



INDY PFLAG NEWS

FEBRUARY 2010

PFLAG meets the 2nd Sunday of each month. The next meeting will be Sun., Feb. 14 from 2 to 4 pm at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in the Youth Wing (North door), just west of Meridian on 86th St.

February 14 meeting

At our Valentine's Day meeting we welcome Niki Steveson with the Indiana Rainbow Chamber of Commerce. Niki grew up in Muncie, IN and moved to Indianapolis to attend Butler University. She was a student athlete for 4 years playing on the Women's Basketball team from 1992-1996. Niki worked with individuals with developmental disabilities for 14 years when she decided to go back to school for an MBA and to start her own business. In 2007, she earned her insurance licenses as well as the Series 6 and 63 to become a licensed Insurance Agent and a Registered Representative with the State of Indiana. She started the Steveson Insurance and Financial Solutions Agency in 2007 and became an independent contractor through Farmers Insurance Group of Companies. The Agency specializes in Auto, Home, Life and Business Insurance. In 2007, Niki joined the Rainbow Chamber of Commerce, and in 2008 became a member of the Board. Personally, Niki lives in Indianapolis with her partner, Amy, and their 4 ½ year old son, Matthias.

Niki will speak about her personal and professional journey and the role of Indiana Rainbow Chamber of Commerce in our community. Her presentation will follow our confidential sharing time. Please join us!

Obama to Congress: extend same-sex benefits

By The Associated Press; 01.28.2010 3:18pm EST

(Tampa, Fla.) President Barack Obama is calling on Congress to pass a law extending benefits to same-sex partners, a day after he renewed his support for repealing the ban on gays and lesbians serving openly in the military.

Obama was responding to a question during a town hall meeting Thursday in Tampa, Fla. He noted a bill is pending that would extend to domestic partners benefits such as granting Social Security survivor payments and allowing hospital visitation.

Obama said: "My hope is we can get it done."

Obama has acted administratively to extend some benefits to federal employees with same-sex partners. He has called for a repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act, which bars federal recognition of gay unions and the granting of benefits and most recently for the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell.

Notes from Annette

On Wednesday, January 20th, I was given the opportunity to testify at the State Senate hearing of SJR-13 (the Anti-Marriage Amendment). I was very happy to be able to tell the Senate committee how I feel about this issue. As a PFLAG mom, I would love to see my son be able to get married one day. So I sat down at my computer and typed three paragraphs about wanting to see my son walk down the aisle, and how we don't want to change marriage – we just want our children able to share in it.

The "other" side testified first. Over and over, I heard people saying how terrible it would be if homosexuals could get married. They said we need to protect the tradition of marriage. One thing they never said was "how" marriage would change if gays could get married.

As these people spoke, I found myself getting very angry. I was having a difficult time listening to them. I think that was fortunate, though, because eventually my anger outweighed my fear. By the time it was my turn to speak, I was ready! I gave my testimony and then it was over. I sat down, able to relax.

Along with me, Sarah Patterson, another PFLAG mom, spoke about her daughter, her daughter's partner and three children. Michael Wallack, who represented the Jewish Community Relations Council, spoke eloquently about how the Jewish community abhors discrimination. Lettie Oliver, Assistant Director of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees – AFSCME Council 62, also spoke about discrimination as a woman and an African-American. J. T. Forbes, State Government Relations Director at Cummins, Inc., described how this amendment would prevent the best and the brightest people from coming to Indiana to work.

Finally, the vote was taken. Unfortunately, SJR-13 was passed by a vote of 6 to 4. We still have a lot of work to do. But representatives and allies of the GLBT community came together to explain how damaging this amendment can be. I am very proud that I was able to share my thoughts with the committee. Hopefully one day my testimony, and that of others, won't be needed. As we say in PFLAG, we will have changed hearts and minds.

Kudos to Sarah Patterson and Annette Gross for their personal testimony before this committee!

Indy PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is a group of people who share common experiences and provide support for each other. We listen and love. We help families have open, positive and loving relationships with GLBT children and we work for their civil and human rights.

