

PFLAG SPIRIT

December 2017



Volume XXIII, Number 11

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.*



December meeting



Join us for our annual Family Holiday Potluck on December 7. It's our annual celebration of family with food, fellowship and fun. Meat will be provided, so bring a side dish or a dessert and join us. No time to cook—just bring yourself—we've never run short of food!

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

12/7	PFLAG FtW Annual Holiday Potluck	6:45 pm
12/14	PFLAG Dallas Monthly Meeting	7:00 pm
12/17	PFLAG Denton Monthly Meeting	3:00 pm
	Food & Fun Confab will not meet this month	
12/25	Supper Club for Samaritan House	5:30 pm
1/4/18	PFLAG Fort Worth January Meeting	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.

This transgender professor just won a \$1 million jury verdict in a major case against a university

By Dominic Holden, November 20, 2017

Rachel Tudor, a former professor at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, was awarded \$1,165,000 by a jury in federal court on Monday in a major discrimination case that began in 2011.

The case has involved both the Trump and Obama administrations and driven a national conversation about the reach of federal civil rights law.

The decision was unusual because jury victories for transgender plaintiffs who make federal discrimination claims are exceedingly rare — and due to the Justice Department's shifting role in the lawsuit.

"I'm thrilled that Dr. Tudor has finally achieved some justice," Jillian T. Weiss, an attorney who'd represented Tudor in one portion of the lawsuit, told BuzzFeed News on Monday. "But it's unfortunate that it took so many years of her life and caused her so much pain."

In its [verdict form](#), the jury in US District Court in Western Oklahoma found Tudor had proven by a preponderance of the evidence that she was denied tenure because of her gender, and denied a chance to re-apply due to her past complaints about workplace discrimination. The jury, however, did not affirm her allegations of a hostile work environment.

In 2010, Tudor alleged the university and the Regional University System of Oklahoma had singled her out for discrimination for being transgender, policing her clothing and limiting her to one restroom on campus. She took her case to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which handles federal civil rights claims in the workplace. The commission concluded that Tudor had a valid claim under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While the law does not address transgender discrimination directly, courts have increasingly interpreted the law's ban on sex discrimination to cover discrimina-

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January meeting—Speaker
Jane Rogers, Coalition for Aging LGBT

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

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

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

U.S. Supreme court rejects Texas case on gay-marriage benefits

By Chuck Lindell, American-Statesman Staff, December 4, 2017

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday let stand a Texas ruling that [said the right to a marriage license did not entitle](#) same-sex couples to spousal benefits under employee insurance plans.

The city of Houston had asked the high court to overturn last June's Texas Supreme Court decision, which determined that all marriage-related matters were not decided when the U.S. Supreme Court established a right to same-sex unions in 2015, leaving room for state courts to explore the limits of gay marriage.

The federal court's decision, [issued without comment](#), allowed the Texas ruling to stand.

Lawyers for Houston had argued that the Texas ruling was wrong, short-sighted and invited endless rounds of litigation from opponents determined to limit the impact of legalized same-sex marriage.

"Equal recognition of same-sex marriage requires more than a marriage license; it requires equal access to the constellation of benefits that the state has linked to marriage," [the city's lawyers told the court](#).

[Opponents of gay marriage had urged the high court](#) to reject Houston's appeal, arguing that it did not open the door to discrimination, as city officials had claimed.

The Texas court merely said that the decision in Obergefell v. Hodges, while acknowledging the right of same-sex couples to marry, did not answer or resolve all marriage-related questions, including whether governments must provide the

same benefits to same-sex couples that are provided to opposite-sex couples, they argued.

Based on a lawsuit that was all but dead a year ago, the Texas case was a surprising addition to the fight over gay marriage....

Sarah Kate Ellis, president of the advocacy organization GLAAD, predicted that Monday's action will open the door to "an onslaught of challenges to the rights of LGBTQ people at every step."

"The Supreme Court has just let an alarming ruling by the Texas Supreme Court stand which plainly undercuts the rights of married same-sex couples," Ellis said.

For the rest of the story: <http://www.statesman.com/news/breaking-supreme-court-rejects-texas-case-gay-marriage-benefits/QWgUz5GV9ktKz1rTC3tle/>

Barbie officially supports marriage equality and the LGBT community

It all started with fashion designer Aimee Song.

