

PFLAG SPIRIT

March 2018



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Newsletter of Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Fort Worth Chapter, P.O. Box 8279, Fort Worth, TX 76124. Published monthly except January.

MISSION: *Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and secure equal civil rights. PFLAG provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.*

March meeting

Our March 1 speaker will be Aimee Schwartz-Jarrett, LPC, an Intervention Specialist at Arlington Heights High School, FWISD. She has worked with many LGBTQ teens and their families. She will be able to share with us the resources available to these students.

Samaritan House Supper Club

Supper Club is a great opportunity to volunteer for a project that really makes a difference. Our dedicated group of volunteers cooks and brings food on the fourth Monday of the month, serving dinner from 5:30-6:30. The residents look forward to our meals, and we enjoy both preparing and sharing the meals with them. Please contact Christy Matthews at 805-717-2454 if you'd like to join us or contribute food.

Dates to Remember

3/1	PFLAG FtW Monthly Meeting	6:45 pm
3/8	PFLAG Dallas Monthly Meeting	7:00 pm
3/18	PFLAG Denton Monthly Meeting	3:00 pm
3/20	Food & Fun Confab	6:30 pm
3/26	Supper Club for Samaritan House	5:30 pm

PFLAG FORT WORTH INFORMATION

Meetings: First Thursday of each month at 6:45 p.m.
First Jefferson Unitarian Universalist Church
1959 Sandy Lane, Fort Worth, TX 76112-5412

Website: <http://pflagfortworth.org>

National Website: <http://www.pflag.org>

Newsletter: Sharon Salih, Editor

Change of address & news to share: 817-496-1587

PFLAG/FW is not directly affiliated with any religious group.

Trump administration dismantles LGBT-friendly policies

By Dan Diamond, February 19, 2018

The nation's health department is taking steps to dismantle LGBT health initiatives, as political appointees have halted or rolled back regulations intended to protect LGBT workers and patients, removed LGBT-friendly language from documents and reassigned the senior adviser dedicated to LGBT health.

The sharp reversal from Obama-era policies carries implications for a population that's been historically vulnerable to discrimination in health care settings, say LGBT health advocates. A Health Affairs [study](#) last year found that many LGBT individuals have less access to care than heterosexuals; in a Harvard-Robert Wood Johnson-NPR [survey](#) one in six LGBT individuals reported experiencing discrimination from doctors or at a clinic.

The Trump administration soon after taking office also moved to change the agency's LGBT-related health data collection, a window into health status and discrimination. Last month it established a new religious liberty division to defend health workers who have religious objections to treating LGBT patients.

The changes at the Department of Health and Human Services represent "rapid destruction of so much of the progress on LGBT health," said Kellan Baker, a researcher at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health who worked with HHS on LGBT issues for nearly a decade. "It's only a matter of time before all the gains made under the Obama administration are reversed under the Trump administration, for purposes that

(Continued on page 5)

VOTE 2018 Texas Primary – March 6

March 2 – Early voting ends

2018 Primary Election Nonpartisan Voters Guide

http://www.lwvtarrantcounty.org/files/2018_lwvtc_primary_election_nonpartisan_voters_guide.pdf

Vote411.org – Personalized Voter Information

<http://www.vote411.org/>

Opinion: Opt-In sex ed bill hurt young people

By Chase Strangio, February 21, 2018

In this op-ed, Chase Strangio, a staff attorney for the ACLU LGBT & HIV Project, explains why bills seeking to restrict how educators talk about LGBTQ identity are harmful to young people.

This year, state legislatures are coming up with new and dangerous ways to target LGBTQ young people.

After years of efforts to push transgender young people out of public life through [bars on restroom](#) and [locker room use](#), lawmakers have taken a new tact this year with efforts to limit discussion of the existence of LGBTQ people in educational settings.

A [South Dakota bill](#) that thankfully died in committee [would have](#) barred mention of “gender identity or expression” in kindergarten through 7th grade.

