

PFLAG SPIRIT

November 2017



Volume XXIII, Number 10

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.*

November meeting

Attorney John Barnes will be our speaker for November. His topic will be "Important Legal Documents to Protect the LGBTQ Community"—very important information.

SAVE THE DATE: Our annual Family Holiday Potluck will be on December 7. Plan to join us for food, fellowship and fun.

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

11/2	PFLAG Fort Worth Monthly Meeting	6:45 pm
11/9	PFLAG Dallas Monthly Meeting	7:00 pm
11/19	PFLAG Denton Monthly Meeting	3:00 pm
	Food & Fun Confab will not meet this month	
11/27	Supper Club for Samaritan House	5:30 pm
12/7	Annual Family Holiday Potluck	6:45 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

Hotline: 817-428-2329

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.

NC governor, ACLU reach settlement on transgender bathroom rule

By Max Greenwood, October 18, 2017

North Carolina Gov. [Roy Cooper](#) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) agreed to settle a federal lawsuit on Wednesday, filing a consent decree allowing transgender people in the state to use the public restrooms that match their gender identities.

The judge presiding over the case must agree to the terms of the consent decree before it becomes law.

The consent decree says that transgender people are not prevented under state law from using public facilities that coordinate with their gender identity.

Cooper, a Democrat, hailed the consent decree as a step toward codifying legal protections for transgender people.

"Earlier this year, I said there was more work to do to protect against discrimination and make North Carolina a welcoming state," Cooper said. "Today's executive order and consent decree are important steps toward fighting discrimination and enacting protections throughout state government and across our state."

The saga over North Carolina's so-called "bathroom bill" began last year with H.B. 2, which required transgender individuals to use restrooms in government buildings that matched the gender on their birth certificate.

That measure was replaced in March by H.B. 142, which rolled back the provision.

But LGBT activists and advocacy groups said that the new law continued the harm of its predecessor by putting the authority to make rules about public restrooms in the hands of the North Carolina General Assembly and barring local governments from passing ordinances or offering guidance on the matter.

The ACLU and Lambda Legal, an LGBT legal group, filed a lawsuit in July challenging H.B. 142, arguing that the law stripped localities of passing anti-discrimination protections and barred the regulation of restroom access in public facilities.

"H.B. 2 and H.B. 142 remain shameful and discrimina-

(Continued on page 5)

Nomination and election of officers for PFLAG Fort Worth Board of Directors

At the November general meeting, the Board of Directors presents the proposed slate to the general membership.

Additional nominations may be made in writing by five or more general members in good standing. These additional nominations must be submitted to the Chair of the Nominating Committee not later than fourteen days after the report of the Nominating Committee is presented to the general membership, provided written consent of the person nominated is included.

The report of the Nominating Committee plus the nomination by the petition shall be sent to the membership at least seven days before the election at the December regular meeting.

In the absence of additional nominations, the report of the Nominating Committee shall become the electoral ballot.

At the December general meeting, the list of offices and candidates will be voted on by the membership. In the event of more than one candidate for any office, voting shall be by closed ballot.

Nominations:

Vice President/Membership:	Barbara Murphy
Vice President/Youth Liaison:	Lisa Earley
Treasurer:	Nancy Novak

Austin church won't hold weddings until it can marry same-sex couples

By Eric Webb and Elizabeth Findell - American-Statesman Staff, September 30, 2017

A downtown Austin church is making much ado about "I do" as a statement in support of marriage equality.

First United Methodist Church announced Friday that it will stop holding weddings until it can perform them for gay and straight couples alike.

Members of the church's congregation on Sept. 24 voted 93 percent in favor of a resolution ending wedding ceremonies in its sanctuary and chapel until the denomination's leadership lifts its ban on marrying same-sex couples, the church said in a statement. The denomination's national body, the United Methodist Church, [does not allow same-sex couples to be married](#) on church property nor does it allow clergy to perform same-sex weddings.

The Rev. Taylor Fuerst said the decision came after the governing body of the United Methodist Church held its 2016 quadrennial meeting and did not change its policies. The

Austin church had joined the LGBT-friendly Reconciling Ministries Network in 2013, but that didn't make last week's resolution a no-brainer, she said.

"I had plenty of conversations with people who were struggling with this conversation, everyone from folks who are still in disagreement with our church's stance on full inclusion to folks who agree with that but were uncomfortable changing our practice," Fuerst said. "It's one thing to say, 'This is what we believe,' but it's another to — if you're a straight person — give something up."

