

THE PFLAG NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

# PFLAGpole

WINTER  
2017



## #Take One Step

## A Path Toward Inclusion and Equality

MOVING FORWARD, ONE STEP AT A TIME...

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Elections matter, and this election left many people questioning if the core American value of the inherent worth and dignity of all people is truly shared by everyone in our country. So many friends and loved ones have quietly shared with me their heartbreak at the thought it might not be.

While the thought breaks my heart too, every single day I hear stories of PFLAGers finding their moments of courage—courage to effect change in another person’s heart, courage to educate a community, courage to change laws in favor of fairness—and these stories fill me with hope. They are a daily reminder of the millions of people who share PFLAG’s vision of America, a vision that centers around our shared values of dignity, fairness, and inclusion.

I have undertaken a somewhat crazy personal project of reading the biographies of all of our Presidents in order of their administration. There is a consistent theme that emerges as you look at the history of our country: that *the people* should have a voice in America’s destiny. History shows us that since our nation’s founding, we have collectively struggled to ensure that *all* people have that opportunity. We have been charged with striving for a more perfect union, even as we are repeatedly reminded that democracy is messy, gloriously inelegant, and that its success is our shared responsibility.

There is a prophetic quote from Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes which says, “A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.” We know that to be true given our lived experiences and personal journeys to acceptance or authentic

living. Stretching ourselves—and helping others to expand their own reach and embrace of new ideas, concepts, and values—takes work, work which PFLAGers take on as part of a mission-based value of meeting people where they are. The steps needed to effect this kind of change must be taken one at a time, whether they are baby-sized or full leaps but, once taken, minds are stretched, and there is no turning back.

The same is true of our country, and the steps that we take as PFLAGers—to stretch ourselves, to help others do

so—cannot be undone, even when it feels that the tide of progress is moving in reverse. We know our values, we demonstrate them daily, and through our actions, we will ensure that our country never returns to its old dimensions.



**Elizabeth Kohm**  
Interim Executive Director,  
PFLAG National

## PFLAG National Unity and Inclusion Policy

*Approved December 2016*

**From its founding in 1972 to its work today, PFLAG’s membership of LGBTQ people, families, and allies have united in love, embracing each other and people whose communities are often marginalized, erased or ignored.**

PFLAG reaffirms that unity and inclusion and a shared commitment to human dignity of all people are critical to fight discrimination and bigotry in any form so that all families can live free of fear. We commit to fight for fairness inclusive of people’s sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, socioeconomic position, religion, level of mental or physical ability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other perceived or actual characteristic.

PFLAG also reaffirms its commitment to this goal which requires us to learn

to be the allies that communities need. We commit to better educate ourselves, listen to others, and engage in critical conversations, ensuring that we model the inclusive behavior we wish to see in the world.

We will be more inclusive allies to create space for voices that might not otherwise be heard and amplify personal stories so that the storytellers are visible. We will listen attentively and actively, and speak out with due diligence and clear conviction, across all barriers and borders, to ensure that all people are included, respected, and treated equally.



Ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu said: “Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.”

For PFLAG, the journey towards building a more welcoming world for all families—inclusive of their background—has been a long one, starting with that one small step taken by Jeanne Manford nearly 45 years ago. Since then, we’ve taken continued steps toward further inclusion, from recognizing the ways in which services may need to be provided, to offering groups to support communities of color, to providing translations of resources.

These efforts, however, while well-intentioned, have not always achieved the intended goals: Sometimes they did not successfully connect with the people who needed them most, while other times, they remained untapped because awareness of PFLAG’s programs and materials didn’t exist. We acknowledge past disconnects but do so with a renewed passion to learn from past experiences in order to achieve our desired goals of broadening the PFLAG family.

In Fall 2016, the PFLAG National Board took a step on a new, exciting journey toward meeting and surpassing our diversity and inclusion goals, and we are inviting you—our PFLAG members and supporters—to understand those goals, the efforts we are making to achieve them and, most importantly, how you are an integral part of those efforts.

First, though, some background: A Diversity and Inclusion Task Force was established on the PFLAG National board in 2014, with the intent of identifying key issues and areas throughout the organization that would be developed to refocus our

efforts. With me in the chairperson role, its members included people who have taught learning sessions as part of PFLAG Academy Online and at the 2015 Convention, with Jean-Marie Navetta, PFLAG National’s Director of Learning & Inclusion acting as a staff liaison to the group.

The dedicated and committed members of the Task Force met several times, charted what was working (and what wasn’t), and ultimately we helped provide an honest forum for much-needed internal discussion.

We quickly came to realize that a task force wouldn’t be sufficient for all that we are committed to doing: Task Forces are focused on short-term projects, and it was clear that supporting diverse families is a long-term effort. At the September 2016 board meeting, we converted to a permanent board committee.

Now, we are taking action.

First, we’ve clarified our goals: We will focus on innovating ways for PFLAG (at every level, from National Board to the chapter network) to become more culturally humble and to better welcome and support communities of color and diverse families. We will also find ways to better support people with disabilities, people of diverse faith-based and non faith-based traditions, and other dimensions of difference. We will also leverage technology to support our efforts and make them more widespread and accessible.