The Indiana Legislature is currently considering a sex ed bill that could have sweeping and dangerous ramifications for LGBTQ students. A previous version of the bill, [SB 65](#), barred “provid[ing] a student with instruction on human sexuality, including sexual activity, sexual orientation, or gender identity, unless the parent of the student ... has provided the school with written consent for the instruction.” The bill passed the Senate and is now in the House. The House Education committee [amended the bill](#) on [February 20](#) to remove the language about gender identity and sexual orientation, thankfully, and to loosen the opt-out nature of the bill, but new amendments or old language could be reintroduced on the House floor.

Opt-in sex ed bills like Indiana’s jeopardize the health and safety of all students. As Planned Parenthood Advocates of Indiana and Kentucky explain in a [Twitter thread](#), bills like SB 65 could make it easier for a parent or guardian abusing their child to shield the child from receiving sexual health and education programming like “good touch/bad touch” and information about consent and bodily autonomy.

Legislation like this would also have real consequences for LGBTQ students. The original sweeping language of the bill could have [barred](#) all mention of LGBTQ people without prior parental authorization. When lawmakers attempt to restrict discussion of LGBTQ people, it could chill educators from even having informal conversations about LGBTQ issues with students struggling with their identities and experiences, and restrict school administrators from responding to and preventing bullying. How can a school administrator limit bullying of LGBTQ students if they are restricted from talking about the very issues driving the bullying and discrimination? How is a teacher supposed to help their student manage a hostile envi-

ronment if they are afraid to mention sexual orientation or gender identity?

It has been [proven](#) to be exceedingly [harmful](#) for LGBTQ young people when the existence of the trans experience and LGBT identities are [erased from conversations](#) about sexual health. But with a bill that goes much further, potentially codifying that erasure in school curricula and chilling even informal conversations between students and staff, it could be life-threatening.

A joint report from leading advocacy groups [explains](#), “[s]ex education programs that stigmatize LGBTQ people help cultivate hostile school environments by ignoring LGBTQ identities and experiences, or worse, actively promoting LGBTQ stigma.” In a [2015 survey](#) of LGBTQ students’ experiences in schools, over 57% of respondents already report feeling unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation. The numbers are similar for students reporting on their gender expression. The absence of school safety and the promotion of LGBTQ stigma can [lead to](#) students missing school, dropping out, facing school discipline, and a range of negative health outcomes.

As a transgender father of a young child, it breaks my heart to imagine sending my child into a school system where her family couldn’t be mentioned, where her experience in the world couldn’t be acknowledged and protected, where all students, whoever they grow up to be, can see themselves reflected in school curricula and dialogue.

It is easy to lose sight of what is happening in state legislatures while we fight so many [battles](#) against the federal government. But bills are swiftly moving towards law that could have dangerous and far-reaching consequences on the people we love and care about. SB 65 was one of the worst examples of those bills. Thankfully, it has been amended but if the old version reemerges and passes, it is going to impair educators, endanger students, and stigmatize an already vulnerable population of young people who are looking to the adults in their lives to model love and acceptance.

We must stay vigilant in the fight against bills like SB 65 and South Dakota’s SB 160. There is a concerted effort from the federal government down to the states to roll back protections for LGBTQ people and one of the most dangerous ways that is happening is through efforts to bar mention of our existence. But we do exist and we will fight back.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/opt-in-sex-ed-bills-hurt-young-people>

Even for most conservative activists the bathroom bill was something of a manufactured issue, where some members of the GOP elite converted a relatively non-issue into an issue among the base, but one that absent a constant stoking of the fire by the GOP elite has for all intents been extinguished. Until such time that Dan Patrick decides to pour some gasoline on the remaining embers.

– [Mark Jones, political science professor at Rice University.](#)

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Can LGBT rights and religious right coexist? Kim Davis-like case tests the waters

By Sarah Pulliam Bailey, February 7, 2018

Since the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015, a slew of controversial cases have raised questions over whether LGBT rights can coexist with religious rights. One of the most hotly debated cases involved Kim Davis, a Kentucky county clerk who famously refused to let her staff issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples in 2015 and went to jail for six days during a legal battle that went to the Supreme Court.

