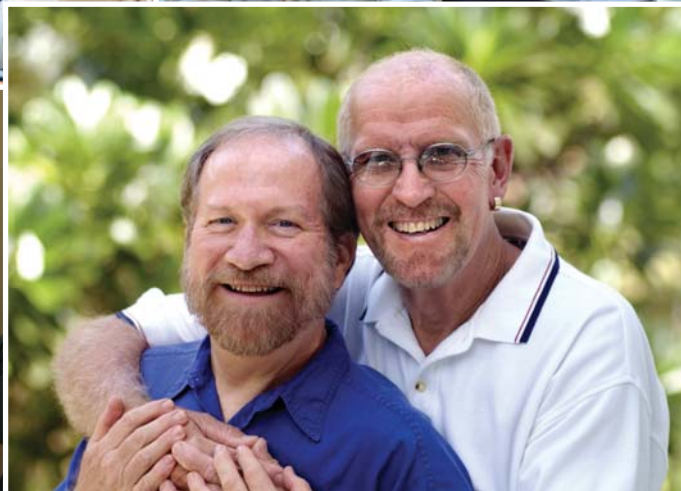




# EQUALITY FLORIDA

WINNING EQUALITY



# WHO WE ARE

Equality Florida is the largest civil rights organization dedicated to securing full equality for Florida's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.

Through lobbying, grassroots organizing, education, and coalition building, we are changing Florida so that no one suffers harassment or discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Equality Florida formed in 1997 as Governor Jeb Bush took office and Florida's state government made a hard turn to the right. In an era of setbacks for progressive causes, Equality Florida has defeated every piece of anti-LGBT legislation filed in Tallahassee for 14 years in a row. These bills included efforts to: overturn all local anti-discrimination policies, repeal all safe schools policies, expand Florida's anti-gay adoption ban, and prohibit domestic partnership benefits and protections.



# HOW WE'RE WINNING EQUALITY

Because Equality Florida has always existed in a hostile political climate, we know how to carve our victories despite strong opposition.

In addition to our work in Tallahassee, we work with our local partners, providing resources and helping to build coalitions that have passed pro-equality laws across the state.

We defend against bad bills and introduce pro-LGBT legislation every single year. Our efforts continue to expand support for our issues across party lines.

For 8 years, we led a broad-based coalition that secured the 2008 passage of the Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act, an anti-bullying law that has resulted in protections from anti-LGBT bullying and harassment for students all across the state.

Equality Florida played a critical role in bringing an end to Florida's 33-year-old anti-gay adoption ban. In addition to years of public education on the harm caused by the ban, we successfully lobbied the Governor and the Department of

Children and Families to immediately end enforcement of the ban and not pursue an appeal to the Supreme Court once the ban was ruled unconstitutional on September 22, 2010.

Under our watch, Florida has led the southeastern United States in passing over 60 local policies outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, banning harassment of LGBT students, and providing domestic partnership benefits to our families. We also lead the region in electing LGBT candidates, with 24 openly LGBT officials holding elected office in Florida as of June 1, 2011.

Through our continuous public education campaigns, we are winning the battle of public opinion with a strong majority of Floridians now supporting nearly every one of our pro-equality issues.

We invite you to take a look at the following pages of *Winning Equality* and see how prominently Florida stands on the national stage of LGBT equality. Your support makes every one of these victories possible.

# RECENT VICTORIES

## 2011: (as of June 1<sup>st</sup>)

- Equality Florida played a leadership role, along with the members of the Orlando Anti-discrimination Ordinance Committee, in the successful two-year effort to add domestic partner benefits for Orange County employees.
- Equality Florida helped lead a successful Broward-based coalition effort to add gender identity and expression to the Broward County School's non-discrimination policy.
- Equality Florida provided critical support to our local partners in the successful effort to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Volusia County Human Rights Ordinance.
- We continued our 14-year streak of defeating anti-gay legislation that has been introduced every year since Equality Florida was formed.
- Equality Florida helped lead the successful effort to create an LGBT inclusive anti-bullying policy in Volusia County schools.