Gay marriage ban goes to Indiana House once again

Wishtv.com; Jim Shella; Thurs, 28 Jan 2010

The state Senate passed a proposed constitutional amendment on gay marriage on a 38-10 vote late Thursday afternoon. The last time the Senate passed the proposal, the Indiana House blocked the effort to send it to a referendum. Now supporters of a constitution ban on gay marriage are restarting the five-year process.

Indiana already has a statutory ban on gay marriage, so critics have charged that conservatives keep bringing it up as a potential campaign issue.

They also charge that it would outlaw civil unions when attitudes are shifting. "There is poll after poll showing that the public's opinion on this issue is changing and it's changing rapidly," said Sen. Tim Lanane (D-Anderson).

But Sen. Colin Yoder (R-Middlebury) countered, "I firmly believe that the definition of marriage as we've traditionally known it in our past and continues today is highly important to the state of Indiana."

Opponents also say that a constitutional ban on gay marriage will hurt economic development through the hiring of a diverse workforce.

The measure now goes to the Indiana House where no action is anticipated this year.

SJR-13 reads as follows:

"Only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized in Indiana. A legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized."

Obama Appoints First Openly Transgender Person

The Obama administration in November appointed Amanda Simpson, a member of the National Center for Transgender Equality board of directors, to a post at the Department of Commerce. Simpson, 49 and a native of Chicago, will serve as Senior Technical Advisor in the Bureau of Industry and Security. The Bureau's mission is to protect national security through the management of international trade, the enforcement of treaties, and the promotion of economic, cyber, and homeland security. She brings more than 30 years of experience working in the aerospace and defense industry, most recently serving as Deputy Director in Advanced Technology Development at Raytheon Missile Systems in Tucson, Arizona. She holds degrees in physics, engineering and business administration along with an extensive flight background. She is a certified flight instructor and test pilot with 20 years of experience.

Sarah & Dick Patterson's last Indy PFLAG meeting

About 20 years ago a young Indy PFLAG was in the fortunate position of adding Sarah Patterson to its membership roster. (Dick took just a little longer). Ever since then, Sarah has made certain that PFLAG's impact has been present and consistent as a staunch supporter, educator and advocate for LGBT people in our community.

In the course of all her many roles, from president to public speaker to conference organizer to materials handler to media representative and so much more, Sarah has been the biggest cheerleader for Indy PFLAG. It's a real challenge to sustain the energy and enthusiasm necessary to keep a volunteer group together and functional. Through all these years, Sarah has never given up and has always been willing to do whatever it takes to keep this organization going.

In 2003, Sarah was honored by Lambda Legal with the Individual Leadership Award at their annual Indiana Benefit Dinner, recognizing her activism and ongoing leadership in the community. In Sarah's usual fashion, she used this exceptional personal tribute to provide more information about PFLAG to the 400 people in attendance.

As Dick became more active, he wore many hats himself. Most recently, he's served as secretary and in 2005 took over the Indy PFLAG website. Our original site had basic information, but Dick upgraded it, provided links and made it easier to navigate. He also added the tools for members to pay membership dues online and is always there to do whatever is asked. Thankfully, Dick will continue to help us with our website from his new home.

As Sarah and Dick move on to Atlanta, GA near their daughter and grandsons, I know we all wish them everything wonderful in this new phase of their life. And I know, too, that many join me as I extend an enormous **THANK YOU** for their unwavering resolve to keep Indy PFLAG focused, productive and enduring through all these years.

Many of us have joined Sarah in her goal of "All I want to do is change the world." As part of the Pattersons' Indy PFLAG family legacy, I hope that Sarah and Dick realize just how very many lives they've already changed along the way.

-Marcia Neff

I Wanted To Change the World

*When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world.
I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to
change my nation.*

*When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus
on my town. I couldn't change the town and as an older
man, I tried to change my family.*

*Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is
myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had
changed myself, I could have made an impact on my
family. My family and I could have made an impact on our
town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I
could indeed have changed the world.*

By Unknown Monk, 1100 A.D.

To talk with a parent who also has a gay son or lesbian daughter & to learn more about Indy PFLAG, please contact:

***Sarah (317) 545-7034**

***Charlene/Oran (317) 897-0126**

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