



The Task Force in the News

Media Highlights

Dec. 21 – 30, 2005

Roberta Sklar, Director of Communications

Quote of the Week:

“Putting the rights of a minority up for a popular vote is always wrong,” said executive director Matt Foreman. “This is not democracy. This is the tyranny of the majority, and it’s immoral.”

Gay People’s Chronicle (Ohio)
2005 wrap up

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Windy City Times

Ford Confirms Ads in Gay Publications

by Andrew Davis
2005-12-21

In a statement issued Dec. 14, Ford re-affirmed its commitment to its progressive workplace policies and has stated that it would advertise all of its brands—including Jaguar and Land Rover—in LGBT publications. The auto giant also declared its continued financial support of LGBT organizations.

According to The Washington Blade, the announcement was the second by the company since a meeting on Dec. 12 between a coalition of gay-rights groups and the automaker. The most recent statement was in response to reports issued the previous week that Ford made a deal with the ultra-conservative American Family Association to cease some advertising in LGBT publications in order to avert a boycott. Various media reports stated that Ford had agreed to not advertise its Jaguar and Land Rover brands in gay publications.

Joe Laymon, a Ford vice-president, said that “[i]t is clear there is a misconception about our intent. As a result we have decided to run ads in these target publications that will include not only Jaguar and Land Rover, but all eight of Ford’s brands.”

Gay-rights organizations lauded the corporation’s actions. For example, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) praised Ford’s latest declaration. Neil Giuliano, the organization’s president, commented that “Ford did the right thing here, both for its brand and for its bottom line. Their message ... signals a strong commitment by Ford to fairness, to inclusion, and to a quality relationship with our community.”

Giuliano also stated that Ford’s action is in line with the LGBT-inclusive thoughts that most Americans harbor.

On Dec. 12, a coalition of community organizations, including GLAAD, the Human Rights Campaign and **the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**, met with Ford executives in Washington, D.C., to discuss the LGBT community’s concerns about the media reports and request a statement clarifying Ford’s policies. Similarly, the coalition released a later statement announcing its satisfaction with the company’s decision to stick with gay publications. The coalition hailed the decision as “an unequivocal reaffirmation of Ford’s historic commitment to our community and the core American values of fairness and equality” and called it “conclusive proof ... that there never was any deal anti-LGBT organizations concerning Ford’s support for our community.”

Matt Foreman, NGLTF’s executive director, also weighed in on the automaker’s latest move. “We applaud Ford Motor for taking such a firm stand on behalf of our community,” he said. In an Advocate.com exclusive, Human Rights Campaign Executive Director Joe Solmonese stated that “[t]his victory wasn’t simply about advertising: It sent a much larger message that fairness and equality are bedrock principles that should never be compromised.”

In the wake of this latest development, some conservatives are again contemplating a boycott of Ford, according to the Associated Press. The American Family Association says it will consider reinstating a boycott against Ford Motor Company, with group chairman Don Wildmon saying that he does not want Ford “choosing sides in the culture war.”

Windy City Times

Older Gays Seek Support Services

by Bob Roehr
2005-12-21

“Make room for all” was the theme of a meeting hosted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) Dec.11, immediately prior to the opening of the White House Conference on Aging.

The Conference is a once-a-decade event that is the culmination of smaller regional meetings. The NGLTF meeting highlighted issues particular to the GLBT community that need to be considered in addressing federal policies and programs on aging.

“LGBT people often have not been visible in that aging world, and because we have not been visible, we have not been included explicitly,” said Task Force senior strategist Amber Hollibaugh. She said San Francisco lesbian icons Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon “were phenomenal at the 1995 Conference and made the issue visible, and were enormously powerful delegates.” But much work remains to be done.

“There is no room for prejudice in the world of aging.” Hollibaugh said. The reality is that GLBT members of the Baby Boomer generation often have led their lives openly and are not going to go back into the closet. It is important that they not face discrimination and that their caregivers be culturally competent in providing that care.

While several of the conference delegates are openly gay or lesbian, Terry Kaelber is the only one who represents an organization whose principal mission is directed toward GLBT seniors. He is executive director of SAGE, the 28-year-old organization for gay seniors in New York City.

“There is some vague notion that we all age alike, that we must lose our individuality and become part of this great aging monolith.” Kaelber said aging is very different for GLBT seniors because of “discrimination and antigay bigotry, which impacts our ability and willingness to access needed programs and services as we age.

“It is informed by the fact that we, by and large, age as single people without the traditional familial support of a spouse or children. It makes us more reliant on the programs that we are not so willing to access.

“Aging as a single person, not just an LGBT person, without traditional familial support networks is highly correlated with increased isolation in old age, depression, substance abuse, medical and physical health complications, unnecessary institutionalization, and even premature death. For our community, adding antigay bigotry and discrimination compounds these outcomes,” Kaelber said.