## 2010:

- Equality Florida played a critical role in bringing an end to Florida's 33-year-old anti-gay adoption ban. In addition to years of public education on the harm caused by the ban, we successfully lobbied the Governor and the Department of Children and Families to immediately end enforcement of

the ban and not pursue an appeal to the Supreme Court once the ban was ruled unconstitutional on September 22, 2010.

- We played a major role in electing Gainesville Mayor Craig Lowe, the first out gay mayor of a North Florida city. The election's razor-thin margin, 42 votes, meant that our fundraising, staffing and volunteer organizing efforts were critical.
- Equality Florida spearheaded a successful effort to add domestic partnership benefits in the City of Kissimmee.
- Equality Florida helped lead a coalition effort to pass a human rights ordinance in Leon County that includes sexual orientation and gender identity. The county is home to our state capital, Tallahassee.
- We launched Equality Means Business, a project aimed at spotlighting and increasing the number of Florida employers with LGBT-inclusive anti-discrimination policies. In only its first year, six Fortune 500 companies have joined the advisory board. Visit [EqualityMeansBusiness.org](http://EqualityMeansBusiness.org).
- Equality Florida led a successful effort to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Hillsborough County School District's non-discrimination policy. We also added gender identity to Tampa's human rights ordinance.

## 2009:

- Passed 15 new domestic partnership, anti-discrimination, and safe schools policies in cities and counties across Florida.



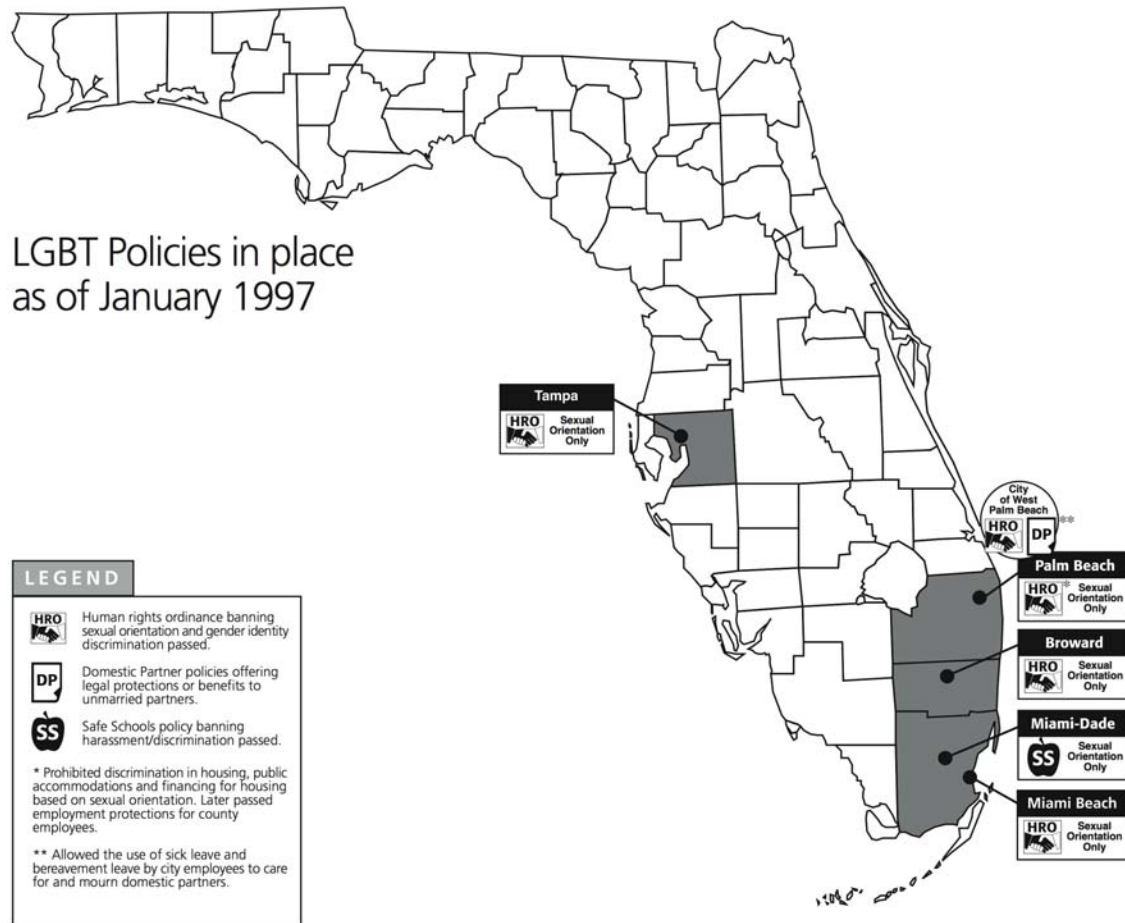
- Equality Florida helped lead the fight to defeat an anti-LGBT campaign to remove sexual orientation and gender identity from Gainesville's human rights ordinance.
- Elected 75% of Equality Florida Action PAC's endorsed champions - including Steve Kornell, the first openly gay City Council member in St. Petersburg, our state's 4th largest city.
- Ensured that a bipartisan majority of Florida's U.S. Representatives voted for the Matthew Shepard / James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act - the first pro-LGBT federal law in our nation's history.
- Fought anti-LGBT attacks by challenging Buju Banton's homophobic concert tour of Florida and staging massive protests of NBC in Tampa for airing anti-gay television programming.