As the battles continue in the courts and in legislatures, some religious-freedom advocates who would like to see a compromise have expressed fears that the country is at an impasse and that the law will ultimately favor one set of rights or the other.

The Supreme Court could clarify controversial questions when it decides later this year whether a bakery owner has the constitutional right to decline to make a cake for a same-sex wedding.

Meanwhile, some advocates are pointing to a case in North Carolina that they say could provide a national blueprint for compromise on the issue.

In 2014, after same-sex marriage was legalized in North Carolina, Gayle Myrick resigned from her job as a magistrate in the state because she believed that performing civil marriages for same-sex couples went against her faith.

Unlike Davis, Myrick did not object to marrying any specific couple, and she did not ask other employees in the office to refuse to do so. (Davis has recently said she no longer objects to issuing licenses for same-sex couples since Kentucky changed the rules so clerks do not have to attach their names to licenses.)

When Myrick, who attends a Southern Baptist church, raised her discomfort with performing a same-sex ceremony, her supervisor suggested she could remove her from the duties of performing marriages altogether. However, a higher-level supervisor said her schedule could not be adjusted to excuse her from marriage duties.

"I didn't want to stop anyone from getting married," said Myrick, who is 68 and lives in Monroe, N.C. "I also knew my religious convictions would not allow me to perform those marriages personally."

A federal judge ruled last year that she should have been allowed to opt out of performing marriages because of her religious beliefs. As a result, Myrick reached a settlement in January with the government to compensate her for her pay, retirement pay and attorneys' fees. She has been represented by the Becket Fund, which has taken up high-profile cases such as Hobby Lobby's Supreme Court case on insurance coverage for contraception.

In 2015, North Carolina passed a law that allows magistrates (who work as lay judges) to opt out of performing all marriages based on a "sincerely held religious objection." The law requires counties to make other magistrates available to handle marriage licenses and same-sex weddings if they have recusals.

Some religious-freedom observers and activists see the state law and Myrick's case as a victory in the tension between LGBT rights and government workers' religious rights. A same-sex couple seeking to wed wouldn't know that a government official intends to discriminate against them, as the official

would be opting out of all marriages, activists argue.

"Nobody's entitled to the right to insult someone or deny someone to their face," said Ira Lupu, a law professor emeritus at George Washington University who specializes in the First Amendment. "People have a right to be accommodated in the workplace so long as there's little harm to the people being served."

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that employers must reasonably accommodate the religious practices of employees if that can be done without undue hardship. The problem with Davis's case was that she didn't seek just to exempt herself, said Douglas Laycock, a professor at the University of Virginia Law School. Instead, she sought to exempt the whole county. Laycock said he believes that exemptions in government offices should be narrower than those in businesses because the government must treat all citizens equally — but that Myrick's case seemed like a win-win compared with Davis's case.

"[Davis] wouldn't let anyone issue licenses," Laycock said. "But the county is not an employee, the county has no religion, and exempting the county would deprive all same-sex couples of essential government services. Substituting a different [official] for Myrick doesn't deprive anyone of anything."

But others are fearful that such laws could give government workers license to discriminate.

"The law already draws the line for ministers and religious institutions. But this is a government officials, said Louise Melling, deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union. "The question is where the law draws the line."

Claims for exemptions based on religious beliefs aren't new, Melling said, and they were raised after civil rights laws were enacted to prevent racial discrimination. Bob Jones University, which previously banned interracial dating, lost a Supreme Court case when the court ruled that the First Amendment did not prevent the IRS from revoking the tax-exempt status of a religious university whose practices are contrary to compelling government interest.

"If you say a magistrate wants exemption ... the government is then licensing discrimination," Melling said.

For the rest of the story: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/02/07/can-lgbt-rights-and-religious-rights-coexist-kim-davis-like-case-tests-the-waters/?utm_term=.5a565155d07d

New York to investigate insurance bias against gay men after bombshell news report

By Curtis M. Wong, February 21, 2018

New York state financial regulators say they plan [to investigate claims](#) that gay men have been denied life, disability and long-term care insurance policies after revealing they were taking HIV prevention medication.