The reality of women’s life is that they devote the equivalent of 12 years to the role of informal caregiver, generally without compensation. They often take lower-paying jobs to have the flexibility to carry out that role, said Laura Young, executive director of OWL, the voice of midlife and older women. “As a result, women will lose \$250,000 of wage wealth” in performing these tasks.

She said “the marriage issue” was important to aging members of the GLBT community, and pointed to the photos from a year ago in San Francisco; “More often than not, they were older couples who had been together for many years who were looking to get some kind of legal status or protection for the lives that they had built together.”

OWL was the only aging organization that took a public stance against the Federal Marriage Amendment, which sought to ban gay marriage.

Young explained that healthcare benefits “become a tax liability for domestic partners, which doesn’t exist for married couples” who do not have to pay taxes on them. She said the Conference needs to talk about changing policies that codify discrimination “if we are going to bring LGBT issues into the dialog.”

"I had an ostrich attitude about aging issues," said Mary McCarthy, 67. She testified with her partner Bonny Winokar about their marriage in Massachusetts and their fears with regard to Medicare and the house that they purchased and renovated.

McCarthy said, under existing federal spend-down requirements for Medicare, if one of them ended up in a nursing home, "One of us would be destitute and the other would be sick." The property of a traditionally married couple would be protected.

"In order to have a good old age filled with optimism, you must have a good young age filled with opportunities that continue throughout the lifecycle," said Dr. Norma Thomas, president of the Center on Ethnic and Minority Aging, in Philadelphia. The effects of poverty, racism, and homophobia do not magically disappear at the age of 60.

"All of the 'isms' come from our own chauvinism," said Regina Shavers, executive director of the Griot Circle, a group of primarily African American and Caribbean seniors. She said the key to serving a diverse community is realizing that, "You just need to know that everybody else's life is not just like yours."

"If you have any gender variance, that is totally" another level of competency that has to be addressed. "When I get to the nursing home and they put one of them pink dresses on me, we are going to have a hard time." She sported a black pantsuit and white ostrich-skin cowboy boots.

"Just because a person comes to you for services, doesn't mean they are ready to tell you everything. People value their privacy very much" she said. "People in my community survived with their secrecy" in the face of a church that condemned them, and a broader community that often was not accepting.

Shavers said, "We should be allowed to choose our own families and have the financial benefit of those connections."

Jim Campbell, president of the National Association of HIV Over Fifty, spoke of "the loss [from HIV] that has never been addressed" for gay males. "We built a family, and those families disappeared almost overnight."

He said HIV is not just a gay issue. More than 17 percent of newly diagnosed cases nationally are in those 50 or older, and the number is growing by about 1 percentage point a year.

A survey of HIV patients at the Fenway Community Health Center in Boston found that 62 percent of their caseload is 40 or older. And with the success of combination therapy and people living longer, it is becoming a problem of aging. Campbell called it "an accident waiting to happen" in the gay community.



Ford back in gear with LGBTs

Company confirms support, reinstates and expands ads in LGBT press

By Jan Stevenson

Originally printed 12/22/2005

WASHINGTON - A tense two weeks came to a happy resolution when Ford unequivocally stated its support for the LGBT community in words and actions, distancing themselves from the extremist right-wing group that had threatened to boycott the company. Ford released a statement confirming that they will continue to support LGBT groups and events, and that Ford will increase its advertising presence in LGBT publications.

"Ford worked in good faith with us in coming to terms with these matters," said Jeffrey Montgomery, executive director of Detroit's Triangle Foundation and one of seven LGBT leaders who met with Ford executives Dec. 12 in Washington, D.C.

The controversy started Dec. 1 when the American Family Association released a statement that said Ford executives had negotiated with AFA leaders to drop the threat of a Ford boycott. The AFA statement said that Ford, "heard our concerns; they are acting on our concerns. We are pleased with where we are."

The next day, a Ford spokesman confirmed that Ford executives had met with AFA representatives, and that Ford was discontinuing their advertising for Jaguar and Land Rover in LGBT publications, raising fears that Ford had made a deal with the anti-gay AFA to avert a boycott. Ford executives claimed that pulling the ads was strictly a business decision. To make matters even worse, a Dec. 6 report by Wards.com, an auto industry trade magazine, claimed that Ford executives had also agreed to the AFA's demand that Ford's cease its support of LGBT events and organizations.

In the Dec. 14 Ford statement, Joe Laymon, Group Vice President of Corporate Human Resources, wrote that Ford would continue its support for LGBT organizations and events, and that in 2006 the automaker would place corporate advertising in LGBT publications for all eight of its brands, including Jaguar and Land Rover. (see complete text of letter below).

