

Acceptance is High, Discrimination and Violence Persist

Poll Shows Clear Public Support of Federal Legislation Prohibiting Anti-Gay Discrimination

By Michael James

A new poll released on Tuesday, November 13, by the Kaiser Family Foundation shows increased acceptance of gay, lesbian and bisexual Americans. The Human Rights Campaign stated that though the results are encouraging, they expressed concern that even in this improved environment discrimination and violence remain persistent problems.

The data also shows that the American people strongly support federal legislation to address hate violence and prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"The poll is a welcome indication of how incredibly far we have progressed, but it is also a barometer of how much further we have to go to reach our goal of full equality," said David M. Smith, Communications Director for the Human Rights Campaign. "We are particularly encouraged by the overwhelming public support for federal legislation to address hate violence and prohibit employment discrimination and we hope that members of Congress see that ending these injustices are

what their constituents clearly want."

According to the poll, large majorities of the public support federal legislation that would address hate violence and anti-gay discrimination with 73 percent of Americans supporting hate crime legislation;

Three quarters of those polled support federal protection from employment discrimination and protection from housing discrimination.

Equally large numbers support extending certain rights and benefits to lesbian and gay domestic partners - 73 percent support inheritance rights, 70 percent support employer-sponsored health insurance and 68 percent believe social security benefits should be extended to same-sex partners.

The poll shows that while gay, lesbian and bisexual Americans feel more accepted than ever, many have suffered discrimination, threats or even violence. Seventy-six percent of lesbians, gays and bisexuals believe there is greater acceptance today. But, an alarming 74 percent report that they have experienced prejudice and discrimination, and 32 percent

report that they have been the target of physical violence.

Additionally, 74 percent of GLBT people report being the victims of verbal abuse and forty-one percent believe that there is more violence directed towards them today than a few years ago.

The survey found that 78 percent of the American people believe that gay men and lesbians experience at least some prejudice and discrimination - including more than half, 57 percent, who say "a lot," and 39 percent who think there is more violence toward gays and lesbians in this country today than a few years ago.

More than half, 55 percent of the general public, opposes legally sanctioned gay and lesbian marriages; while 39 percent support it. This is up from previous surveys conducted in 1998, where 33 percent were in favor of marriage and in 1992 when only 27 percent were in favor.

The public is less inclined to oppose legally sanctioned gay and lesbian unions or partnerships, with 47 percent in support of such policies.

Support on adoption rights for GLBT families is split, with 46 percent opposing it and 47 percent in favor. Support for adoption

rights for couples has increased in recent years - from 29 percent in 1994 and 36 percent in 1998.

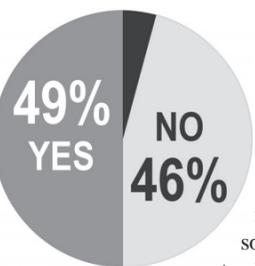
The public's evolving views on gay and lesbian parenting are further shown in the fact that 56 percent of those surveyed believe that gay and lesbian couples can be good parents.

The age group that showed a significantly wide margin of support was 18 to 29-year-olds. In this group 68 percent support gay unions or partnerships, 60 percent support the right to marry and an additional 55 percent are in favor of adoption rights for gays and lesbians.

Nearly three quarters, of the general public know someone who is gay or lesbian, up from 55 percent in 1998. Nearly half those who know someone who is gay are significantly less likely to believe that homosexuality is morally wrong compared to those who do not know someone who is gay, 68 percent.

"This poll shows that the importance coming out has on changing hearts and minds cannot be overstated," said HRC National Coming Out Project Manager Candace Gingrich. "Coming out not only changes the individual's life, but has a significant impact on those around them."

Would You Attend a Church or Synagogue with an Openly Gay Minister/Priest?



D.C. Council Passes Domestic Partnership Benefits

Even the U.S. Senate Joins in Ratifying Rights

The U.S. Senate on Wednesday, Nov. 7, voted 75-24 to approve a District of Columbia appropriations bill that allows the city to use its own funds to put in place a domestic partners law that the D.C. City Council passed in 1992.

