition, an LGBT youth leadership organization. She holds a master's degree from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and her expertise includes management, fundraising, strategic planning, staff and board development, capacity building, coalition work, leadership training and program development. For the last five months, Carey has overseen the leadership transition as Matt Foreman moved on to the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund and she has served as the acting executive director since mid-April.

Her appointment drew praise from predecessor Foreman. "Rea is an extraordinary leader, a brilliant thinker and passionately committed to complete equality for our people," he said. "Her appointment as the new executive director is not only wonderful for the Task Force and its future, but for the entire movement."