Ford's statement puts to rest the worries of the LGBT leaders that the corporation was backing off in its support for LGBT consumers, employees and community groups. "We welcome today's statement from Ford Motor Company," said the seven LGBT leaders in a joint statement. "It is conclusive proof of what Ford leaders have repeatedly assured us - that there never was any deal with the anti-LGBT organizations concerning Ford's support for our community."

Local LGBT leaders and Ford representatives breathed a collective sigh of relief that a negative showdown between Ford and the LGBT community has been averted. The Michigan LGBT community has a close working relationship with the Ford Motor Company, which has donated significant money to LGBT groups and sponsored numerous events. Ford provides strong support for their internal employee group, Ford GLOBE. For the Michigan LGBT community, the rift with Ford felt more like a family fallout than some sterile fight with a distant corporate conglomerate.

"Although they might not admit it, it is clear to me that the American Family Association created this mess by characterizing its relationship and influence with the company in the most cynical and dishonest terms," said Montgomery. "It is a credit to Ford that they have been willing to do what they could to replace that impression with today's strong statement of commitment to our community and many of our organizations."

In last week's issue of BTL, Leslie Thompson, executive director of Affirmations Lesbian Gay Community Center in Ferndale, wrote a viewpoint defending Ford as an excellent corporate citizen and friend to the LGBT community. "This past week it's almost been like Ford has been on trial in the gay community," wrote Thompson. "And suspiciously enough, doesn't this seem to be just the kind of situation that the AFA would love - pitting us against one of our strongest corporate allies?"

"Ford's action is a positive outcome and win for equality and fairness," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. "Ford has sent a powerful signal that corporate America values its GLBT employees and customers."

"We applaud Ford Motor Company for taking such a firm stand on behalf of our community - pledging to continue support for our community's organization and events, and increasing - not decreasing - its advertising in our community's publications to include all Ford brands," said Matt Foreman, executive director of National Gay & Lesbian task Force. "This is a very positive, welcome outcome."

The AFA, however, has called foul and now claims that Ford is reneging on a firm deal to stop marketing to LGBT consumers and to stop supporting LGBT organizations in exchange for the AFA calling off its boycott.

"We had an agreement with Ford, worked out in good faith," said AFA Chairman Donald Wildmon. "Unfortunately, some Ford Company officials made the decision to violate the good faith agreement."

"We are now considering our response to the violation and expect to reach a decision very soon," said Wildmon, who added that the option of a boycott is very much alive.

The AFA boycott threat comes as Ford struggles with declining market share and rising financial woes. Ford lost \$284 million in the third quarter worldwide. In North America, its losses soared to \$1.2 billion. Ford's turnaround plan could eliminate as many as 30,000 hourly jobs and shutter at least 10 factories in North America over the next five or six years. Ford already has announced plans to cut about 4,000 salaried positions in North America by the end of March.

Letter to LGBT organizations from Ford Motor Company

The following letter was issued Dec. 14 and was addressed to **Matt Foreman of NGLTF**, Joe Solmonese of HRC, Jody Huckaby of PFLAG, Craig Bowman of National Youth Advocacy Coalition, Alexander Robinson of National Black Justice Coalition, Neil Giuliano of GLAAD, and Jeffrey Montgomery of the Triangle Foundation.

Dear Friends:

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with us on Monday. In my view, it was the start of a valuable and healthy dialogue, and I was pleased to be there on behalf of Bill Ford, Chairman and CEO of Ford Motor Company.

My intention was to be direct and forthright. You deserve no less. I appreciate your candor in return. I'd like to take this opportunity to review the information we shared face-to-face and to tell you how our thinking has evolved.

You asked us specifically to reaffirm our principles of nondiscrimination and inclusiveness. We agreed, without any reservations, and issued a statement immediately after the meeting in which Bill Ford did so personally. We pointed out that Ford Motor Company and its brands value diversity among all of our constituents and pride ourselves on strong and clear values - respect for our customers, communities, employees, suppliers and dealers; acceptance of our differences; inclusion of different people with different perspectives; and integrity. That commitment is unchanged and we believe it is reflected in our policies, practices and marketing.

You asked us to comment on reports that we had placed creative restrictions on the way our brands could speak to gay and lesbian audiences. We expect our brands to create advertising that supports their brand image and is appropriate and effective in connecting with the intended audience. That is unchanged. But we do not have to deal with this topic in the abstract. The best answer to your question will be in the ads themselves. I would ask you to judge our intent by what you see.

You asked directly whether Ford Motor Company will continue to support nonprofit groups and events in the GLBT community. While we will still support certain events, I know you understand that the business situation will limit the extent of our support in all communities in 2006. We will continue all of our workplace policies and practices in support of Ford GLOBE members and supporters. That is unchanged.