It's official: Barbie is Team Marriage Equality.

The decades-old classic doll sported a 'Love Wins' t-shirt on the Barbie Style Instagram page recently alongside fashion designer Aimee Song.

Song created the shirt and Mattel unveiled it on their titular doll at the same time they revealed Song's own Barbie doll.

'Proud to wear this "Love Wins" shirt with @songofstyle!' the caption exclaims.

Song designed the shirt for Pride Month this year. Half of the shirt's proceeds go to The Trevor Project.

As the designer explained on her [website](#), she aimed to make a t-shirt each month whose proceeds would go to a non-profit. For Breast Cancer Awareness Month, she created her rose tits tees.

While she wasn't able to make a new shirt every month, she didn't pass up June.

'So many of my friends (actually most of them) are a part of the LGBTQ community, and I know that life was not always easy for them,' she wrote when unveiling the shirt.

'They're all in great places in their lives now and they're such great examples of 'It Gets Better.' As an ally, and someone who really believes that love wins, I created this tee shirt to benefit The Trevor Project.'

<https://www.gaystarnews.com/article/barbie-supports-marriage-equality/#gs.jh1oLfe>

First Jefferson Unitarian Universalist Church

Affirming the inherent worth and
dignity of all human beings.
Sunday Services at 11:00 a.m.

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"If a baker can reject LGBTQ people because of who we are, then what about the mechanic, the florist, the doctor, the teacher? This is not about cake. This is not about art. This is about survival."

[- American Civil Liberties Union lawyer Chase Strangio, on the Masterpiece Cakeshop case that goes before the Supreme Court next week](#)

Walters: Supreme Court case shouldn't redefine religious freedom to allow discrimination

By Laura Walters, November 1, 2017

The Supreme Court is about to decide whether religious freedom is a license to discriminate. This deeply troubles me as both an American and a Christian pastor.

The high court is expected in December to consider the case of a Colorado business owner who refused to sell a cake to a same-sex couple. In that case, Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission, the owner has cited his religious beliefs as exempting him from a nondiscrimination law that requires businesses to treat everyone equally.

Clergy across Texas, including myself, are among nearly 1,300 faith leaders who have signed a friend-of-the-court brief arguing that it is wrong to allow businesses to discriminate under the guise of religion. Many signers in this state are part of Texas Believes (TexasBelieves.org), a growing movement of religious leaders who support full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

Of course, this case could affect far more than just LGBT people. Allowing businesses to pick and choose which laws they will obey would open the door to rolling back discrimination protections for virtually anyone.

Earlier this year, two other faith leaders associated with Texas Believes - a rabbi and an African American minister - wrote about how religion has been used in our history to justify discrimination against people like them. After so much progress - uneven as it has been - to end discrimination against Jews, African Americans and others in this country, this Colorado case could turn back the clock.

Consider the possible consequences if the Supreme Court allows a special right of religious refusal to obey nondiscrimination laws. Some extreme religious sects teach white supremacy and anti-Semitism, for example. Should business owners who hold such religious views be given a pass to post signs proclaiming "Whites Only" and "No Jews" at the shop entrance?

Likewise, would it be acceptable for a restaurant owner to refuse service to people simply because their religion is different from his? Should a factory owner whose religion teaches that women must not work outside the home be allowed to fire or refuse to hire women who do?

Most Americans would rightly answer no to those questions. That's because we decided long ago as a nation that those who do business in the public marketplace must treat everyone equally.

That's an important civic and legal principle in America. But more fundamentally, it's a moral imperative. Discrimination is simply wrong.

But now some are trying to use religious freedom to justify discrimination against LGBT people. They seek to radically redefine this freedom as the right to hurt people to whom they have personal objections. And they want our courts to embrace this cause.

Yet, the stories of my faith are about radical acceptance and compassion. In them, Jesus reaches out to people who society has marginalized and lovingly brings them back into community. Over and over, we are taught to move from places of narrowness to spaciousness, from exclusion to equality. Sim-

ply put, we are taught to love as we have been loved. And so as people of faith, we must challenge these attempts to discriminate against the LGBT community, especially under the guise of freedom of religion, so all of God's children can be treated equally with respect and dignity.