Second, we’ve established three key workflow areas: Chapter network support, external partnerships, and leadership education. Each of these will provide ways for committee members, myself included, to amplify our skills and leverage our backgrounds to advance the work on parallel tracks.

Third, while identifying long-term ways to make PFLAG more inclusive is critical, it is even more important that we assess what we have and what we know to start delivering help immediately.

**However, this effort isn’t something we can do alone, and this is where I’m personally asking for your help. Reach out to us at [inclusion@pflag.org](mailto:inclusion@pflag.org), and tell us more about the work you’re doing and how PFLAG National can further support you.** Does your chapter have a great diversity-focused program or have you created unique spaces for diverse families? Is there a specific issue you want to learn more about, but don’t have the right connections? Are you a PFLAGer who has experience working in diverse communities, and able to add your expertise to our efforts? Tell us now, at [inclusion@pflag.org](mailto:inclusion@pflag.org).

Finally, the Board has voted on and approved the PFLAG National Unity and Inclusion Policy (see sidebar, left) which emphatically restates and reaffirms our commitment—and PFLAG’s commitment—to be passionate and resolute allies to all people who have been in any way marginalized.

It is my hope and ambition that this committee will offer a way to rebuild efforts, innovate new programs, and reach more people than ever before to continue to make PFLAG an organization for all families. I’m looking forward to walking this journey with all of you.



**Robert A. Marchman**  
Chair, Diversity and Inclusion Committee  
Member, PFLAG National Board of Directors





## The Year in Advocacy

It's hard to look at the incredible wins of 2016 and not be reminded of the current conditions of 2017, and what's to come ahead. Reflection, however, is critical in the fight for equality, for it allows us to see what we did that worked, what we need to do differently, and how far we've come together in the fight.

- We saw landmark federal LGBTQ protections and statements put forward through Administrative rules and regulations, and Executive statements of support. These included [the rule issued by HHS ensuring nondiscrimination in healthcare](#), and the [federal guidance issued jointly by the Departments of Justice and Education](#) urging public schools to recognize students in accord with their gender identity. ([The Title IX guidance was recently rescinded by the new administration](#); PFLAGers everywhere have taken up the cause, reminding school districts that Title IX is still very much in effect, and telling students, "[Claim Your Rights!](#)")
- Bills such as [the Do No Harm Act](#) were put forward, offering hope to restore the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) to match Congress's original intent to grant all individuals equal respect and protection under the law. PFLAG spoke at the launch news conference and at the Congressional briefing.
- Longtime PFLAG friend, former Congressman Mike Honda, grandfather of a transgender girl, created and chaired The Transgender Working Group of The LGBT Equality Caucus. PFLAG National was a featured speaker at its launch, and [PFLAG National board member](#)



[Catherine Hyde testified as a witness at an historic Congressional forum.](#)

- PFLAG partnered with the [Department of Justice Community Relations Service to help educate and train law enforcement on how to work with the transgender and gender-expansive community.](#)
- The Stonewall Inn was designated an [historic landmark through our country's National Parks system](#), and, through federal legislation sponsored by Congressman Joseph Crowley, [a U.S. federal post office in Jackson Heights, Queens was named for PFLAG founder Jeanne Manford and her husband Jules.](#)
- LGBTQ people and allies fought against a record [200-plus anti-LGBTQ bills in 33 states](#). These included bills to allow individuals to apply their personally held religious beliefs to wield discrimination against LGBTQ people; and bills to restrict public accommodations access to transgender and gender-expansive people across generations and locations. PFLAG National

supported chapters coast-to-coast, with talking points, coalition conferences, printed palm cards, and more.

- [NC's HB2 still stands as law](#) after a divisive special session held in the legislature failed to push through a repeal which, behind the scenes, had been suggested would be successful. The new governor has said he has plans to repeal the law.
- In [Georgia](#) and in [South Dakota](#) PFLAGers successfully helped beat back anti-LGBTQ legislation. In Fairfax County, Virginia, PFLAGers [continue their work in support of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in their schools.](#)
- [PFLAG Orlando](#) and [PFLAG National](#) partnered with the DOJ and local organizations to support the many people—in particular Latinx families—whose loved ones' lives were taken at PULSE nightclub. Chapters across the country came together to provide support in a time of need for so many.

**Ready to continue this work? Join the PFLAG National Rapid Response Team, so that you can take immediate steps on behalf of LGBTQ people in this country, anytime and anywhere action is needed in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead. [Visit pflag.org/rapidresponse](#) to get started.**

## The Chapter Hub

After hearing from our members about their frustration with the lack of a method for timely control of their chapter information, PFLAG National launched the new PFLAG Chapter Hub. Offering chapter leaders real-time control of their information in a new and truly comprehensive way, the chapter hub **freed chapter leaders' time to focus on the support, education, and advocacy work that is at the heart of chapter activities across the country.**

The PFLAG Chapter Hub puts PFLAG chapter leaders and members in the driver's seat, with a system that is easy to use, super intuitive...and puts the power of information into their hands. Reporting is a crucial piece of work for all chapters and provides PFLAG National critical information on how to

support network volunteer efforts, and then share news of those efforts with others across the country. The PFLAG Chapter Hub further connects PFLAG's hundreds of chapters, giving members and supporters an opportunity to see how their work is an integral part of advancing PFLAG's mission.