You asked us directly for us to have Jaguar and Land Rover reverse its plans and advertise in gay and lesbian targeted publications in 2006. As we said, Jaguar and Land Rover made a business decision about their media plans and it would be inconsistent with the way we manage our business to direct them to do otherwise. However, it is clear there is a misperception about our intent. As a result, we have decided to run corporate ads in these targeted publications that will

include not only Jaguar/Land Rover but all eight of Ford's vehicle brands. As we have said, the content will be appropriate and effective in connecting with the intended audience. It is my hope that this will remove any ambiguity about Ford's desire to advertise to all important audiences and put this particular issue behind us.

Finally, you expressed your strong objections to our having even met with one of your harshest critics. We meet every day with people and organizations on many issues, and, as a business, do not wish to be drawn into those that detract from our effectiveness in the marketplace. That said, we expect to be measured not by the meetings we conduct but by our conduct itself. Our record on tolerance and inclusion speaks for itself and I am proud to be judged on that record at any time.

In closing, thank you again for your candor and professionalism. We listened and learned, and hope that you continue to understand the values and commitment of Ford Motor Company. I look forward to hearing from you at any time.

Sincerely,

Joe W. Laymon

Group Vice President

Corporate Human Resources



American Catholics: Time for a Stonewall Moment

By Mary E. Hunt

Originally printed 12/22/2005

The Vatican has released a document banning priests "who are actively homosexual, have deep-seated homosexual tendencies, or support the so-called 'gay culture.'" Rome has been floating trial balloons for some time about this document to see what level of anti-gay rhetoric it can get away with. After months of document leaks, the Vatican had already made its point: local bishops and religious superiors will be expected to scrutinize seminaries lest they become hideaways of gay culture. At this point the actual text of the document is irrelevant: dictatorships always rely more on self-censorship through fear and intimidation than actual punishment to accomplish their goals.

The galling fact is, this document, while purporting to 'clarify' church teaching or 'purify' the priesthood, is really nothing more than an effort to link the criminal activity of pedophile priests with homosexuality, and to distract from the reprehensible behavior of bishops who covered up their misconduct. This is an absurd gambit on the part of the Vatican; homosexuality has no relationship to child sex abuse. This scandal has made transparent an untenable 'kyriarchal' system -- a model of church that locates power, both sacramental and temporal, in the hands of a few men who literally 'lord' over the laity, speaking and acting in the name of all believers when in fact they are but a tiny percentage of the community.

It is time for a Stonewall moment.

The Stonewall was a gay bar in New York where, in 1969, patrons resisted arrest during one of the police's regular gay-bashing raids. Rather than acquiesce to the harassment that kept up a neurotic minuet between police and bar patrons, courageous lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people stood up, spoke out and resisted. They probably surprised even themselves at the power of their own righteous indignation.

Catholics should respond to the latest Vatican bullying the same way. After decades of the Vatican implementing a system that takes authority away from local communities and presumes to impose its will on Catholics who can think for themselves, it is time for Catholics to stand up, speak out and resist.

Evidence suggests that American Catholics do not support many of the narrow-minded tenets of their church. In opposition to the male hierarchy's belief that ordaining women priests is theological treason, more than 60 percent of American Catholics say they would support women in the priesthood, according to the most recent Zogby/LeMoyné poll. A poll conducted by the Boston Globe in the Boston archdiocese -- where the incidences of sexual abuse by priests were among the highest -- finds that nearly 60 percent of Catholics oppose a ban on gay priests. Combine this with American Catholics' clear disregard for the church's medieval views on marriage, divorce and birth control, and increasing numbers of Catholics who support abortion under certain circumstances, and it becomes obvious that Americans find themselves in a church that does not speak to their everyday concerns in any meaningful way.

The Vatican, in its patriarchal echo chamber, continues to portray Western values of tolerance and equality as the fallen morality of a secular society. In so doing, the institutional church treats millions of faithful Catholics in America not as spiritual adults, but as perpetual adolescents in need of discipline. The time has come for American Catholics to claim their full baptismal citizenship and publicly call for changes in church policies on sexuality, ordination and relationships. Considering the enormous economic and political influence of the American church, if Catholics here really stood up to their bishops, loudly and in numbers, the Vatican would have little choice but to listen.

There is evidence that despite the dissembling of the hierarchy, American Catholics are refusing to let the institution scapegoat gay priests, feminism and modernity for the Vatican's sins.

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the leaders of the U.S. men's religious orders, recently said it would send a delegation to Rome to oppose the anti-gay seminary policy. In a welcome response to an inflexible Vatican regime, the superior of the New York Province of the Jesuits, Fr. Gerald J. Chojnacki, wrote: "We know that gay men...have served the church well as priests -- and so why would we be asked to discriminate based on orientation alone against those whom God has called and invited?" This is a question that could be asked about women and married men as well.

Thomas Gumbleton, Detroit's auxiliary bishop, issued this call to action in a recent sermon: "When authorities in our church say one thing and then act in a different way, it seems to me that we're called to challenge that, to speak out if necessary to try to counteract what our religious authorities do."