The church, at 1201 Lavaca St., will still host weddings already scheduled but won't book any more, it said. And clergy won't officially perform weddings off-site either, though they're free to take part in ceremonies for both gay and straight couples or to provide blessings or counseling....

The [Rio Texas Annual Conference](#), the United Methodist Church's regional body, issued a statement in response to First United's resolution, taking no position on it but calling it perfectly in keeping with church rules.

For the rest of the story: <http://www.mystatesman.com/news/local/austin-church-won-not-hold-weddings-until-can-marry-same-sex-couples/ki3LKRUrpgi6KSoJQSreYL/>

Germany celebrates 1st same-sex weddings after law change

By Frank Jordans, Associated Press, October 1, 2017

BERLIN — [Germany](#) celebrated its first same-sex weddings Sunday, after a new law came into force putting gay and [lesbian](#) couples on an equal legal footing with heterosexual couples.

Town halls in Berlin, Hamburg and elsewhere opened their doors to mark the event, made possible by a surprise vote in Parliament three months earlier.

"We're making a single exception to fire a symbolic starter pistol because same-sex marriages are possible from today," said Gordon Holland, a registrar in Berlin's Schoeneberg district.

Holland said it was appropriate for Schoeneberg to hold the first same-sex wedding in the country because it has long been a center of gay life in the German capital.

About 60 guests and an equal number of journalists packed into Schoeneberg town hall's "Golden Room" to witness the marriage of Karl Kreile and his partner of 38 years, Bodo Mende.

The grooms entered the room to the popular "Wedding March" by 19th-century German composer Felix Mendelssohn, before saying their vows and signing the marriage documents to applause and cheers from the assembled guests.

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Fort Worth, Texas 76112
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The world is a dangerous place, not
because of those who do evil, but be-
cause of those who look on and do noth-
ing.
--- *Albert Einstein*

Justice Department rolls back protections for transgender workers

By Mike Levine, October 5, 2017

The Department of Justice rolled back an Obama-era policy Wednesday that protected [transgender](#) workers as part of the Civil Rights Act.

Title VII of the landmark 1964 federal law states that employers cannot discriminate against someone "because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin." In December 2014, under former President Barack Obama, Attorney General Eric Holder issued a memo saying that Title VII protections include protections for transgender individuals.

But in a memo sent Wednesday to U.S. attorneys and other top department officials across the country, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said otherwise.

"Although federal law, including Title VII, provides various protections to transgender individuals, Title VII does not prohibit discrimination based on gender identity per se," the memo reads. "As a law enforcement agency, the Department of Justice must interpret Title VII as written by Congress.... Therefore, as of the date of this memorandum, which hereby withdraws the December 15, 2014, memorandum, the Department of Justice will take that position in all pending and future matters."

In a statement Thursday, a Justice Department spokesperson said, "The Department of Justice cannot expand the law beyond what Congress has provided."

"Unfortunately, the last administration abandoned that fundamental principle, which necessitated [the] action," the statement continued. "This Department remains committed to protecting the civil and constitutional rights of all individuals, and will continue to enforce the numerous laws that Congress has enacted that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

The memo comes just over two months after President Donald Trump first announced a ban on transgender individuals from serving in the military. The Department of Defense is currently in the midst of a six-month period in which it is developing an implementation plan for the directive, which is facing numerous legal challenges.

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/justice-department-rolls-back-protections-transgender-workers/story?id=50306365>

Aiding transgender case, Sessions defies his image on civil rights

By Matt Apuzzo, October 15, 2017

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has dispatched an experienced federal hate crimes lawyer to Iowa to help prosecute a man charged with murdering a transgender high school student last year, a highly unusual move that officials said was personally initiated by Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

In taking the step, Mr. Sessions, a staunch conservative, is sending a signal that he has made a priority of fighting violence against transgender people individually, even as he has rolled back legal protections for them collectively.

The Justice Department rarely assigns its lawyers to serve as local prosecutors, and only in cases in which they can

provide expertise in areas that the federal government views as significant. By doing so in this instance, Mr. Sessions put the weight of the government behind a small-city murder case with overtones of gender identity and sexuality.

Kedarie Johnson, a 16-year-old in Burlington, Iowa, was shot to death in March 2016. Family and friends told [local newspapers](#) that he was gay, identified as [both male and female](#) and occasionally went by the name Kandicee. Christopher Peraras, a Justice Department lawyer, will serve as a county prosecutor in the case, according to court documents filed on Friday.

"This is just one example of the attorney general's commitment to enforcing the laws enacted by Congress and to protecting the civil rights of all individuals," said Devin O'Malley, a spokesman for the Justice Department.

