

THE Agenda

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State Assembly Passes GENDA!

In an overwhelming show of bipartisan support, the New York State Assembly voted 108-34 on June 3 to pass the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA), a bill that amends the state's human rights law to include anti-discrimination protections based on gender identity and expression. This was the first time that GENDA made it to the floor of the Assembly for a vote since it was first introduced in 2003. This means that GENDA is now one big step closer to becoming law and protecting the thousands of transgender New Yorkers who live in fear of being fired from their jobs or kicked out of their homes because of who they are.

The Pride Agenda, along with the other members of the GENDA Coalition, played a huge role in making sure that the Assembly understood the necessity of ending the discrimination that transgender New Yorkers face on a daily basis. The united efforts of the Coalition's more than 200 groups and

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RECOGNIZING MARRIAGE IN NEW YORK STATE

On May 29, New York made national news again on marriage equality when *The New York Times* ran a front page story reporting that Governor Paterson had sent a memo to all state agencies informing them that state law and a recent court decision requires them to recognize out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples.

This exciting development came after months of discussions the Pride Agenda and Lambda Legal have had with Governor Paterson's office — and before that with Governor Spitzer's office — about taking this proactive step in support of our families. While opponents of marriage equality in New York immediately cried foul over the Governor's action, New York's long history of recognizing legal out-of-state marriages, even if they can't be performed here, places the Governor's decision to do this on a firm legal foundation.

We were also thrilled the Governor chose our annual Spring Dinner in Rochester — two weeks before *The New York Times* wrote its article — to first announce he had instructed state agencies to treat legal out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples the same way they treat any other marriage. In a video-taped message to Spring Dinner attendees, Governor Paterson said that

all executive agencies “will recognize marriages conducted outside our state right here in New York State, and this will be a strong step towards marriage equality right here within the state.”

This is without a doubt a big step forward in our efforts to win marriage equality in New York State. For the past four years, same-sex couples have gone to Canada to get married and can now also

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go to California in order to come back to New York to get access to some of the 1,324 state-based rights and responsibilities that come with a marriage license. Other couples have moved to New York from places like Massachusetts hoping to have their legal marriages respected.

While the Governor's memo confirms that it is the stated policy of New York's Executive branch

and its agencies to fully respect the marriages of same-sex couples performed in jurisdictions where they are legal, it still leaves some questions unanswered, the biggest of which is how many of the 1,324 rights and responsibilities this action covers. Once the Governor's office hears back from the state agencies, there should be some more concrete information about which of the rights and responsibilities of marriage granted by the state are wholly within the jurisdiction of state agencies versus other branches of state government outside the Executive Branch.

Please be assured that we are following this process very closely so stay tuned. When we have more information to share, we will let you know as soon as possible.

One thing we do know for sure: full marriage equality will never be secure for our families until the New York State Legislature passes the marriage equality bill and Governor Paterson signs it into law. Policies based on longstanding legal precedent and court decisions can be overturned much easier than laws can be undone. We need you to continue to work with us to make sure that in November, we elect a State Senate whose leadership is committed to passing the marriage bill.

A Message from Alan Van Capelle

We're now past the halfway point in a year that we knew could be exciting for our community, but even I have been surprised about how much has been accomplished here in New York for LGBT people.

First and foremost, our work over the past five years on GENDA finally paid off in a big way when the New York State Assembly on June 3 passed GENDA by a wide, bipartisan margin of 108-34. What this now means is that the Assembly and the Governor are all on record in support of GENDA, marriage equality and the Dignity for All Students Act. We are so close to legislative victories on these three issues, and only one thing stands in our way: The New York State Senate.

Next, Governor Paterson's announcement that state agencies would begin treating out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples the same way they treat any other marriage keeps our state at the very forefront of states working to provide real equality for LGBT families. And, after more than fifteen years of work, the Pride Agenda in coalition with a number of other groups was finally successful in passing a bill opening family court to same-sex domestic partners.

Now that the legislative session in Albany is behind us, election season is now underway and we are determined to play a leadership role in bringing about real change this fall here in New York State. We know that we need to elect a Senate Majority leadership that is willing to put our issues up to a vote and we're only two seats away from having that leadership. So from now until the first Tuesday in November, the Pride Agenda will be working very hard to ensure that candidates for Senate who are pro-LGBT win their elections.

We've already done some amazing work towards this end. In early June we worked with the executive board of the New York State Working Families Party to have it unanimously pass a resolution in support of marriage equality. Having the backing of such a powerful statewide political force will be invaluable as we continue to build support in key Senate districts across the state on marriage. The Working Families Party now joins the State Democratic Party as major political parties on record in support of marriage equality.