He went on to confront the Vatican with the teaching of U.S. bishops, which says that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are "always our children." "They say one thing, 'In you God's love is revealed,' but then say, 'You're not worthy to be in the seminary.' It is a terrible cruelty and injustice."

The Women-Church Convergence, a coalition of Catholic feminist groups, clarified that "All ministers, indeed all members, are called to be responsible agents of their own sexuality" and pledged themselves "to create communities in which all persons can love and be loved openly as is their birthright. Anything less is simply not Catholic."

And ultimately, as Catholics face their Stonewall moment, where the choice to submit means a choice to violate one's conscience, this is what it comes down to: the meaning of the word 'Catholic.' 'Catholic' means all-encompassing, universal, comprehensive. 'Catholic' does not mean exclusion from the community on the basis of misinformed or capricious reasoning. This message of universal inclusion was the lesson of the first Stonewall. It is still being learned by society as a whole. The Gospel message of love and justice is reason to hope Catholics will be quicker on the uptake.

Mary E. Hunt is a member of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force National Religious Leadership Roundtable and co-director of the Women's Alliance for Theology Ethics and Ritual (WATER).



December 21, 2005

Merry Xmas, Reverend Grinch

The religious right's outrage over the greeting "Happy Holidays" is Grinch-like in its obsession with the trappings of Christmas instead of its meaning. As a gay Muslim, the author finds the season's true spirit in respectful pluralism

By Imam Daayiee Abdullah

Once again this year, the religious right has taken offense at the so-called war on Christmas. The American Family Association and other radical religious groups called for a boycott of Target because of the corporation's policy of saying "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas." Fox News commentator John Gibson has written a book on the subject titled *The War on Christmas*, which outlines the supposed excesses of public school districts observing "holiday parties" and "winter breaks."



In a recent New York Times article, Nicholas Kristof wrote that Fox News has featured the so-called Christmas controversy more than 50 times during the past month.

In this "controversy," as with the campaign to "protect marriage" from the horror of same-sex unions, the uncontested cultural majority seems to find itself oppressed by the prospect of tolerance and respect of minorities in our pluralistic society.

Each year, I happily use the phrase "Happy Holidays" as I express my sincere wishes to my coreligionists of the monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As various religious and nonreligious holidays occur during the same period, I find it heartening to see humankind greeting each other with holiday cheer and no one left out of the celebration.

As a black American with an eclectic array of friends and associates, I am able to celebrate Ramadan as a Muslim, wish my Jewish and Christian friends a joyful Hanukkah and Christmas respectively, and honor those who celebrate Kwanzaa and the winter solstice. Additionally, shortly after New Year's I celebrate my birthday. Why wouldn't I want to have and wish everyone a happy holiday season?

The religious and political elites of the right have a mistaken belief that anyone who does not support their beliefs is a secularist. In efforts to stir up their supporters through fear, they portray these "secularists" as having an agenda of cultural genocide—their evil goal being to eradicate Christianity from the public discourse. Why do they not fear the elimination of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and other faith systems that Americans believe in and follow? Such interfaith concern would be far from the narrowly proscribed truth they wish to push down the throats of anyone who lives in America, regardless of faith.

Of course, conservative Christians have the right to punish economically businesses that are in opposition to their beliefs. Under the American legal system, they also have the right to counter what they believe to be illegally discriminatory behavior. But they ignore the responsibility we have as Americans to interact in public in ways that do not impinge on the religious freedoms of our fellow American citizens.

When trying to best serve the general public and not insult those of any faith, stores, schools, and government entities should follow clear guidelines that promote a neutral position because it avoids the appearance, if not the intent, of imposing one's beliefs on another. The religious right seems to have fallen for the Grinch character's belief that taking down the ubiquitous trappings of Christmas has the power to destroy the joy in the hearts of believers. The religious right would do well to learn, as the Grinch did, that the true meaning of Christmas is not found in commercial expressions of "Merry Christmas" or in "my faith is better than yours" thinking; if the spirit of Christmas is to exist at all, it must be kept alive in the hearts of believers.

The majority conservative Christian culture is not being attacked by a pluralist society. Its desires to impose a narrowly conservative Christian faith on all Americans is being tempered so that it does not offend the sensibilities of most Americans who are perfectly fine with saying "Happy Holidays." Perhaps if the leaders of the religious right had the true Christmas spirit in their hearts, they would avoid insulting friends and fellow citizens with their insistence on public dogmatism and spread some peace on earth and goodwill to all people.

Abdullah is a member of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force National Religious Leadership Roundtable. He is the only openly gay imam in the United States and the moderator of an Internet discussion group for Muslim gay men: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MuslimGayMen>.



Frank says trans issue stalled Senate hate crime measure House passed trans-inclusive bill

By ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG | Dec 21, 2:11 PM

A hate crimes bill, which has passed the Senate three times before, is now stalled because of disagreements over extending specific protections for gender identity, according to Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.).