Nine months into his tenure as the nation's top law enforcement official, the nuances of Mr. Sessions's civil rights policy are coming into focus. As a senator from Alabama, Mr. Sessions had spoken out against same-sex marriage and voted against expanding federal hate crimes laws to protect transgender people, and civil rights groups were livid when President Trump nominated him to be attorney general. They predicted he would reverse policies on discrimination, police abuses and other areas.

In many ways, Mr. Sessions has fulfilled those predictions. He declared that the Justice Department [no longer considered](#) gay or transgender people [to be protected from workplace discrimination](#) and [reversed a policy](#) encouraging schools to let transgender students use bathrooms that fit their gender identities. He abandoned objections [to voter identification requirements](#) in Texas and signaled that [he would not try to force federal oversight](#) on police departments suspected of abuses.

But he has also brought several hate crime cases, including one against a man accused of burning a mosque. He condemned white supremacist violence in Charlottesville, Va., far more forcefully than the president. And he has vowed tough action against hate crimes, speaking aggressively in ways that few of his most ardent opponents could have predicted. He has tied enforcement of those crimes to his tough stance against violence, a cornerstone of his policies as attorney **general**.

For the rest of the story: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/15/us/politics/jeff-sessions-transgender.html>

A majority of Republicans finally agree homosexuality is OK

By Matthew Rozsa, October 6, 2017

There is good news coming from the Republican Party: For the first time in recorded history, a majority of its members say homosexuality should be accepted by society.

A Pew Research Center survey found that 54 percent of Republicans and Republican leaners believed homosexuality should be accepted by society rather than discouraged by it, [according to a recent report](#). Only 37 percent of the right-leaning respondents said that homosexuality should be discouraged by society.

By contrast, only 35 percent Republicans and Republican leaners believed that homosexuality should be accepted by

(Continued on page 4)

Mississippi's uniquely cruel anti-LGBTQ law may be heading to the Supreme Court

By Mark Joseph Stern, October 2, 2017

The fight against Mississippi's HB 1523, the worst anti-LGBTQ law in the United States, may be heading to the Supreme Court.

On Friday, the judges of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals [refused to reconsider](#) a panel decision holding that challengers to HB 1523 do not have standing to challenge the measure in court. Two judges issued a fierce dissent asserting that the 5th Circuit had “abdicated its mandate to decide the substantive claims raised by the plaintiffs.” These plaintiffs will now ask the Supreme Court to rule that they have standing to contest HB 1523's constitutionality. Former U.S. Solicitor General Don Verrilli and Paul Smith, a [renowned](#) Supreme Court [litigator](#), will join the appeal.

Mississippi passed HB 1523 as a direct response to [Obergefell v. Hodges](#) in an effort to stymie LGBTQ equality in the state. [The law](#) singles out three religious beliefs for heightened protection: The belief that marriage is between a man and a woman; that sexual relations outside of a heterosexual marriage are improper; and that a person's gender must always be the sex they were assigned at birth. Individuals who hold these three beliefs get special rights laid out in the statute. Doctors, employers, businesses, landlords, schools, and adoption agencies (including state-funded ones) are expressly licensed to discriminate against LGBTQ people if their religion compels it. No other religious convictions receive extra protection under the law.

By elevating three beliefs over all others, HB 1523 would seem to violate [the neutrality principle](#) at the heart of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. The measure favors a few religious beliefs over others, effectively endorsing a specific sect of Christianity. As the Supreme Court has [explained](#), the government runs afoul of the Establishment Clause [when it endorses religion](#) in this manner by sending “a message ... [to] nonadherents that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community.”

In June of 2016, a federal judge [blocked the entire law](#) as an unconstitutional infringement upon the rights of the plaintiffs, a group of LGBTQ Mississippians, including religious leaders. But nearly a year later, a panel of judges on the 5th Circuit [reversed](#), ruling that these plaintiffs did not have standing to challenge the law in court. The panel insisted that the challengers were not sufficiently stigmatized by HB 1523 because they had no “personal confrontation” with it. It claimed that, to have standing under the Establishment Clause, a plaintiff must directly encounter the alleged constitutional violation. Under this theory, an individual has standing to sue when she encounters a Ten Commandments monument at a courthouse, or a crèche at a town hall, or a priest delivering a prayer at a public school graduation or football game. Yet she could not sue if the government passed a law establishing Southern Baptism as the official state religion, since she cannot “personally confront” the “statutory text.”