## 2008:

- We passed the Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act, an anti-bullying law that has resulted in protections from anti-LGBT bullying and harassment for students all across the state.

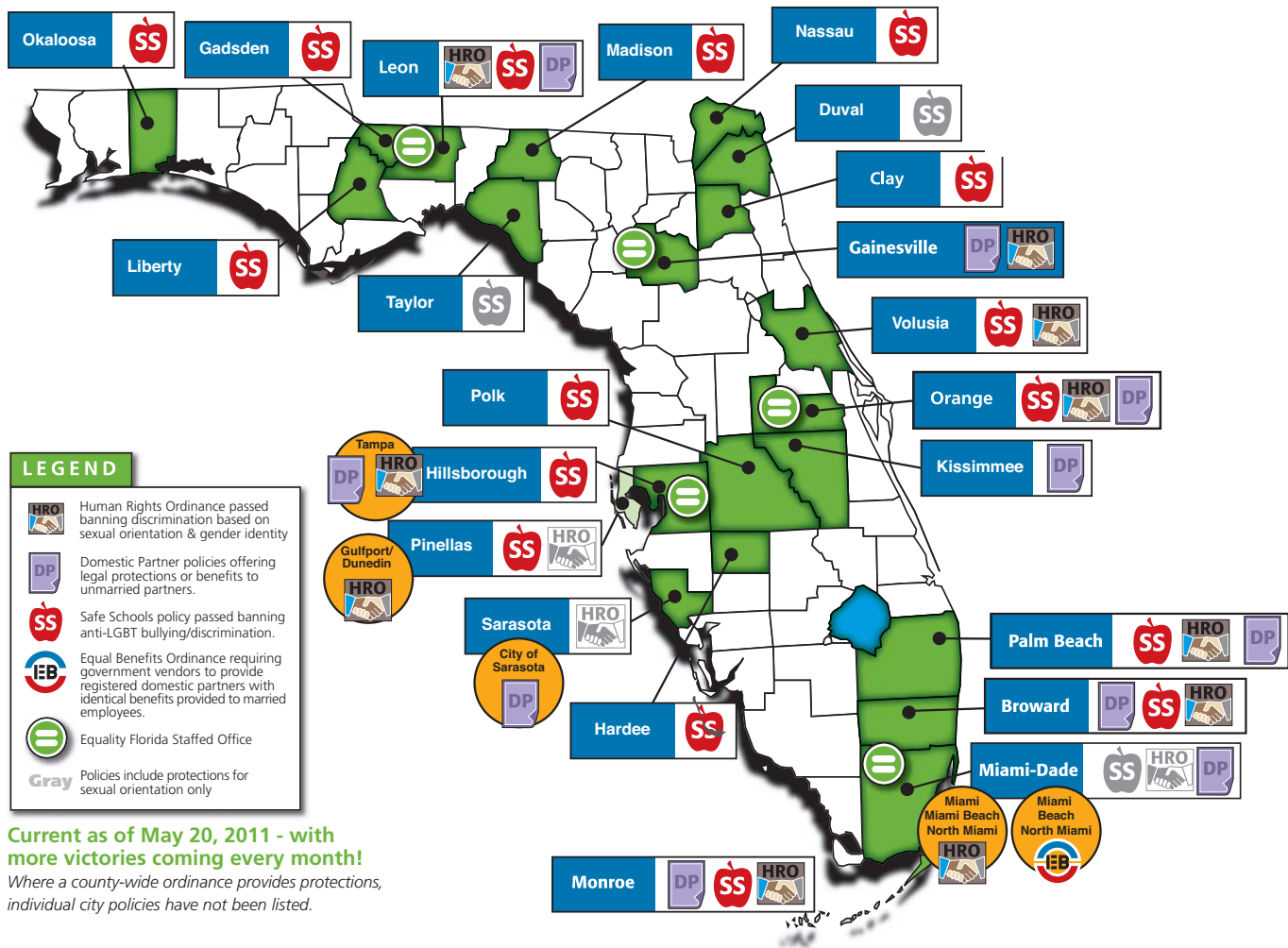
# THEN

Equality Florida formed in 1997 out of a successful effort to stop anti-LGBT extremists in their attempt to repeal Tampa's sexual orientation-inclusive human rights ordinance. This map demonstrates the local policies that were in place prior to Equality Florida's existence. In addition to these local policies, the statewide hate crimes law included sexual orientation protections.



# NOW

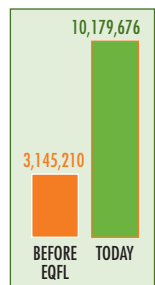
Statewide victories are built on successes at the local level. Equality Florida leads grassroots efforts and we support those of our local partners in cities and counties across Florida to win protections for our community and to defeat anti-gay initiatives. We measure the effectiveness of everything we do by whether it strengthens local organizing. Here is a sample of local successes in Florida:



## OUTLAWING DISCRIMINATION

Florida has passed 26 city and county ordinances banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression.

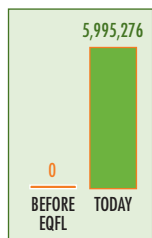
**10,179,676 Floridians** are protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation. **Florida ranks 4th in the nation**, behind California, New York and Illinois, in the number of people protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation.



Number of Floridians protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation

**5,995,276 Floridians** protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. **Florida ranks 5th in the nation**, behind

California, Illinois, New Jersey, and Washington, in the number of people protected from discrimination based on gender identity and expression.