“The inclusion of the transgender provision is clearly holding up the bill in the Senate,” said Frank, who is gay. “It’s clear to me that the inclusion of transgender language is an obstacle.”

The House in September passed a transgender inclusive hate crimes bill as an amendment to the Child Safety Act. The amendment was co-sponsored by Frank, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.), Christopher Shays (R-Conn.) and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), and passed 223-199.

Last year, the House voted 213-186 in favor of a hate crimes bill that only included sexual orientation.

Several anti-gay conservative groups mobilized to protest after the hate crimes amendment passed in September. One group, Concerned Women for America, asked members to call their senators urging them to vote against the amendment.

The Senate version, sponsored by Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Gordon Smith (R-Ore.), includes protection based on sexual orientation and real or perceived gender. Unlike the House version, there is no explicit language calling for transgender crime victims to be included.

Chris Matthews, a spokesperson for Sen. Smith, said after the House vote that the Senate version would not be changed to include gender identity.

“The Senate works on precedent,” Matthews said at the time. “This bill has good bipartisan support. The best thing for hate crimes legislation is for it to pass.”

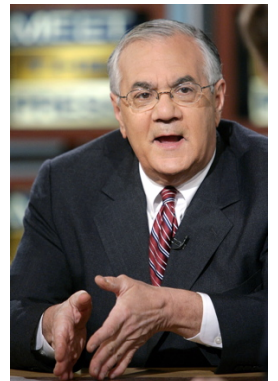
Steve Adamske, a press spokesman for Frank, said the bill was "caught up in Republican partisanship."

"Why won't Smith's office just move the bill?" Adamske said on Wednesday. Kennedy and Smith were not available for comment this week.

The Child Safety Act, which is likely to include a hate crimes amendment, has not been scheduled for a vote in the Senate. The Senate Judiciary Committee passed its own version of the Child Safety Act, called the Sex Offender Registration & Notification Act sponsored by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), without the hate crimes amendment.

A Hatch spokesperson said the bill was put on hold so a hate crimes amendment can be attached.

Lisa Mottet of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force said the Sex Offender Act sponsors are holding up the vote, adding that Kennedy and Smith have said they don't plan to introduce transgender inclusive language.



Gay Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.) says the inclusion of transgender language in a federal hate crimes bill is 'an obstacle' to passage in the Senate.

‘Obstacle delusion’?

Several gay and transgender rights advocates said politicians have no reason to fear political fallout if they extend the hate crime measure to include protections based on gender identity.

Those who oppose gay rights often make no distinctions between gay and transgender issues, argued Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality.

“It’s seen as a gay bill whether transgender protections are in it or not,” said Keisling. “Our enemies, like the American Family Association, are liars, false prophets and charlatans.”

Officials who worry transgender protections will hurt them politically are suffering from “obstacle delusion,” she said. Voting for trans-inclusive bills has not been an issue in re-election campaigns, she said.

Keisling’s group was one of about 40 organizations that signed a letter addressed to Kennedy, asking him to include language that explicitly protects transgender people. The American Civil Liberties Union and the NAACP also signed on.

The Human Rights Campaign decided not to sign on to the letter. Chris Labonte, the organization’s deputy political director, said HRC wants to see the hate crimes bill in a conference committee where transgender-inclusive language can be added to the final version, he said.

CONSCIENCE

The Newsjournal of Catholic Opinion

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December 22, 2005

The sex abuse crisis: the Vatican "scapegoats" gays for abuse crisis; priest sex abusers

ARCHBISHOP EDWIN O'Brien, who is overseeing a Vatican-imposed evaluation of every seminary in the United States, has confirmed that the Vatican is seeking to impose a ban on homosexual men becoming priests. In an interview with a conservative Catholic newspaper, he said, "anyone who has engaged in homosexual activity, or has strong homosexual inclinations, would be best not to apply to a seminary and not to be accepted into a seminary." Speaking with the Associated Press, he went further, stating that the church must restrict the enrollment of gay men into the priesthood.

The Apostolic Visitation involves 117 bishops and Catholic officials visiting each of the 229 Roman Catholic seminaries in the US in teams of three or four. The teams will interview each seminarian, staff member and a selection of former seminarians. The interviewers will seek to examine how well each seminary prepares the seminarians for living the life of a priest, with special attention paid to moral theology and celibacy. They will also seek to ascertain if there is any "evidence of homosexuality" on campus.

The executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Matt Foreman, said, "This is part of the church hierarchy's calculated--and frankly, evil--campaign to scapegoat gay people for the decades of appalling sex abuse of children and young people that it alone created, nurtured and covered up."

