



Action of the Month: BGLT Equality

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

Washington Office for Advocacy
Congregational Advocacy and Witness

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"You're under arrest." Kate Burns and Sheila Schroeder of First Unitarian Denver wanted to get married. Instead they were arrested in 2007 for applying for a marriage license. Charlie Howard, a UU from Bangor, Maine, would have turned 48 on January 31, 2009. However, he was dropped from a bridge and later died in 1984. Who knows what he would have accomplished in the last 24 years? As a Navy Captain in the U.S. Military, Captain Joan Darrah was forced to keep her partner a secret for fear of losing her job.

The hardships experienced by these Unitarian Universalists have been due to their sexuality or gender identity. You can make a difference in their lives and the lives of many others by **Lobbying for BGLT Equality**.



Take Action

Join UUs across the nation in **Lobbying for BGLT Equality**. Visit your Representative or Senator's district or national office and ask them to support BGLT equality by working on the following issues: Repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell; supporting the Employment Non-Discrimination Act; Marriage Equality; and stricter Hate Crimes enforcement. Unitarian Universalists have a long history of supporting BGLT equality and we hope you will continue to offer your support. Lobbying isn't as difficult as it sounds. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Face-to-face meetings with your elected officials are the most influential form of advocacy.
- Lobby visits are best done in groups of 3-5 individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- Plan ahead! Most offices are happy to accommodate lobby meeting requests but due to the busy nature of the office it can take 1-3 weeks to schedule.
- Research your Representative or Senator's stance on the issue and come up with key points that you would like to discuss.
- Bring a packet of supporting materials about the issues to leave with the office. A one pager about the bill and supporting documents allow the Member of Congress to follow up on the issue.
- Expect to be received by a staff person, not the member of congress with a meeting lasting between fifteen to twenty minutes. This does not diminish the value of the visit, staff speak regularly with your member of congress and can present very strong arguments on your behalf.

Visit uua.org/socialjustice to register your visit. Enter the relevant information about your lobby visit and as you conduct your lobby visits across the country, the Washington Office for Advocacy staff will follow up on your district visits here in D.C. We also want to know what happens after your visit. Take pictures of your group and/or write about your experience and send it to us at la_bgl@uua.org.

Congregational Success

For the past five years, Revs. Phyllis LeNoir Hubbell and John Parker Manwell have worked together for BGLT equality through direct action. Each year they have brought UUs in Maryland to the statehouse to lobby for BGLT equality. In recent years the lobby day has focused on marriage equality, but other BGLT issues such as hospital visitation have also been addressed. To accomplish their goal Revs. Hubbell and Manwell developed liaisons in local churches who then worked with them to create an inspirational and educational campaign about BGLT issues. Each February UUs from across Maryland participated in Equality Maryland's annual lobby day. Each year 25 or more UUs attended the event that included a rally at the capitol. Many churches across Maryland have been active in the lobby day, but most notably, Cedar Lane, Baltimore and Silver Spring. Revs. Hubbell and Manwell's dedication to BGLT rights and their annual lobby day have contributed to the passage of legislation to prohibit discrimination in housing and public accommodations.