Of course, Texas does not currently have a statewide law protecting LGBT people from discrimination. But some Texas cities do, including Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio and Plano.

They are among more than 200 cities and 18 states that have already updated their nondiscrimination laws to be LGBT-inclusive. Those laws allow LGBT people to live their lives with less worry that they will be fired from their jobs, evicted from their homes or refused service simply because of who they are or whom they love. But this Supreme Court case puts those protections at risk.

Religious freedom is a fundamental right for all. That's why we protect it in the Texas and federal constitutions. But protecting people from discrimination threatens no one's religious freedom. Indeed, treating others as we would like to be treated affirms a central teaching of many religions, including my Christian faith.

As a pastor, I pray that the Supreme Court won't turn back the clock in this country.

Walters is pastor at Presbyterian Church of Lake Travis near Austin.

http://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/outlook/article/Walters-Supreme-Court-case-shouldn-t-redefine-12324429.php?utm_campaign=twitter-premium&utm_source=CMS%20Sharing%20Button&utm_medium=social

Second Judge Blocks Trump's transgender ban in the military

By Dave Philipps, November 21, 2017

WASHINGTON — A second federal judge blocked the Trump administration's proposed ban on transgender troops Tuesday, saying President Trump's announcement of the ban in a series of tweets this summer was "capricious, arbitrary, and unqualified."

In a [preliminary injunction](#), Judge Marvin J. Garbis of the Federal District Court for Maryland halted a policy that would have discharged all current transgender troops and barred prospective ones from enlisting, saying it likely violated equal protection provisions of the Constitution.

Judge Garbis's 53-page order went further than [a similar ruling](#) last month by Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly of the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia, which also said the ban likely violated the Constitution. "There is absolutely no support for the claim that the ongoing service of transgender people would have any negative effective on the military at all," the ruling said.

But while Judge Kollar-Kotelly did not specifically block a Trump administration policy prohibiting gender-reassignment surgery for service members at the government's expense, Judge Garbis's order does.

The ruling leaves in place an Obama-era policy, announced in 2016, that allows transgender troops to serve openly and receive the required medical care for their gender

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Transgender people are being killed at a record pace in U.S., advocacy groups say

Associated Press

At least 25 transgender people in the United States have been homicide victims so far this year, the highest annual total on record, according to advocacy groups that have been monitoring the grim phenomenon and seeking ways to reduce the toll.

The [Human Rights Campaign](#), in a report released Friday, calculated that 102 transgender people have been killed in the U.S. over the past five years — including 25 this year. Its report, jointly sponsored by the Trans People of Color Coalition, was issued ahead of Monday's annual Transgender Day of Remembrance observations, commemorating the hundreds of transgender people killed worldwide each year.

Another monitoring group, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, has tallied 26 homicides of transgender and gender-nonconforming people in the U.S. so far this year.

Both groups say their counts may be incomplete because transgender victims are sometimes misidentified in police and news reports.

The Human Rights Campaign provided a statistical breakdown of the 102 killings since January 2013. It said that 88 of the victims were transgender women, and that nearly all of them were black or Hispanic. Nearly three-quarters were under age 35, including four minors. And 55 of the victims were killed in the South, including 16 this year.

"Their killings were committed by lovers, acquaintances, family members, neighbors and strangers," the report said. "While every story highlighted in this report is unique and tragic, they all also reflect a legacy of intolerance, hate and discrimination that transgender people must navigate and surmount every day."

The report noted that most states do not have laws prohibiting discrimination against transgender people.

"Indeed, in many states, anti-transgender bias is ingrained and systematically enforced in nearly all aspects of life, including in laws and government agencies, schools, housing, healthcare and employment," the report said.

The result, said the report, is a disproportionately high 30% poverty rate among transgender people.

"Many of those living in poverty rely on the underground economy to survive, including sex work, drug sales and other currently criminalized work," the report said. "These dangerous situations may put transgender people at a higher risk of police harassment, sexual assault and fatal violence."

While many of the transgender homicides draw no more than scant local news coverage, two recent cases have attracted national attention.

In Missouri, LGBTQ activists have asked the state attorney general to oversee an investigation of the death of a transgender teenager whose body was mutilated and burned in September. Activists have raised concerns about the response of the local sheriff and prosecutor to the death of 17-year-old Ally Lee Steinfeld. The local officials insist the slaying wasn't a hate crime.