Grand Jury Condemns Archdiocese's Inaction

A THREE-YEAR GRAND JURY investigation into how the Archdiocese of Philadelphia covered up and facilitated sexual abuse has resulted in a scathing critique of the archdiocese's leaders. The jurors found that Cardinals John Krol and Anthony Bevilacqua "excused and enabled the abuse," placing the legal and financial interests of the archdiocese over the protection of children. The statutes of limitations have expired so no prosecutions will be brought against those named.

The report singles out one official for special criticism. Msgr. William Lynn, now pastor of St. Joseph Church in Downingtown, who was head of the office that responded to abuse complaints under Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, is mentioned 652 times in the report, compared with Bevilacqua's 523.

The following is a selection of statements from the report (as detailed in the Philadelphia Inquirer):

* "The behavior of Archdiocese officials was perhaps not so lurid as that of the individual priest sex abusers. But in its callous, calculating manner, the Archdiocese's 'handling' of the abuse scandal was at least as immoral as the abuse itself."

* "Secretary for Clergy Lynn, often taking direction from the Archdiocese's attorneys, treated victims as potential plaintiffs. Not only did they not receive apologies acknowledging their abuse, but many were bullied, intimidated, lied to, even investigated themselves."

* "Msgr. Lynn's 'investigations' of abuse allegations were designed more to discredit the victims and conceal evidence of their abuse than to ascertain whether their alleged abuser was in fact a sexual abuser of children."

The Church and State

"The Vatican Is Not a State"

IN A DISPUTE WITH A UN official, the Vatican has claimed that it is not a state and has "no international obligations" to help the UN hunt down war criminals. The claim was made in a meeting between Carla del Ponte, the chief prosecutor of the United Nations international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, Secretary for Relations with States.

Ms. del Ponte is in charge of the search for one of the most wanted war criminals from the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, General Ante Gotovina.

She believes that Gotovina is being sheltered in a Franciscan monastery in his native Croatia. She said: "I have information he is hiding in a Franciscan monastery and so the Catholic Church is protecting him. I have taken this up with the Vatican and the Vatican refuses totally to cooperate with us."

"The Vatican Is a State"

THE VATICAN EMBASSY IN Washington has asked the US government to file a legal brief claiming that, as the Vatican claims statehood, Pope Benedict xvi should be granted immunity in a sexual abuse case. Three boys have brought a case alleging that Juan Carlos Patino-Arango, a Colombian-born seminarian on assignment at St. Francis de Sales church in Houston, molested them during counseling sessions during the mid-1990s. Patino-Arango has been indicted and is on the run.

In filing the brief, Assistant US Attorney General Peter Keisler said that, as pope, Benedict enjoys immunity as the head of a state. The US Supreme Court has held that US courts are bound by such "suggestion of immunity" motions submitted by the government, Keisler's filing says, so immunity should be expected. Daniel Shea, attorney for one of the three boys, has said that if the pope is granted immunity, he would challenge the constitutionality of the US diplomatic recognition of the Holy See on the grounds that it goes against the First Amendment's establishment clause barring laws respecting the establishment of religion.

The lawsuit alleges that Benedict conspired (when he was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and in his former post of Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) to both hide Patino-Arango's crimes and to help him escape prosecution. The lawsuit cites a 2001 letter from Ratzinger to all bishops, explaining that his office would handle "grave" crimes such as the sexual abuse of minors and that any tribunal proceedings related to abuse cases were subject to the highest order of church confidentiality, the "pontifical secret."

New Irish Campaign to Legalize Abortion

THE IRISH FAMILY PLANNING Association (IFPA) has launched an official challenge to the ban on abortion in Ireland. Currently, more than 6,200 Irish women travel to Britain each year to have an abortion and hundreds more go to the Netherlands, France and Spain.

The first action of the "Safe and Legal in Ireland" campaign is to support a group of three women who are challenging the Irish government's ban on abortion in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Campaign spokeswoman Ivana Bacik, who is Reid Professor of Criminal Law at Trinity College, Dublin, said that the three women, who have all recently had an abortion in Britain, lodged a complaint with the ECHR stating that their rights had been violated. They claim that their rights to privacy in all family, home and personal interests, their right to protection from 'inhuman or degrading treatment,' the right to life of an individual and rights against discrimination have all be violated.



Sen. Allen shifts stance on gay rights

The senator says he continues to support hate-crime laws, but not those protecting gay Americans.

BY DAVID LERMAN
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WASHINGTON -- As he prepares for a likely presidential campaign, Virginia Sen. George Allen has quietly changed his position on an issue of prime concern to conservative Republican primary voters: gay rights.

Last year, Allen voted for an amendment to help states prosecute hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation, race, religion and other factors.

In a recent interview, Allen said he continues to support hate-crimes laws, but not those aimed at protecting gay Americans.

He said he changed his position about a month ago after hearing about an incident at a gay pride festival in Philadelphia last year. A group of Christian conservative protesters who attended the event were arrested and charged with a variety of offenses, including criminal conspiracy, disorderly conduct, obstructing highways and ethnic intimidation - Pennsylvania's version of a hate crime.

