

Equality News

Equality Florida is building a state of equal rights for all Floridians inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Election Recap

TurnOutSM Florida was a Huge Success

Florida's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and supportive (LGBTs) community can be proud of the many successes around last year's election effort. TurnOut Florida was the largest gay-supportive voter mobilization in our nation's history. We mobilized 350,000 voters, some voting for the very first time. "I'm 45, and this is the first time I've ever voted," said Josh B. of Tampa. "I think this is the most important election of my life."

The enthusiastic participation of so many fair-minded voters has allowed Equality Florida to emerge from the 2004 election with a stronger and more diverse support structure.

We spearheaded the historic effort with lead partners Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the Florida Consumer Action Network (FCAN), as well as 35 additional local, state, and national groups. For the first time ever, courageous volunteers across the state walked door-to-door with a gay supportive message.

The unprecedented scale of our election effort was a success in itself:

- Over 100,000 voter registration and absentee ballot materials were mailed to voters.
- Over 150,000 customized and general voters' guides were mailed or handed out.
- More than 49,000 people have visited www.turnoutfl.org (18,000 in October alone).
- Over 13,000 people downloaded our voters' guides from the website.
- Over 60,000 people have received the voters' guides through our media partners.
- Thousands of volunteer and staff hours have been logged to ensure that our families will never be used as political scapegoats again.

It was all made possible by you. In addition to your participation in our election effort, you contributed \$500,000 to make sure we were successful. Those familiar with campaign financing know that this is an extremely cheap price tag to move so many people.

Because of you, we are in the best shape ever to take on the challenges of the year ahead.

Volunteer Spotlight

The following speech was given at one of the Valentine's Day rallies hosted by Equality Florida and local organizations to oppose the marriage prohibition amendment:

"My name is Dick Rogers and this is my life partner Bill Mullins. We have been in love for 41 years. That's 41 years of supporting each other and looking after each other in sickness and in health. That's 41 years of growing a relationship that we would not trade for anything in the world.

A few years ago, Broward County recognized the great value in our relationship and that of other loving couples, and created Domestic Partnership. Bill and I were the first in line to register.

We are both sixty eight years old and, now more than ever, we need the legal protections so many others take for granted, such as: Social Security and pension benefits, inheritance rights, hospital visitation, and many, many more.

We're here to ask you to oppose re-writing Florida's Constitution to discriminate against us. We don't want to see generations of other couples building their lives together only to be seen as legal strangers.

In the meantime Bill and I know in our hearts that we share a great love for each other and for God. We know in his eyes that we are good people and that we do good things. That is why he blessed us with each other.

Dick Rodgers and Bill Mullins



Because we believe "to whom much has been given, much is expected," we have spent a lifetime giving back to our community and our nation. We love our country, we have gladly served our nation and

we are proud to be U.S. Army Veterans. We believe in taking care of the sick, especially those who suffer as a result of their service to our nation. So, in our lives together, we have volunteered over 4,000 hours at the Oakland Park Veterans Administration Clinic.

When we were very young, we recognized the importance of the civil rights movement and felt so strongly about fairness and equality that we marched in the 1960's Civil Rights March on Washington D.C. We stood at the base of the Lincoln Memorial and heard Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. tell us about his dream.

We believed then and we still believe today that fairness and equality for all Americans is fundamental to our way of life. We ask you today to stand with us and oppose writing discrimination into Florida's Constitution. These are our sincere feelings."

— Dick Rodgers and Bill Mullins

Legislative Spotlight:

Far Right Launches Anti-Marriage Ballot Measure

On Valentine's Day 2005, the state Southern Baptist Convention announced the launch of their effort to gather over 1,000,000 petition signatures to enshrine discrimination into the Florida Constitution. The proposed amendment could permanently eliminate ALL legal protections for same-sex couples.

Equality Florida believes that Florida's Constitution was created to protect citizens from discrimination and should not carve out a particular group for unequal treatment under the law.

The impact of this kind of attack is very real. Families will be harmed. Couples who love each other, who take care of each other and take on the obligations of one another need legal protections. And, in many cases, so do their children.

Equality Florida will do everything within our power to stop the amendment effort, but we need you. Sign up for our E-Activist list by visiting www.EQFL.org and we'll keep you informed about what you can do to help.

Progress Made in School Safety Campaign

We are seeing the dividends of 5 years of students lobbying in Tallahassee. For the first time ever, we have bipartisan sponsorship of a Safe Schools bill.

Thanks to your past efforts and support, lawmakers are recognizing that there is a crisis in Florida schools. The most recent data from Florida's Attorney General shows over 14,000 acts of violence occurring on campuses across the state. 1 in 12 students miss a day of school each month due to fear of physical violence.