Number of Floridians protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

## STOPPING HATE VIOLENCE

Florida law provides increased penalties for hate crimes based on sexual orientation and has been interpreted to include hate crimes targeting the transgender community as well.\*

During 2009, Equality Florida worked to ensure that a majority of Florida's representatives in Congress voted to pass the Matthew Shepard / James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act - the first federal protections for the LGBT community. **Florida ranks 4th in the nation**, behind California, New York and Texas, in the number of people protected by state hate crimes laws.

*\*Adding explicit protections for gender identity and expression to our state hate crimes statute continues to be a priority.*



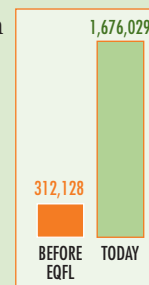
## PROTECTING LGBT STUDENTS

Florida protects more students from anti-LGBT bullying than any other state except California and New York. Eighteen Florida school districts ban harassment and bullying based on sexual orientation and fourteen also ban bullying based on gender identity and expression.

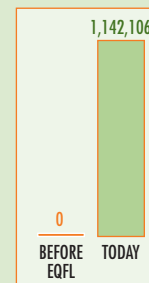
Equality Florida also runs the Florida Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Network, a training and support network for LGBT students. Our Florida GSA Network has been recognized as the nation's fastest growing state network with over 110 GSA clubs across Florida.

**1,676,029 students**

are protected from bullying based on sexual orientation. **Florida ranks 4th in the nation**, behind California, New York and Illinois, in the number of students protected.



