



Frank talks gay rights at inauguration event

Wins award Sunday at People's 'Gayla'

By JOSHUA LYNSEN, Washington Blade | Jan 19, 12:20 PM

Adorned in tuxedos and cocktail dresses, a few hundred people laughed and danced their way toward equality Sunday at the People's Inaugural LGBT Gayla.

The event, set at the Historical Society of Washington, celebrated the work that U.S. Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) and others have done to foster equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans. It also featured frequent calls to support full voting rights in Congress for D.C. residents.

Frank, in accepting an award for his gay rights work in Congress, wove the two issues together by noting the nation's founding documents were once interpreted as granting rights exclusively to wealthy, white landowners. He said such views have long since been abandoned — but equal rights remain elusive for many people.

He said the march toward gay civil rights, which began overtly in America about 40 years ago, has moved faster than he thought would happen. Still, he noted, the progress has not come fast enough. Gays are not protected from employment discrimination and cannot serve openly in the armed forces.

The concept of full equality also eludes D.C. residents, whose congressional representative lacks full voting privileges. Frank, who lauded Sunday the notion of giving D.C. residents stronger representation in Congress, noted the legislative battle is one that gay Americans should support.

He said members of the Congressional Black Caucus have a stronger voting record on gay civil rights bills than some gay members of Congress. When a befuddled crowd did not react, Frank clarified to many laughs that he wasn't referencing the openly gay members of Congress.

D.C. Council member Jim Graham (D-Ward 1), who presented Frank's award, thanked him for being a role model for gay Americans. "Having an openly gay member of Congress fight for our rights is a real inspiration," Graham said. "His voice has been much needed help when there were few leaders speaking out for LGBT persons. He continues to be a bold voice for civil rights."

Also honored during the Gayla were the Pride at Work program, an official AFL-CIO constituency group, and Rea Carey, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, among others.