Lawmakers are also beginning to see that the solution to this crisis is a statewide policy that applies to all schools districts and sets minimum standards for addressing harassment and violence in Florida schools. This awakening is the result of years of dedication and effort by hundreds of courageous students willing to tell their stories year after year.

This year, we will again make our annual journey to the state capital and continue to build on the foundation of those who traveled before. You can join the effort to make schools a safe haven for vulnerable youth through participating in Lobby Day or by meeting with your representative in-district. Contact your Regional Director to get more information today or log onto www.EQFL.org and learn more about the effort.

Challenge Moves Forward

Our efforts to repeal Florida's adoption law continue to pick up steam in the legislature. Florida remains the only state with a law that bars qualified prospective parents from adopting based solely on their sexual orientation.

For the second year, Senator Mandy Dawson has filed a bill (SB 986) that would completely eliminate this discriminatory language from Florida law.

Senator Nan Richs has filed SB 1534 which will allow judges the ability to decide, on a case-by-case basis what is in the best interest of the child being adopted.

Rep. Sheri McInvale has filed a similar bill in the house (HB 633)

Visit our Web site today and add your information to our E-Activists list. We'll send you regular updates on this legislation and other issues important to you.

West Palm Beach Passes Domestic Partnership Policy

In February Commissioners for the City of West Palm Beach adopted legislation that affords certain rights and benefits to qualified committed relationships that have registered with the city.

Registered Domestic Partners in the City of West Palm Beach shall have the following rights:

- Hospital visitation at health care facilities located within, or under the jurisdiction of the City of West Palm Beach;
- The same right as a spouse to make health care decisions for an incapacitated partner;
- The same right as a surviving spouse with regard to funeral/burial decisions and disposition of the decedent partner's body;
- The right to receive notification in those situations where notification of family is mandated or permissible;
- The right to be designated and to serve as a pre-need guardian;
- A dependent of a Registered Domestic Partner shall have the same visitation rights as a patient's child.

Partners need not be West Palm Beach residents. Registration is available either by U.S. mail or in person at City Hall. The registration fee is \$50.00 per couple. For more information, call the City Clerk at 561-822-1210.

Letter from the Chair

Thank you, thank you!

I can't say it enough. Thank you for making the TurnOut Florida campaign a huge success. With your help, we mobilized the LGBT supportive vote like never before and emerged from last year's election with a stronger, more geographically diverse infrastructure.

Because you were willing to step up, we reached our goal of raising \$500,000 and were able to mobilize 350,000 voters across the state. We built the largest coalition of local, state and national organizations ever to mobilize the LGBT supportive vote. More people engaged in our work than ever before as volunteers, donors, online activists and door-to-door canvassers. And we still need you!

We are closer to turning back Florida's anti-gay, anti-child adoption ban than we have been in almost 30 years. Equality Florida has worked closely with Senator Mandy Dawson, Senator Nan Rich and Representative Sheri McInvale to introduce bills that would repeal the adoption ban or allow judges to act in the best interest of the child. With your help we can build support in Tallahassee to pass this legislation.

After five years of talking to lawmakers about the plague of biased-based harassment and violence in Florida's schools, they are finally beginning to recognize the need for a uniform, statewide safe schools policy. We need you to continue your efforts to protect Florida's LGBT students.

In the coming year, marriage discrimination is going to be an issue in Florida whether we like it or not. We must stand against any attempt to embed discrimination in Florida's Constitution. The far right is using our relationships and the love we share with our partners and spouses to create fear in order to build their constituencies and treasure chests.

Our community stepped up last year and we must do it again this coming year. Apathy from our community is just as lethal to achieving equality in Florida as any attack from far-right fundamentalists.

Thank you for stepping up this past year and please keep the momentum going.

Mickey MacIntyre

Equality Florida Board Co-Chair
Florida Council Member



Men of the Abbey Calendar

Support Equality Florida and buy someone a great gift at the same time. Florida Council members Rick Pulsinelli and Johnny Oye have published a 2005 calendar and are donating the net proceeds to Equality Florida. Visit www.MenOfTheAbbey.com.