We've also begun our candidate endorsement process, which is a very important tool in learning where candidates for New York State Assembly and Senate are on all of our issues. We also use this process to move certain candidates who seek out our support to be the best that they can be on all of our issues—like asking them to urge their fellow lawmakers to co-sponsor GENDA or campaigning openly in support of marriage equality.

A Pride Agenda endorsement is also our opportunity to thank those elected officials who have acted on our issues—like the Assemblymembers who voted for marriage, GENDA and Dignity since the last election cycle. Our endorsement lets them know that we have their back after they've done the right thing and voted for important LGBT bills.

Another big part of this process is letting our supporters—like you—know who we believe are the best candidates running in Assembly and State Senate races across the state. We'll be putting up a voter guide online for the September Primaries, and for the November General Election we'll be releasing a more comprehensive voter guide so you have something to take into the voting booth that lets you know who the best candidates are on our issues.



Assemblymember and 2008 Queens Pride Parade Grand Marshal Jose Peralta (left) with Pride Agenda Executive Director Alan Van Capelle (right) marching in Queens Pride

Don't forget — there are many ways in which you can get involved to help our community win during this crucial moment. You can volunteer to help in the races of candidates we endorse—and you can give to the Pride Agenda PAC to help us support those candidates who will work for LGBT equality once elected. Go to www.prideagenda.org or contact either our New York City or Albany office to find out how you can get into the action!

It's an exciting time for LGBT New Yorkers. We're on the brink of huge victories—and we hope you'll be a part of them!

SAY "I DO" WITH THE GIFT OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Here at the Empire State Pride Agenda, we are thrilled to see other states offer marriage equality to same-sex couples. We applaud the groundbreaking efforts of LGBT leaders in California. The Pride Agenda and thousands of same-sex couples across the state are working hard in great anticipation towards the day when same-sex marriage is legal in New York State. We also congratulate the many same-sex couples living in New York and elsewhere who have chosen to pledge their commitment to one another with an out-of-state wedding.

For those of you planning an out-of-state marriage, or even if you are planning a ceremony here in New York, we ask you to consider designating donations in lieu of gifts in honor of your union to the Empire State Pride Agenda. Through these honorary gifts, you and your guests will help play a vital role as we continue our work to ensure that the 1,324 rights and responsibilities granted with marriage will one day be available to all loving same-sex couples in committed relationships across New York State.

To find out more about honorary giving, please visit our website and see *Gifts in Honor or Memory* under the *Donate* tab. We have also created the *Marriage Equality Toolkit for Weddings*, which offers other ideas for using your ceremony as a way to raise awareness about marriage equality. You can find this under the *Issues Explained* section of our website. For more information please contact Daniel Smith, Senior Manager of Donor Relations at (212) 627-0305 or dsmith@prideagenda.org.



Equality@Work Awards

On June 11th, 250 individuals representing over 40 companies gathered for our Fifth Annual Equality@Work Awards Luncheon. Hosted by *Top Chef's* Padma Lakshmi, the event was not only a fun celebration but also a great way to connect with dynamic professionals from all major sectors of business.

The Equality@Work Awards honors those outstanding companies and individuals working to create LGBT-inclusive work environments.

This year Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP, Credit Suisse and Kenneth Cole of Kenneth Cole Productions all came away with awards, each exemplifying a commitment to workplace equality that has reset the bar for their industries.

WORLDWIDE Credit Suisse demonstrates a depth of LGBT-affirmative policies, extending their health insurance and domestic partner benefits to include employees in over 50 countries where the company does business.

HOLISTIC Cleary Gottlieb's work on LGBT equality goes beyond the internal policies impacting its staff and attorneys. The firm's pro bono practice actively works on issues pertaining to marriage equality, same-sex adoption and winning asylum for transgender people.

PUBLIC Kenneth Cole has never been afraid to put a public face on issues facing the LGBT community. Through socially-conscious advertising, he has raised the public's awareness on issues such as marriage equality and HIV



Equality@Work award winner Kenneth Cole and event emcee Padma Lakshmi

The Equality@Work Awards is an initiative of Pride in My Workplace. For more information, visit [Pride in My Workplace](#) under "Programs" on the homepage of our website at www.prideagenda.org or email workplace@prideagenda.org.

