

Help Bill H-247 to Pass

If you would like to get involved in helping pass H. 247, here are some suggestions of what you can do:

1.) Call your Representative by calling the toll free number for the Sergeant-at-Arms at the state house in Montpelier. That number is 1-800-322-5616. Leave a message for your Representative asking that they support H.247. If you do not know who your representative is, the Sergeant-at-Arms can tell you. You will probably be asked to leave your name. If you are uncomfortable doing that, tell the Sergeant-at-Arms. You can even tell them why, but ask that your Representative still be given the message.

You can also leave a message for members of the Judiciary Committee, asking that they support H. 247. Their names follow this article.

2. Write a letter to your Representative. If you do not want to sign it, explain why. This can be a very powerful illustration of the need for protective legislation.

Send a copy of any letters you write to the Coalition's lobbying committee c/o : RFD 1, Box 5620, Worcester, VT 05682, so that they know which representatives have been contacted.

3. Ask your family and friends to call and write in support of our civil rights.

4. Try to get any organizations that you are a member of or in contact with to endorse H. 247. If possible, get a written endorsement. Invite them to submit written testimony to the Judiciary Committee. Again, please send any endorsements or testimonies to the lobbying committee at the above address.

5. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper. If you see a negative letter, one from the opposition, respond to it. If you do not want to or cannot respond to it, please notify the Coalition's media people, Howdy at 453-2218 or Susan at 234-9589 and they will arrange a response.

6. Get involved. This is our struggle - our State - our lives. Think of all that we have to gain. Think of all the fear of being who we are that we can get rid of. The work of organizing is hard. The tasks are many. Please do all that you can. Consider getting involved with the Coalition and one of its working committees. To do so,

since I worked politically with men. I was skeptical at first, But my experience working with the men within the Vermont Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men has been very positive. It appears that our community has come a long way in learning how to work together. Women that do

State Coalition Approves L/G Rights Bill

By Carrie Coy

Sixty-five people at the Statewide Coalition meeting in South Royalton on Sunday, February 2, unanimously agreed to endorse the introduction of a Lesbian/Gay Civil Rights Bill into the legislature. The bill was introduced Tuesday, February 10 by Representative Mique Glitman in the General Assembly.

The Legislative Subcommittee of the Statewide Coalition drafted the bill using the same definitions used in the federal bill. The bill proposes to add the words, "affectional or sexual orientation" to existing anti-discrimination statues on employment, banking, insurance, credit, and housing. Statutes which don't specifically mention gender, such as the adoption statute, were not included in the scope of the bill.

Separate men's and women's meetings were held in the morning to debate the merits of introducing the bill now. During the separate and joint discussions, several people noted the need to distinguish general support for gay civil rights from support for a bill during this session. People discussed the certainty of renewed harassment, remobilization of ERA opposition groups, attacks in the press, and abuse in the workplace and small towns.

The men's group agreed that not only is there a need to actively support visible members of a lobbying effort but also that many individuals need to get involved. Letters to newspapers and representatives from a variety of people are essential in creating a perception of widespread support. People willing to testify before the House Judiciary Committee, with or without bags on their heads, are needed.

contact Howdy or Susan. Everyone of us can make a difference, especially in Vermont.

Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

Betty Nuovo, Middlebury, Chair
Amy Davenport, Montpelier, Vice-chair
Timothy Van Zandt, Springfield
Anne Batten, Hardwick
Lixi Fortna, Warren
Mique Glitman, Burlington
Orlan Campbell, Manchester
Sally Fox, Essex
Paul Haanan, Holland
Vi Luginbuhl, South Burlington
Robert Paolini, Waterbury

not wish to work with men might want to know that on the days the Coalition meets, there is always a separate meeting of LOV, Lesbians of Vermont. I have found both the LOV meetings and the Coalition meetings very productive and positive. Please join us.

The amount of work in a successful lobbying effort was emphasized. One person noted that we are inviting attention by introducing the bill and we must be prepared to respond as a community to both attacks and honest inquiries for information.

Favorable reactions from incumbent legislators influenced the group's decision. The House Judiciary Committee seems to be generally supportive of the bill. Terje Anderson reported favorable reactions to the proposed legislation from several powerful legislators.

Heather Wishisk - who was voted in as the new female Co-Liaison to the Governor for Gay/Lesbian Concerns - stressed that the bill didn't have to pass to consider the effort successful. Emphasizing that passage of Wisconsin's bill took eleven years of repeated introductions, she said a respectable hearing by the House Judiciary Committee should be the Coalition's goal for this session.

In other business, Beth Dingman, outgoing Co-Liaison to the Governor, noted that her job had been very informal and communication with the Governor had been sporadic. The group discussed expectations of the liaisons. Two meetings a year with the Governor, more frequent meetings with her staff and formal monthly updates to the Governor's Office were agreed upon as goals. Terje Anderson and Heather emphasized the need for input from the gay community and feedback from the Coalition. Terje, who was recently contracted as Executive Director of Vermont CARES, will continue as the male Co-Liaison.

Strategy planning sessions for the lobbying effort replaced the scheduled afternoon workshops. The group divided into six committees: Media, Education, Fundraising, Networking, Testifying and Lobbying and met to develop plans.

The media committee became designated spokepeople for the Coalition. All inquiries from the press and legislators will be referred to either this committee or the chairpeople of other committees. Members of this committee appeared at a press conference with Mique Glitman when the bill was introduced.

The Education committee is putting together an informational packet for each legislator to be delivered after the bill is assigned a hearing date.

The Lobbying committee focused on testifying strategies and different ways for people to express their support for the bill.

The group was divided on the need for fund raising. It decided to leave any money raising efforts to the initiative of individuals.

If you are interested in more information on any of these committees and their activities, or ways in which you can become involved, contact "Out In The Mountains".