The Senate action, which is expected to be ratified by a House-Senate conference committee later this month, would end a nine-year-old congressional edict that prohibited the city from offering health care benefits to same-sex and opposite-sex domestic partners of city employees.

"We're seeing a change in how America perceives gays and lesbians," said Carl Schmid, a local gay rights advocate who helped coordinate lobbying efforts to lift the congressional ban on the domestic partners law.

Schmid and officials with the Human Rights Campaign, the national gay political group that worked with local groups to push for lifting the ban, noted that no senator came forward to introduce an amendment on the Senate floor to restore the domestic partners ban - a development that would have been



Kevin Ivers

unlikely as recently as a few months ago.

The Senate Appropriations Committee decided earlier this month against adding language to the D.C. appropriations bill to continue the ban on the domestic partners law. Senate Republican leaders, expressing anger over the committee's action, vowed they would take steps to restore the ban on the domestic partners law when the D.C. appropriations bill reached the Senate floor. Gay advocacy groups, who were bracing for a Senate debate and vote on the issue this week, said they were both surprised and delighted when the vote didn't materialize.

"An effort by social conservatives to have an amendment offered that would maintain the ban fizzled," said Kevin Ivers, communications director of the Log Cabin Republicans, a national gay GOP group.

The House of Representatives on Sept. 25 approved its own version of the

D.C. appropriations that also lifts the congressional ban on the domestic partners law, led by openly gay U.S. Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.), joined 194 Democrats in voting against the amendment.

Congressional observers expect a House-Senate conference committee to give final approval to the D.C. appropriations bill within the next week. Bush's signature on the bill would give the D.C. government immediate authority to begin implementing its domestic partners benefits program.

Kurt Vorndran, president of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, one of D.C.'s largest gay political groups, said D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams (D) has pledged to take steps to put the implementation of the law on a fast track.

Vorndran called the Senate action a "major victory" for the D.C. gay community and for the principle of D.C. home rule.

In addition to providing



Cornelius Baker

health care benefits to partners D.C. government employees, the domestic partners law, known as the D.C. Health Care Benefits Expansion Act, would also allow all domestic partners living in the city to register their relationships with the District government. In addition, it would require all city-based health care facilities, such as hospitals and nursing homes, to provide visitation rights to

domestic partners and would allow the city to offer tax breaks to private sector employers that voluntarily provide domestic partner benefits to their workers.

"This is a tremendous step for gay and lesbian people and all those committed in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Washington, D.C.," said A. Cornelius Baker, executive of D.C.'s Whitman-Walker Clinic.

"We are one step closer to equality for same-sex couples in the District of Columbia," he said, "and one step closer to critical city funding for needle exchange programs that save lives by curbing the spread of HIV and helping injection drug users enter treatment."

Reprinted courtesy of the Washington Blade.

Available

The Commonwealth Building
2881 East Oakland Park Blvd.

- Perfect for owner/user
- 856 Sq. Feet to 12,000 Sq. Feet
- Between Christophers and Yesterdays
- Proximate to restaurants, banks & shopping.
- Recently renovated two-story lobby with new marble and carpet.
- Plenty of free parking with easy access to the building.

The Power Team
Commercial and Investment Specialist

Chuck Forbes 954-423-1019 Brokercat@aol.com	Billy Looper 954-423-1048 BillyLooper@BellSouth.net
--	--

COLDWELL BANKER COMMERCIAL
NRT

Don't Take Your Chances With Collision Repair

IMPACT
PAINT AND BODY

Your Comprehensive Collision Specialist

ASE **I-CAR**

A/B License #222

Our work speaks for itself. One look and you'll know why our customers are loyal and refer their friends & family to Impact.

5700 N.W. 9th Avenue (Powerline Rd.)
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309
Phone (954) 491-1142 • Fax (954) 493-5332