

# THE Agenda

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## A MESSAGE FROM

### Alan Van Capelle



The 2007 legislative session in Albany is well underway and, as I said to you in our last newsletter, the way ahead looks promising, but victory won't happen without hard work being done.

So let me give you a summary of what's been happening this year and some of the successes we've already achieved. There are some exciting things to report!

After I finish, I'm going to be making an "ask" that I'd like you to seriously consider. Even though the Pride Agenda is your full-time representative in Albany, there are times when we need you to get involved personally in the political process and that time is just about here.

On January 31, Governor Spitzer released his budget and in it he provided a record \$6 million to community-based service providers that are part of the NYS LGBT Health and Human Services Network (Network), which the Pride Agenda coordinates. Not only is this a huge increase over last year's \$2.373 million, the \$6 million represents the fulfillment of a promise candidate Spitzer made last year to the Pride Agenda to better address the long overlooked needs of our community in areas like primary and preventative health care, mental health treatment, alcohol and substance abuse treatment, and homeless youth and senior services.

And on February 26, the Governor held a reception in his offices on the second floor

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## Equality & Justice Day – May 1 in Albany

LGBT Equality & Justice Day is fast approaching. On Tuesday, May 1, hundreds of New Yorkers will travel to Albany to lobby their state representatives on marriage equality, discrimination protections based upon gender identity and expression, safe schools for LGBT youth, and funding for our community's health and human services needs.

This year we will also be holding a noontime rally on the steps of the state capitol building, which will feature speeches from community and political leaders. Last July, when New York's high court issued its unacceptable ruling on marriage, thousands of you rallied all across the state to say to your elected officials that it's time for them to take a stand against discrimination and support marriage equality. We now need you to bring that energy and determination to Albany to let legislators know that we have not forgotten July 6 and we have not forgotten that we expect them to act on marriage, Gender Expression and Non-Expression Act (GENDA) and our other issues.

New York State lags far behind its neighbors in protecting our lives, our relationships and our families and your elected representatives need to know this. The larger the size of the crowd at the rally and the more of you that crowd into the offices of legislators to make the case for LGBT equality and justice, the faster they will come to understand that it's time to act.

So mark Tuesday, May 1 down in your calendars and reach out to your friends and get them to go with you. Our allies in the labor, faith, business, and choice communities are coming to stand with you and we need you to be there too!

We have buses going to Albany from all across the state. They will get you there and home on the same day.

Sign up now by going to [www.prideagenda.org](http://www.prideagenda.org).

We need you to be there to show legislators the power of our community!



Above photos: Doug Meszler

On Tuesday, May 1, hundreds of New Yorkers will travel to Albany to lobby their state representatives

SUPPORT THE PRIDE  
AGENDA AT AN  
EVENT NEAR YOU!



## BUFFALO BRUNCH

BUFFALO, NY ON APRIL 22

The Buffalo Brunch Committee invites you to the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center to celebrate community leaders, with proceeds benefiting the Empire State Pride Agenda. This year the Brunch will honor Trinity Episcopal Church, the Buffalo Bears and Paul Michaels, with Honorary Chair Assemblyman Sam Hoyt.

## EQUALITY & JUSTICE DAY

ALBANY, NY ON MAY 1

Join hundreds of other fair-minded people in Albany to lobby your state representatives on marriage equality, discrimination protections based upon gender identity and expression, safe schools for LGBT youth, and funding for our community's health and human services needs.

## SPRING DINNER

ROCHESTER, NY ON MAY 19

Mark your calendars for the Spring Dinner at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. The Dinner brings together over 500 people from Western New York in support of LGBT civil rights and protections. We will recognize former Board Co-Chair Duffy Palmer with our Community Service Award in honor of his tireless commitment and efforts for the LGBT community in New York.

## EQUALITY@WORK AWARDS LUNCHEON

NEW YORK, NY ON JUNE 6

The Equality@Work Awards, held at JP Morgan Chase, recognize corporations who have demonstrated exceptional leadership in promoting inclusive work environments that respect, welcome and support LGBT employees.

## WELCOME TO THE CLUB

The Empire Club has a new look. Check out the new logo above!

Members of the Empire Club are a driving force behind the Pride Agenda's education, organizing, and advocacy programs. These generous individuals and companies make an annual commitment of \$1,200 or more to the Pride Agenda.

Empire Club members receive regular briefings on the progress of our work and invitations to special Empire Club events. They are also recognized in specific Pride Agenda materials, including our annual Fall Dinner journal.

Consider becoming the newest member of the Empire Club today, for more information, visit our website or contact our Development Office at (212) 627-0305.

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of the Capitol so that Network members could meet all his senior commissioners and agency heads that oversee the state's health and human services programs. No governor has ever done this before. It was a watershed moment for our community and sent a strong message that our interests are New York's interests. We still have more work to do—a number of Network members depend upon the Assembly for their funding—but we're off to an incredible start.

On February 6, Democrat Craig Johnson won a Special Election in Nassau County for a seat in the State Senate. Craig's race was a transformative election for our community and our issues. He ran as a pro-marriage equality candidate in a high profile race in a region that is a political bellwether for New York State. And he showed the political establishment that you can not only be for marriage equality but that you can be out about it—and still win big in a place like Nassau County.