A state judge dismissed all charges in February, but Allen said he was troubled that anti-gay protesters could be arrested for expressing their beliefs.

"It curtails completely legitimate, nonviolent religious expression," he said.

When he voted for a hate-crimes measure that included sexual orientation, Allen said, he had no intention of elevating protection for gays to a civil right. "Such laws at the state level have actually curtailed people's freedom of expression and freedom of religion," he said.

His staff could provide no evidence of court rulings in the United States to back up that claim except for the Philadelphia case, which was dismissed.

Asked to explain his change of position, Allen said, "You learn. You see what's happened in the courts and you exercise your best judgment."

The reversal comes as the former governor and first-term senator explores a 2008 presidential campaign. A survey of 100 Republican members of Congress, conducted this month by the National Journal, ranked Allen as the most likely candidate to win their party's nomination.

Some of Allen's top potential competitors - including Arizona Sen. John McCain, Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani - have wide appeal among party moderates and independents, polls have shown. Allen would likely need to rally his party's conservative base to win the nomination.

His decision won praise from the conservative Family Policy Network, which has accused Allen in the past of not being faithful to conservative social principles.

"You've got to give the guy credit for changing his position when he's seen new evidence," said Joe Glover, president of the Virginia-based group, which claims a mailing list of 35,000 households nationwide. "Our position is, 'Welcome home.' He should have been here all along. It's where his base is."

Gay-rights groups criticized the policy change as a politically inspired appeal to homophobia.

"It's a sad day when an elected official changes his mind to support hatred," said Roberta Sklar, spokeswoman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the nation's oldest gay-rights lobby. "We do not accept equivocating on the rights of American citizens for political gain."

The Log Cabin Republicans, a group of openly gay Republicans who have met with Allen and worked with his staff in recent years, offered more tempered criticism of Allen's new stance.

"It's deeply disappointing, particularly because Senator Allen has a congressional record of being fair-minded and being willing to support a big-tent Republican Party," said Patrick Guerriero, president of the national Log Cabin group.

"You can be a good conservative Republican and believe there's a place for equality for gays and lesbians. We should leave flip-flopping up to (Massachusetts Sen.) John Kerry and Democratic candidates for president."

Allen dismissed the impact of presidential politics on his decision, saying, "It has nothing to do with it. It has to do with the evidence and the rulings of the courts."

Activists on both sides said they doubt that assertion. But whatever the motivation, the reversal on gay rights marks at least the second policy change that could work to Allen's advantage if he wins re-election to the Senate next year and then launches a presidential campaign.

Allen, once an opponent of ethanol subsidies, decided this spring to support a measure aimed at doubling the production of ethanol - a corn-based gasoline additive. Political support for ethanol is considered an imperative in Iowa, which typically hosts the first-in-the-nation presidential caucuses.

An Allen aide said at the time that the senator's position on ethanol evolved based on changes in technology that have made its production more efficient and economical.

But Allen's stance on a fundamental social issue such as gay rights promises to hold more consequence to the voting public nationwide.

The folksy senator, who favors cowboy boots and chews tobacco, is an ideologically driven conservative who has tried to walk a fine line on gay-rights issues.

While he declared his support last year for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, he has adopted a non-discrimination policy in his hiring of office staff.

"As a United States senator, I do not hire, promote, or terminate on the basis of gender, religion, race or sexual orientation," Allen wrote in a 2001 letter to the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay lobby. "Such characteristics are irrelevant in the performance of duties in the office of a senator."

In changing his position on hate-crimes laws for gays, Allen said, he in no way meant to suggest that gay people deserve any less protection against crime than heterosexuals.

"I don't think it's right to beat up anybody, whether they're gay or straight," he said. But since violent crimes are already against the law and hate-crimes legislation only offers additional penalties, he said, "It's not as if it's open season on anybody."

The amendment adopted by the Senate last year, sponsored by Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Oregon, offered federal aid to state and local governments that prosecuted hate crimes, including crimes based on sexual orientation. It passed the Senate on a vote of 65 to 33. Allen and Sen. John W. Warner, R-Va., voted for it.



December 30, 2005

A roller-coaster year

Up and downs left the community dizzy

by Anthony Glassman

As 2005 becomes 2006, it is time to reflect upon some of the happenings of the last 12 months, a year that saw highs and lows, the good and bad in fairly equal measure for the LGBT community.

November

While four congregations left the Episcopal Diocese of Ohio over the 2004 ordination of an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Creating Change Conference repeated the idea that the LGBT equal rights movement must seize the moral high ground in public debate.

"Putting the rights of a minority up for a popular vote is always wrong," said executive director Matt Foreman. "This is not democracy. This is the tyranny of the majority, and it's immoral."