As Judge James L. Dennis explained on Friday in a [dissent](#) joined by Judge James E. Graves, this requirement of “physical exposure” makes little sense and is not compelled by precedent. The “stigmatic harm that flows from the enactment of a law or adoption of official policy that deems a non-adherent plaintiff an ‘outsider’ in his own community,” Dennis wrote, “is sufficient to confer standing.” Dennis and Graves would've re-

heard the case en banc and allowed the plaintiffs to challenge HB 1523 on the merits. By declining to revisit the panel's opinion, the court “den[ie]d citizens a forum in which to challenge the evils against which the Establishment Clause was designed to protect.”

For the rest of the story: <http://www.slate.com/blogs/outward/2017/10/02/mississippi-s-hb-1523-may-be-heading-to-the-supreme-court.html>

Saluting a transgender hero of Harvey

By John Wright, October 4, 2017

After seeing our October 2017 issue [saluting the LGBTQ heroes of Harvey](#), transgender advocate Hannah Simpson reached out to share her story.

Simpson, a New York-based writer and comedian, says she was in Austin for Pride when the storm slammed into Texas. After both Austin Pride and Simpson's return flight were canceled, she volunteered for the Red Cross at a local shelter “A few days turned into over three weeks,” Simpson says. “The governor of Texas stopped by, I got a photo op and a chance to remind him that I'm a transgender woman serving his community. I told him I concern myself with humans being, not humans peeing. And I mostly just spent a lot of time clowning and playing with kids in the shelters.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, of course, has been a supporter of anti-trans “bathroom” legislation.

Simpson says her encounter with Abbott was “an unexpected bonus that I jumped upon” after she saw him greeting people at the shelter, where she did intake for evacuees in English and Spanish.

“I later joined the command center and did data management and welcoming for new walk-in volunteers, worked on the disability integration team, and served on a mobile feeding canteen truck,” Simpson says. “I met a few transgender evacuees in the shelter, and did my best to remind them they were seen, just like everyone else. Our identities don't just wash away with the rains or high water.

“I am staying involved with the Red Cross now that I'm back in New York, and I think other trans people should step up too,” she adds.

<http://www.outsmartmagazine.com/2017/10/saluting-a-transgender-hero-of-harvey/>

(Continued from page 3)

society back in 2007. In 1994, the number was slightly higher at 38 percent — indicating that there has been far more substantial progress in spreading acceptance of homosexuality within the past decade than there was within the preceding thirteen years....

Regardless of the views held by Republicans on homosexuality and women's rights, the GOP's current leaders are rolling back progress when it comes to at least one related issue — transgender rights. [Attorney General Jeff Sessions ordered the Justice Department on Thursday](#) to take the position that transgender individuals are not protected by a civil rights law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in the workplace. This revokes a directive issued by Attorney General Eric Holder.

<https://www.salon.com/2017/10/06/a-majority-of->

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tory attacks on LGBT people that should never have been signed into law, but under this proposed consent decree North Carolina would finally affirm the right of transgender people to use facilities that match their gender," Karen Anderson, the executive director of the ACLU of North Carolina, said in a statement.

<http://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/356111-nc-governor-aclu-reach-settlement-on-transgender-bathroom-rule>

Kreile, 59, said it was an "incredible honor" to be the first same-sex couple to marry in Germany, noting that he and Mende, 60, had been campaigning for gay rights for decades.

After cutting the wedding cake — featuring a rainbow flag and the words "marriage for all" — the couple planned to hold a small reception and fly to Vienna later in the week for a five-day honeymoon.

"We had a huge party 15 years ago that can't be topped," said Kreile, referring to the celebration after the couple registered their partnership in 2002.

Germany introduced registered partnerships in 2002, but those gave same-sex couples fewer rights than heterosexual couples who married.


Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) long opposed same-sex marriages, only agreeing to a free vote in Parliament on the matter in June, shortly before national elections.

The bill, which enjoyed strong public support, passed by a wide margin, with 393 lawmakers voting in favor of marriage equality and 226 — including Merkel — voting against.


"This day sends a significant signal, which is that the state's discrimination of lesbians and gays is finished," said Joerg Steinert, who heads the Berlin branch of Germany's lesbian and gay association. "This was long overdue in Germany and so this is a day of great joy."

Some hurdles remain, including the fact that women can't automatically recognize motherhood of a lesbian partner's child, and the software used to record marriages doesn't currently allow for two entries with the same sex.

For the rest of the story: <http://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/wireStory/germany-celebrates-1st-sex-weddings-law-change-50207790>



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