The Pride Agenda contributed the maximum amount allowable to Craig, which included one of our staffers working full-time in his campaign for the last week of the race. Newsday, the influential Long Island-based newspaper, named the Pride Agenda as one of Craig Johnson's most important backers.

Finally, we're making solid progress in building support in the Legislature for marriage equality legislation, the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) and the

Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity). I'm in Albany every Tuesday doing one-on-one meetings with legislators, asking them to support and co-sponsor these bills. And each week the numbers move in our direction. It's door-to-door politics and that's what it takes to win. To view our Legislative Scorecard, go to [www.pridagenda.org](http://www.pridagenda.org).

So now it comes to the "ask" that I need you to seriously think about.

First, if you haven't called or written your legislators about these issues, we need you to do that. To learn how, just read the piece in this newsletter that discusses our new online Pride Agenda Action Center. It's very easy to do and your elected officials need to hear from you. So go do it!

And second, we need you to go to LGBT Equality and Justice Day (E&J Day) in Albany on Tuesday, May 1 to lobby your legislators in person. Legislators pay attention when they see hundreds of people walking the hallways wearing buttons and stickers saying who they are. And they pay attention when you crowd into their offices to say, "It's time to pass marriage; it's time to pass GENDA; and, it's time to pass the Dignity for All Students Act." So get the details in this newsletter about E&J Day and then go to [www.prideagenda.org](http://www.prideagenda.org) and register. And do it now!

Together we will make change happen in New York and we will win equality and justice. So let's get moving!



[www.prideagenda.org](http://www.prideagenda.org)

## A New, Easier Way to Take Legislative Action!

In January, the Pride Agenda launched a new web-based Action Center, which will enable you to quickly and easily contact your state representatives.

If you receive our email messages, chances are you've probably already heard about this new tool—and you may have already used the Action Center—to call or write your Assemblymember or State Senator for support on an issue that matters to you.

If you have not yet seen the Action Center, simply visit the Pride Agenda's website ([www.prideagenda.org](http://www.prideagenda.org)) and click on "Take Action," which will guide you to the Action Center. You can also type in the entire web address, <http://eqfed.org/espany/home.html>, to access the Action Center.

Once you are there, click on "Sign up with the Pride Agenda Action Center." This will allow you to create a profile, which will automatically identify your New York State elected representatives. As soon as you've done this all of your information will be stored and ready each time you come back to take action! You'll also be able to receive messages from the Action Center, which will let you know when we really need you to contact your representatives to get their support on important issues.

Lobbying your state representatives is now as easy as that!

Contact Josh Meltzer at [jmeltzer@prideagenda.org](mailto:jmeltzer@prideagenda.org) if you have any questions or problems.

## WINTER HEAT

On March 1, over 400 women celebrated the work of the Pride Agenda at Winter Heat, our annual women's dance party, in New York City. The event raised critical support for our programs and efforts to win equality and justice. New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn served as Honorary Chair for the event. We thank

our generous corporate sponsors including the Corcoran Group, Svedka Vodka, Bud Light, Subaru, Time Warner Inc., Chelsea Eye & Cosmetic Surgery and Time Warner Cable of NY & NJ, as well as many generous individual sponsors.



Photos: Lee P. Sharmat

## Pride Agenda Mobilizes Against Cosi Restaurants and Wins!

Photo Album pages made by families in the Lower Hudson Valley were scheduled to be on display for one month at a Cosi restaurant in New Rochelle. Just one day after the unveiling, we were informed by the restaurant manager that the display had to be removed, due to complaints that Cosi corporate had received about the exhibit.

To counter this decision, we used our new online Action Center and mobilized our supporters to gather union members, clergy, corporate executives, Marriage Ambassadors, and the local families to attend a press conference to urge Cosi to keep the photo album exhibited for the month to which they had committed. We also worked with some of the nation's leading LGBT blogs to activate the online community to respond to Cosi corporate. Within hours, Cosi was flooded with hundreds of emails from

across the country and more than forty people gathered in the middle of a work day to rally outside of Cosi in New Rochelle.

As result of this quick organizing, the Pride Agenda was able to negotiate directly with Cosi's Chief Marketing Officer. In the end, Cosi agreed to keep the Family Album on display through the end of March, as originally intended.

Mobilizing activists, staging a press conference, and negotiations – all within 18 hours of receiving the call – resulted in a reversal of Cosi's decision. This story is just one example of how the Pride Agenda is working to build a rapid and effective response to attacks against our community. We won this fight because we have built a smart and strong organizing program and because of the support of people like you.



The Reverend Patty Ackerman addresses the crowd gathered outside of the Cosi

## MARRIAGE FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM

The Pride Agenda, in collaboration with over 100 of our partners and volunteers throughout the state, created the LGBT Family Photo Album, which shows the loving, caring, and committed people and families who need marriage in order to protect their partners and their children.

Copies of pages from the Photo Album will be on display May 1 in Albany at Equality & Justice Day, putting a human face to the families who are in need of the protections and rights associated with marriage.

Three of the pages are featured here.