The [U.S. Justice Department](#) sent a federal hate

crimes lawyer to Iowa to help prosecute a man charged with killing a transgender teenager last year, an unusual decision by Atty. Gen. Jeff Sessions even as he takes other steps to weaken the rights of transgender people. A jury on Nov. 3 convicted Jorge Sanders-Galvez, 23, of first-degree murder in the fatal shooting of 16-year-old Kedarie Johnson in Burlington, Iowa, in March 2016. A trial for a second man charged with murder in the case, Jaron Purham, 25, is set for Feb. 20, 2018.

Sessions says the Justice Department no longer considers transgender people shielded from workplace discrimination under federal law, and he has issued sweeping guidance on protecting religious freedom that undercuts protections for LGBTQ people.

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-transgender-homicides-20171117-story.html>

As Trump attempts a transgender military ban, Germany celebrates its first trans commander

By [Rick Noack](#) / *The Washington Post*, November 11, 2017

STORKOW, Germany — On July 26, when President Donald Trump unexpectedly tweeted his plans to ban transgender servicemen and women from the U.S. military, Anastasia Biefang was more than 4,000 miles away from Washington. Still, she could not hide her shock.

"It felt like a smack in the face," said the 43-year-old German army officer, who is the first transgender person to command a military unit in the country's history.

Biefang joined the German army as a man more than 23 years ago. Two years ago, despite fearing negative repercussions for her career, she came out to her superiors and eventually to her entire unit. Her decision to transition from male to female coincided with an unprecedented openness among top military officials in Germany, the United States and other countries to having transgender troops serve openly.

Since then, the United States and Germany have taken dramatically different turns. Biefang, now a lieutenant colonel, commands a logistics unit of more than 700 soldiers, and the Bundeswehr, Germany's military, heralds her as a national role model. She is the first transgender commander in a force headed by a defense minister, Ursula von der Leyen, who has made support for transsexual and homosexual personnel a top priority.

"People who hold fears aren't able to give their very best. We can't afford that," von der Leyen said in January. She largely echoed similar remarks by then-U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter, who explained the decision to drop the American ban on transgender military service in 2016 by saying that "our mission — which is defending the country — has to come first."...

At least 18 countries allow transgender service members to serve openly, including eight NATO members: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Britain, Spain, France and Germany. Their overall assessment is that allowing transgender service members to serve openly can be an advantage to their armed forces, according to a RAND Corp. report released last year. "None of the militaries that we examined reported a negative impact on the operational effectiveness, op-

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★ Due to the Thanksgiving holiday ★

★ **Food & Fun Confab** ★

★ **social meeting** ★

★ **WILL NOT TAKE PLACE IN DECEMBER** ★

★ We'll resume after the holidays. ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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tion against transgender people as a form of illegal sex-stereotyping.

The commission referred the case to the Justice Department's Employment Litigation Section. At the time, however, the Obama administration had yet to argue Title VII covered anti-transgender discrimination. That changed in December 2014, when former Attorney General Eric Holder [announced](#) the Justice Department would adopt a stance that Title VII covers gender identity in future litigation. Having undertaken that position, the Justice Department sued the university in March 2015; Tudor quickly joined the case in her own capacity....

"We can win even when the government is not recognizing our rights — we can take on the US government, and take on state governments, and we can win," Weiss said. "Transgender people are protected from discrimination and employers should take notice, whether the government is on your side or not."

Oklahoma is within the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, which has found in the past that transgender people are not protected as a separate class, but has held transgender workers may bring claims for discrimination based on their gender.

For the rest of the story: https://www.buzzfeed.com/dominicholden/a-transgender-professor-just-won-a-1-million-jury-verdict?utm_term=.idm7nJDPWW#.vpAnZbLN55

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transition through the military. Shortly after the ruling the Trump administration appealed last month's decision, signaling it would continue to press for the removal of transgender troops.

For the rest of the story: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/21/us/transgender-ban-military.html>


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eration readiness, or cohesion of the force," said political scientist Agnes Gereben Schaefer, who co-wrote the study.

For the rest of the story: <http://www.denverpost.com/2017/11/11/germany-first-transgender-commander-donald-trump-military-ban/>



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