Maria T. Vullo, the state's superintendent of financial services, [told The New York Times](#) last week that companies making such denials could be penalized for illegally discriminating against those clients.

The announcement followed a Feb. 12 [New York Times article](#) in which journalist Donald G. McNeil spoke with Dr. Philip J. Cheng, who had begun taking Truvada for pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP — an HIV prevention drug — after injuring himself while prepping an HIV-positive patient for surgery.

(Continued on page 4)

East Africa's Queer community searches for a home of its own

By Sarah Stacke, February 8, 2018

In 2013 Uganda gained international recognition as a horrific place to be gay when the country [passed the Anti-Homosexuality Act](#), infamously known as the “Kill the Gays” bill.

In the aftermath of its passage, LGBTQ activists in Uganda were granted funding, access to resources and a global platform that catapulted them into the spotlight. “But on the flip side,” says photographer Jake Naughton, “the visibility created an allergic reaction on the ground where violence is happening at an increasing rate, and it’s not from politicians or religious leaders. It’s from everyday Ugandans, the people in your neighborhood, at church, your family.”

Today Uganda could be more dangerous than ever for the gay community, despite the annulment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in 2014.

Naughton’s project, *This is How the Heart Beats*, calls attention to the forced migration of LGBTQ refugees in East Africa. The series follows the refugees as they flee their homes in Uganda, seek haven in Kenya, find resettlement in the United States, and for some, make a decisive return to Uganda.

Curious how the events of 2013 have resonated in the country, Naughton traveled there in 2017 to record the lives of ordinary LGBTQ Ugandans. Although the people in the photographs may not formally identify as activists, the banal actions of their daily life become a form of activism, a defiance of those who wish them banished or dead.

Naughton acknowledges that as a white American there’s a limit to how his experiences relate to a Ugandan, but “as a gay person, there’s an implicit trust that I understand the danger and the stakes of being a queer person represented in the media,” he says of his ability to access East Africa’s LGBTQ community.

In Kenya, the refugees Naughton photographed often asked him to conceal their identity out of fear that their families back home could encounter retributive attacks. It came as a surprise then that in Uganda almost everyone was happy to have their faces shown. “Most people were [already] out in one way or the other,” says Naughton, adding, “that didn’t mean the stakes were lower.” They constantly face the perils of being openly gay, but there is this sense of “people know who we are and that’s just how it is,” recalls Naughton.

To mirror the intense public and private scrutiny LGBTQ people run into in East Africa, Naughton often uses off-camera flash when photographing. The bright light flooding the frame offers a visual metaphor for the unwanted surveillance gay Ugandans endure. Contrasted by deep shadows created by the flash, the dynamic provides an “elegant way to talk about the dual nature of being a queer person in East Africa,” says Naughton, indicating the secrecy that can be bred by the threat of harm.

Naughton increasingly sees himself as a documentarian of queerness in the present moment. “It’s really hard as a gay person to see the incredible violence that people have to experience because of an identity that I share,” he says. On the other hand, Naughton is heartened by the profound resiliency of queer people, their zest for life, and their ability to brave an uni-

maginable amount of trauma and then turn those experiences “into something beautiful.”

A young transgender woman named Javan embodies the qualities Naughton describes. After surviving brutal abuses in Uganda, Javan fled to Kenya. Six months later she returned home saying, “I have to make a stand. What kind of example do I show for other Ugandan trans people if I leave?”

In a luminous portrait Naughton made of Javan near her home in Kampala, she looks directly into the camera with a look of calm empowerment. The Ugandan LGBTQ community is “committed to reforming the country’s beliefs about queer people,” says Naughton, “and they are there to stay.”

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/proof/2018/>

(Continued from page 3)

Cheng, who is gay, later attempted to apply for a disability insurance policy, and said he was told that he could only have a five-year policy because he was on PrEP.