Equality & Justice Day

Equality & Justice Day 2008 brought more than 1,200 LGBT New Yorkers and allies to the Capitol on April 29 to push for marriage equality, non-discrimination protections based upon gender identity and expression, and schools safe from bias-based harassment and discrimination.

Attendees from all over the state got up at dawn and boarded 23 buses that included 7 from New York City, 6 from Western New York, 2 from Central New York, 2 from Long Island, and 1 from the Hudson Valley. It was one of the most diverse groups ever to go to Albany. There were more than 140 people of faith, 100 union members, 300 high school youth, 100 college students and 125 transgender New Yorkers.

The morning session included caucuses for youth, college students, people of color, transgender people, PFLAG attendees, people of faith and Marriage Ambassadors. Then we rallied at lunchtime at West Capitol Park so lawmakers could witness the power of our community.

At the rally, which was one of the biggest crowds to fill West Capitol Park during the entire 2008 legislative session, we heard from speakers who called for progress on our issues, including Kelli Conlin from NARAL Pro-Choice NY, Alan Lubin from New York State United Teachers, H. Alexander Robinson from the National Black Justice Coalition, Rev. David Parsons from Lutherans Concerned,

transgender activist Donna Rose, and the Pride Agenda's own Alan Van Capelle.

In the afternoon, participants jammed the halls of the Legislative Office Building, meeting with 175 Assemblymembers and State Senators. We thanked Assemblymembers for passing the marriage equality bill and Dignity for All Students Act and asked them to pass GENDA. With Senators, we demanded an end of delay on all three bills.

By telling our stories, we made the case for why these key pieces of legislation are necessary. By turning out larger and larger numbers of New Yorkers each year for Equality & Justice Day, we continue to send the clear message that we're not going away until all these bills become law.



Celebrating Rochester

On May 17, 2008, the Empire State Pride Agenda held its ninth annual Spring Dinner fundraiser at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, hosted by the incomparable Caroline Rhea.

At the event, Keith Powell was presented with our Community Service Award in appreciation of his many years of work on behalf of the local and national LGBT community.

We also recognized Pat Martinez and Lisa Golden, a brave couple who took their fight to have their Canadian marriage recognized by their employer to the appellate court. *Martinez vs. the County of Monroe* is now a historic court case that confirmed New York State's policy of recognizing same-sex marriages that are legally performed out-of-state.

In a video taped for the Spring Dinner, which can now be viewed on YouTube, Gov. David Paterson announced — for the first time — that he had instructed State agencies to treat legal out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples as fully valid in New York.

This milestone is unprecedented and due in part to the persistence of Pat Martinez and Lisa Golden to have their marriage treated the same as any other marriage. As ever, LGBT New Yorkers in the Genesee Valley are paving the road to equality and justice for us all.

We so appreciate the efforts of our tireless Co-Chairs, Chris Beato and Emily Jones, and all of the members of our hardworking Committee who made the Spring Dinner such a big success. Thank you, Rochester!



(at left) Community Service Award recipient Keith Powell



(below) Lisa Golden, Pride Agenda Foundation Board member Rev. Jennifer Crow and Pat Martinez

SAVE THE DATE

FALL DINNER

MONDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2008

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR DAVID A. PATERSON

The Pride Agenda's annual Fall Dinner will be held on **MONDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2008**, at the Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers in Manhattan. The Fall Dinner is a celebration of our recent victories, and always brings a mix of LGBT leaders, politicians and allies to support our work.

Sponsorships are on sale now. Visit www.prideagenda.org or call 212-627-0305 to guarantee your seat at one of the largest LGBT dinners in the country.

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individuals included sharing personal stories with legislators at Equality & Justice Day, hosting forums across the state, and coordinating hundreds of constituent phone calls and emails to Assemblymembers during a statewide GENDA call-in day.

This work, combined with the dedication of transgender activists and the support of more than 461,000 union members, 26 New York-based Fortune 500 companies, and 130 clergy and lay leaders, made this victory in the Assembly possible.

Special thanks also go to Assemblymember Dick Gottfried for his commitment to GENDA and for shepherding it through the Assembly, to GENDA's record 74 co-sponsors this year in the Assembly, and to Speaker Sheldon Silver and the Assembly Majority for making sure that GENDA came to the floor for a full Assembly vote this session.

Next year we will be working to bring this bill to a vote in the State Senate. With the Assembly's strong support and Governor Paterson's promise to sign the bill into law, it's time for State Senate to side with the 78% of New Yorkers who believe transgender discrimination is wrong and that GENDA should be the law in New York.