2005 Florida Council

The Governors' Club (\$10,000 +)

Mickey MacIntyre and
Scollay Petry
Scott Opler Foundation

Florida Cabinet (\$5,000-\$9,999)

Rob Hancock and Bob Schwartz
Andrew Tobias and
Charles Nolan
Doug Mayberry and
Michael Phillip

Florida Senate (\$2,500-\$4,999)

Nadine Smith

Florida House (\$1,000-\$2,499)

Kim Byrd and
Brian Winfield
C. Chad Cronin
Michael Dively
Robert Graham and
Paul Fasana
Brian McNaught and
Raymond Struble
Bill Peters and
Warren Davidson
Stratton Pollitzer and
Christopher Boykin
Rick Pulsinelli and
Johnny Oye
Frank Romano and Joe Lizska

2004 Florida Council

The Governors' Club (\$10,000 +)

Ron Ansin
Tom Blount
Gill Foundation
Human Rights Campaign
George Kessinger -
Georgie s Alibi
Mickey MacIntyre and
Scollay Petry
Scott Opler Foundation
Robert Sanderson and
Dyce Craig
Jon Stryker
Andrew Tobias and
Charles Nolan

Florida Cabinet (\$5,000-\$9,999)

Jon Allen and Martin Kay
Rudy Marn and
Winston Machado
Doug Mayberry and
Michael Phillip
Kathy Richter and Lisa Gladstone
Robert Swartz and Rob Hancock
Coyote Phoenix

Florida Senate (\$2,500-\$4,999)

Jack Campbell and Pablo Andres
Compass
David Da Silva Cornell
Jamie Griffin and John Crossley
Leslie Leonelli and
Heather Carruthers
George Lindeman and Jud Laird
Amy Mandel
PFLAG Sarasota
James Peebles
Stratton Pollitzer and
Christopher Boykin
Wendy Reiner
Frank Romano and Joe Lizska
John Ross
Peter Simon and Ken Colbert
Nadine Smith and Karen Ingram

Florida House (\$1,000-\$2,499)

William Adams and David Alt
Mark Adler
Ray Baker and Joseph Viana
Liane Bennati
Frederick Bertron and
Tim Cregan
Mabry Binnicker
Michael Brill

Leslie Case and Jack Crepeau
Ross Claiborne
William Condon and
George Beaupre
Philip Dearborn
Michael Dively
Tom Dyer
Eunice Fisher
Scott Fraser
Rita Glassman
Ian Gordon
Vicki Gordon
Andrea Graham and
Geoffrey Simon
Harold Harkins Jr.
Dr. Jay Heider
Naila and Michael Hess
Diane Hincley and April Bates
Bart Hofford
Nace Hopple
Island House
H. Scott Huizenga
Steve Kozlowski
Adam Kratochwill and
William Thornton
John Labus
Linda and Phillip Lerner
Scott Linder
Alfred May
Michael Milstein and Eric Hankin
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Palm Beach & Broward
Counties
Pearl's Rainbow
Bill Peters and Warren Davidson
Dana Philp and Jan Rubel
Robert Pope and
Lawrence Conrad
Anthony Quaglieri
John Ramos
Marion Ridley and Mark Lundy
David Ring
Martha Robinson
Frank Romano and Joe Lizska
Tom Runyan
Adrian Russell
Liz Schwartz
Michael Shelton
Caroline Spencer
Ron Spivak and Earl Waters
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Foundation
Robert Tracy
Rose Walton and Marge Sherwin
Roger and
Mary Ann Westerlund
West Florida Growlers
Bert Whitt and Dennis Beaver



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Equality
 is
 Closer
 than you think

St. Pete is New Home of Equality Florida

Equality Florida is proud to announce the relocation of our statewide Headquarters and Central Florida office to St. Petersburg.

Equality Florida has begun to call St. Petersburg "home" for the first time in our 8-year history. The upgraded office space is located in the same building that houses King of Peace Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), at 3150 Fifth Avenue North. The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) will continue to share office space with Equality Florida at the new location.

"This is a great opportunity for Equality

Florida," said Nadine Smith, Executive Director. "The relocation provides us the ability to improve the quality of our office space, reduce our monthly costs and increase our volunteer base."

Another benefit of the move is that the new location will be just a block away from Metro Center, which is quickly becoming the hub of St. Petersburg's vibrant LGBT community.

Donations of quality office furniture, paint, decorations, and relocation funds are greatly appreciated. Call David at (813) 870-3735 x206.

Time to Renew

Your financial support of our work is key to achieving equality in Florida.

Memberships start at just \$35 - Individual and \$50 - Family.

Please renew your annual membership today. Log onto www.EQFL.org and use your MC or Visa to securely donate online TODAY!

(813) 870-3735 x201

Or mail your donation to:

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Visit www.EQFL.org regularly to get up-to-date information on issues important to you.
New office location: 3150 5th Ave. North, Suite 325 • St. Petersburg, FL 33713