McNeil also interviewed LGBTQ rights advocates, insurance brokers and staff at medical clinics, who said they’d heard of various insurers who had denied policies to gay men after learning they took PrEP. Some men, they said, even stopped taking the medication to get insured.

“This is tantamount to penalizing applicants based on sexual orientation,” Vullo said on Feb. 14. She encouraged any New York residents who believe they had been denied coverage on those grounds to contact her agency, adding, “Insurers cannot choose to deny coverage based on discriminatory reasons.”

Though Vullo wasn’t sure if other states would follow suit, she believed that California regulators “will be aligned with me on this issue,” according to the Times.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, using PrEP every day [can reduce the risk of contracting HIV](#) from sex by more than 90 percent.

Still, the drug has remained a lightning rod for controversy, possibly because people associate its use with gay and bisexual men, who remain [disproportionately susceptible](#) to HIV infection.

Last month, Florida-based supermarket chain Publix faced public backlash for reportedly [refusing to cover PrEP](#) for an employee through its insurance plan. By Feb. 6, Publix — which operates [1,169 stores](#) in seven Southern states — changed its tune after a meeting with Florida Rep. [Carlos Guillermo Smith](#) (D).

Smith, who is openly gay, said Publix officials confirmed to him that they were “absolutely denying” insurance coverage for PrEP, in part because medication used “to treat a medical condition that someone might get in the future” was not covered in their existing plan.

A day after the meeting with Smith, a Publix representative [tweeted](#) that the company had “made the decision to expand our health plan’s coverage” to include PrEP, and was “working with our pharmacy benefits manager to implement this change as quickly as possible.”

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/hiv-prevention-drug-insurance-claim_us_5a8d9e5ae4b0273053a6e92f?ncid=APPLENEWS00001

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★ Magnolia Ave, Fort Worth, TX 76104. ★

★ The next event will be on March 20. ★

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have nothing to do with public health and have everything to do with politics.”

The policy reversals also come after President Donald Trump repeatedly pledged during his campaign that he would support LGBT causes. "Thank you to the LGBT community!" Trump [tweeted](#) in June 2016. "I will fight for you while Hillary brings in more people that will threaten your freedoms and beliefs."

The Trump administration defended its approach to LGBT health as part of its broader health care strategy.

"The policies of the Trump administration are intended to improve the lives of all Americans, including the LGBTQ community," White House principal deputy press secretary Raj Shah said in a statement. "Through actions aimed at making health care more affordable, rolling back burdensome regulations, and combating the opioid crisis, the administration is working to ensure a healthier America."


The new leader of HHS — Alex Azar, who was sworn in as secretary last month — is thought to be more pragmatic than his predecessor Tom Price. Azar previously led U.S. operations for Eli Lilly, a pharmaceutical company that has been hailed by the Human Rights Campaign, among others, for its pro-LGBT policies. Lilly opposed Indiana's religious liberty law, advanced by then-Gov. Mike Pence, that LGBT groups said was discriminatory.

However, staff inside the health department have raised concerns about several other Trump appointees now in senior roles who had a history of anti-LGBT comments before joining the agency, Among them is Roger Severino, a former Heritage Foundation official who has said that the Supreme Court's 2015 decision on same-sex marriage was "wrong" and repeatedly warned of its consequences.

"[S]ame-sex marriage was merely the start, not end, of the left's LGBT agenda," Severino [wrote](#) in May 2016, about 10 months before he was tapped by Trump to be the health department's top civil rights official. "The radical left is using government power to coerce everyone, including children, into pledging allegiance to a radical new gender ideology over and above their right to privacy, safety, and religious freedom.

Asked in an interview this month if he stood by those comments, Severino pointed out that since joining the health department he had reached out to LGBT advocates. He also said his responsibility as civil rights chief is to uphold constitutional protections for all Americans.

For the rest of the story: https://www.politico.com/story/2018/02/19/trump-lgbt-rights-discrimination-353774?lo=ap_f1



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