



Give the People Light and they will find their own way.

The Wisconsin Light

State Wide Gay Political Network Is Off to Big Start

[Madison]- Fifty activists from around the State of Wisconsin gathered in the State Capitol last Saturday, February 12, to contribute to the development of a Lesbian and Gay statewide political network.

The objectives of the organization are three-fold: 1) to enhance communication among persons and organizations around the state who are interested in keeping informed about the civil rights initiatives on Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals;

2) To educate the general public about LesBiGay issues;

3) And to create a strong political voice in order to advance equal rights measures for the LesBiGay community and to respond to assaults on our civil rights.

Lesbians, Gay men and Bisexuals and supporters from as far away as Menomonie and La Crosse answered State Representative Tammy Baldwin's (D-Madison) call to gather to help organize this critical Network.

"This meeting was so exciting!" said United Director Jane Vanderbosh. "We had representation from many people within our diverse community and we hope to broaden that group."

Representatives from any organizations participated in the meeting. They included: 10% Society (Stout, Madison), Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Human Rights Campaign Fund, The United, Men of All Colors, United Methodist Church, Queer TV in Milwaukee, Lesbian Parent Network, UW United Council, Lesbian/Gay Law Student Association, Log Cabin Club, and the Human Rights League, among others.

After introductions and a discussion about the organization's working philosophy, individuals divided into six working groups on resource assessment, communication, structure, fundraising, strategy and conference planning.

Some of the recommendations that emerged from the working groups included: development of a survey to be sent to Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual and ally organizations and interested individuals, ideas for a logo and a newsletter, a press release announcing the organization's formation, discussion of by-laws, ideas relating to a statewide conference on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual issues, and a fundraising strategy that will include state and national resources.

The organization has established its working philosophy which is founded upon inclusion. "This organization will be most successful when it includes all within our community and our supporters," one leader said.

For further information, contact Rep. Baldwin's office at (608) 266-8570.

In Madison: Pocan Wins Primary; Gore on Top With 9 Vote Margin

[Madison]- The Lesbian and Gay community took another step on Tuesday, February 15, in our quest for visibility and equal rights. Mark Pocan won his primary contest for a second term on the Dane County Board of Supervisors. At the same time, Cathreen Godre has advanced to the general election for the Board.

After a long primary campaign, Godre won a close contest to take on John Hendrick, a straight Farm-Labor Party candidate for a position on the Board.

"We worked very, very hard over the last 8 months and it really paid off," said Godre. "Every vote counted and the victory would not have been possible without the Gay and Lesbian community."

Godre edged openly Gay candidate, Tim O'Brien by 9 votes and labor activist Robin Nix by 48 votes in a primary where nearly 1100 people voted. Godre was trailing O'Brien by 25 votes until the last ward reported.

"This was a very difficult race and Tim

Clinton Blasts Anti-Gay Initiatives; Committed to Equality For All

STONEWALL 25



PRIDEFEST

Our Time To Shine

State Losing Thousands of Dollars A Year in Federal AIDS Funding

[Milwaukee]- AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin Executive Director, Doug Nelson, is taking his role in national AIDS politics seriously if his latest trip to Washington, D.C. is any measure.

In an exclusive interview with Wisconsin Light, Nelson reported that he waged a tough and lonely fight within the National AIDS Action Council for making AIDS funding from the Ryan White CARE Act equitable throughout the country.

"This is a huge battle with very high stakes for Wisconsin AIDS funding," Nelson said. "For the most part I feel like

the Lone Ranger in raising the issue of equitable Ryan White AIDS funding. But Wisconsin and other heartland states are getting shortchanged from Ryan White because of arbitrary funding formulas and a historic practice of investing more AIDS funding per case in east and west coast states where AIDS incidence has historically been higher."

Nelson's battle centers around the debate on Congressional reauthorization of the federal Ryan White CARE Act which was originally passed in 1990, and which requires reauthorization for a second 5 year period. The Ryan White Act is the largest federal outlay of funding for health care and support services for people living with HIV and AIDS.

"It is a lonely game because most all of my colleagues on the AIDS Action Council come from east and west coast states where Ryan White funding has been very high and they want to protect the structure and system that delivers for them," Nelson explained. "But there is great disparity and injustice with the current system that harms Wisconsin and thereby fails to meet the needs of people with AIDS who live here."

Nelson characterized the issue as one of a wide disparity in AIDS funding on a per case or per capita basis that results from two separate Titles of the White Act. Title I for high incidence cities with AIDS caseloads above a 2,000 case threshold and Title II for all of the states. Although Wisconsin's AIDS caseload is currently at 2,241 cases which is well above the threshold, because the Milwaukee metropolitan area accounts for only about 1,150 of these cases, Milwaukee and Wisconsin do not qualify for Title I funding.

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[Washington, D.C.]- Leaders of six national Lesbian/Gay organizations heralded President Bill Clinton's strong statement against anti-Gay initiatives occurring in 11 states around the country. The President said, "I am committed to the fight for equality for all Americans."

The President's letter to William Waybourn, Executive Director of the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, came on February 15, in response to a request by the Victory Fund on February 9, and five other Gay and Lesbian groups.

"Those who would legalize discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or any other ground are gravely mistaken about the values that make our country strong. The essential right to equality must not be denied by a ballot initiative or otherwise," the President wrote.

In addition to the Victory Fund, the Human Rights Campaign Fund, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the Black Gay/Lesbian Leadership Forum and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays had requested Clinton's statement.

"All people in our society must enjoy the opportunity to be judged on their merits," the President wrote. "As you point out, this simple principle of justice has come under assault in several states this year."

Anti-Gay campaigns are currently underway in Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon and Washington. These are fueled by the Religious Right Wing.

"Those who would legalize discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or any other ground are gravely mistaken about the values that make our country strong. The essential right to equality must not be denied by a ballot initiative or otherwise," the President wrote.

The President went on to commend Gay organizations and other groups "who have united to oppose these ballot initiatives. This is not an issue of 'special rights' for any one group. This is a battle to protect the human rights of every individual," the President said.

In announcing the President's support, Waybourn said, "The President's backing brings a measure of hope to those who are fighting in the trenches every day to defeat these anti-Gay measures. It will sustain them through this long battle. We are not alone."

Waybourn went on to say that Lesbians and Gay men are "victims of a holy war. We have been subjected to an epidemic of violence, hatred, bigotry, discrimination and prejudice."

Waybourn said that obtaining the President's support was crucial to the Victory Fund, which supports openly Lesbian and Gay candidates for public office, has candidates running for office in eight states where referendums are scheduled.

"We are a community that seeks inclusion, but finds intolerance," Waybourn said.

Waybourn said the Victory Fund trained at least three organizers from each of the 11 targeted states and gave them tools and skills they needed to return to their communities and organize others to manage campaigns against the Religious Far Right.

"Today we're drawing a line — a front line of defense," Waybourn said. "And this is just the beginning."

Editor's Note: If you would like to help the Victory Fund in its drive to protect human rights, write: Victory Fund, 1012 14th Street NW, Suite 707, Washington, D.C. 20005.

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