Number of Florida students protected based on sexual orientation



Number of Florida students protected based on sexual orientation and gender identity

**1,142,106 students**

are protected from bullying based on gender identity and expression. **Florida ranks 6th in the nation**, behind California, New York, Illinois, North Carolina and New Jersey, in the number of students protected.

## SHIFTING PUBLIC OPINION

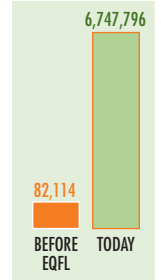
Equality Florida works every day to win the hearts and minds of all Floridians in our march toward full equality.

We coordinate campaigns with local leaders in efforts to pass ordinances, oppose anti-gay ballot measures and win critical elections. We galvanize the media around stories like Attorney General Bill McCullom's outrageous payments to anti-gay George Rekers, who was later caught with a male escort. We bring communities together for discussions and town hall meetings on issues like racism, homophobia, freedom of speech and LGBT family recognition. We work to ensure fair and accurate coverage in the media.



## WINNING DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP RIGHTS

There are 12 Florida cities and counties that provide domestic partnership benefits either through DP registries or public employee benefit programs. These programs reach 1 out of every 3 Floridians.



Number of Floridians with access to Domestic Partnerships

### 6,747,796 Floridians

live in communities that provide access to domestic partnership benefits and/or protections through their city or county governments (and millions more have access through their employers).

### Florida ranks 7th in the nation

in the number of LGBT people living in communities that recognize domestic partnerships, behind California, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

## ELECTING PRO-EQUALITY CHAMPIONS

**Equality Florida Supporters - 156,000**

**Pro-LGBT Voter File - 350,000**

Nearly everything we fight for depends on the election of fair-minded politicians. We have built the largest voter file ever assembled to mobilize the LGBT vote in Florida - over 350,000 pro-equality voters. Every election cycle, we screen thousands of candidates and distribute hundreds of thousands of voter guides to ensure our community and our allies are informed and turn out to vote.

Additionally, Equality Florida Action PAC works to elect out LGBT candidates and politicians who champion LGBT equality. Number of LGBT elected officials in Florida - 24, **the most in the south and 6th highest in the nation.**

*Data used in this report is current as of June 1, 2011.*

# HISTORIC HIGHLIGHTS

Some victories stand out above the rest. Here are some of our proudest victories on behalf of Florida's LGBT and allied community.

## ADOPTION

Equality Florida played a critical role in bringing an end to Florida's 33-year-old anti-gay adoption ban. In addition to years of public education on the harm caused by the ban, we successfully lobbied the Governor and the Department of Children and Families to immediately end enforcement of the ban and not pursue an uncertain appeal to the Supreme Court once the ban was ruled "unconstitutional" on September 22, 2010.

## SAFE SCHOOLS

Equality Florida's ten year effort to make schools safe for LGBT students led to the 2008 passage of the Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act. This anti-bullying law has resulted in protections from anti-LGBT bullying and harassment for millions of students across the state.

## HATE CRIMES

Equality Florida has worked with local and state law enforcement for 14 years to ensure anti-LGBT hate crimes are made visible and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. In 2007, 24-year-old Ryan Skipper was murdered in an anti-gay hate crime. With the support of Ryan's family and friends, we challenged unsubstantiated and irresponsible accusations by the Polk County Sheriff and we hosted memorial rallies in 13 Florida cities and Washington DC. Over 1,000 supporters came out to honor and remember Ryan and all victims of hate crimes.



## LOBBYING

Equality Florida has provided a voice for Florida's LGBT community during legislative session in Tallahassee every year since our founding and we continue our 14-year streak of never allowing an anti-LGBT bill to pass the Florida Legislature and become law.

## ELECTIONS

Our Equality Florida Action PAC has helped elect out LGBT politicians since 2004. Today, we lead the southeast region in electing LGBT candidates, with 24 openly LGBT officials holding elected offices in Florida as of May 2011.

## LOCAL SUCCESS

Under our watch, Florida has led the southeastern United States in passing over 60 local policies outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, banning bullying of LGBT students, and providing domestic partnership benefits to our families.



EqualityFlorida.org

For more information, contact:

Equality Florida  
hr@eqfl.org  
(813) 870-3735  
PO Box 13184

St. Petersburg, FL 33733