Chapter leaders need only visit [pflag.force.com](#) to get started...and can contact their [Regional Director](#) or [PFLAG National Field Managers for support](#). One more way PFLAG National supports the network of chapters that is the bedrock of the PFLAG mission.

## Care with Pride™

PFLAG National partnered for a fifth year with Straight for Equality™ in the Workplace honorees the Johnson & Johnson Family of Consumer Companies on Care with Pride™. Care with Pride supports PFLAG, and elevates PFLAG's mission of supporting people who are LGBTQ, and working to create safer schools for all students.

This year's theme—[#LoveHasNoLabels](#)—focused on bias, prejudice, and inclusion, a major focus of PFLAG's work. In addition to participating with PFLAG in Pride marches, and offering PFLAG's anti-bullying materials on the [Care with Pride™ website](#), the activation once again included the Donate A Photo component of the campaign, with nearly 10,000 people sharing close to 20,000 photos to support PFLAG's safe schools and anti-bullying work.

We thank our friends at Johnson & Johnson for their continued commitment to creating a world where all people, LGBTQ and allies, are valued, respected, and safe.



## #TakeOneStep...

PFLAG founder Jeanne Manford took a step in support of her gay son at a time when it was entirely unsafe for her to do so. In the spirit of our Unity and Inclusion Policy (see p. 2), PFLAG members and supporters must be ready to act each day, uniting in support of LGBTQ people and all marginalized communities. There is power in numbers, and when families, allies, and LGBTQ people work together, there is nothing that can't be accomplished.

### Here are small actions YOU can take, any time, to make a difference.

- Stay vigilant and educated about hate groups, [courtesy of our friends at the Southern Poverty Law Center](#).
- When you hear derogatory slurs or jokes, about any marginalized group, say something—and don't tell them yourself.
- Keep the pressure on: [Find the contact information for your state and federal officials](#). From nominees to legislation, it's a crucial time to use the power of your zip code and make your voice heard.
- Write a letter to the editor of your newspaper as to why you support respectful and equal treatment for LGBTQ people.
- Belong to a faith community? Meet with the head of your congregation and talk about why your community needs to be more welcoming and affirming.
- Be sure to check out PFLAG's Policy Matters newsletter for bi-weekly advocacy actions to take. Sign up to stay informed at [pflag.org/stay-informed](#).
- Donate an LGBTQ-themed book or film to your local library or school.
- Do something good for yourself. [Remember Audre Lorde's words: self care is not self indulgence, it's self preservation.](#)
- Share a fact with a friend about [Black/African-American History Month...but not just in February](#). Share stories of civil rights champions like [Bayard Rustin](#) and [Rep. John Lewis](#).
- Confirm that the news you share on social media is from a reliable and trustworthy news source.
- Revisit a PFLAG publication, or read a new one. Find them all at [pflag.org/publications](#).
- Sign up for a learning session with [PFLAG Academy Online](#).
- Connect with a non-LGBTQ local group and discover common ground and goals.
- Volunteer to read an LGBTQ childrens' book aloud at the local library. Visit [pflag.org/transkids-books](#) for a list of suggestions.

Grab your phone, record your personal story in two minutes or less, and share it on social media (and then send it to PFLAG National to share again!).



SHARE

Visit [pflag.org/news](#) and read about the work PFLAGers across the country are doing. And then share it with others.



- Buycott, don't boycott. Check out [HRC's Corporate Equality Index](#) and see where your favorite companies stand.
- Take one of [Harvard's Project Implicit implicit bias tests](#). Many to choose from on a variety of issues, and be open to what the outcome might teach you.
- [Make a small donation to PFLAG](#) in honor of a friend.
- Read a book by or about marginalized people of different races, faiths, genders, etc., then share them with friends. [Here's a fantastic list of books on different races to get you started](#), for readers of all ages.
- Learn more about bringing in new allies with [this great on-demand learning session from PFLAG Academy Online](#).
- Is your faith community inclusive? Let the neighborhood know by flying a rainbow flag, or hanging a banner outside.
- March is Women's History Month. Share a fact about a woman who made history on your social media feed today. [Why not start with PFLAG founder, and mother of the LGBTQ ally movement, Jeanne Manford?](#)

- There are numerous resources for LGBTQ people who are also part of the disabled community. [Share a resource with others in need](#), in honor of Developmental Disabilities Awareness month (March).
- Find and share information about a community event that will help educate about the lived realities of people who are LGBTQ.
- Mark your calendar for March 31 and the International Transgender Day of Visibility, a day to celebrate the community and raise awareness about anti-trans discrimination.
- Create and share a resource that will educate allies and others about the meaning of [common LGBTQ flags and symbols](#).
- Share the [Straight Ally Spectrum](#) section of the Straight for Equality website on your social media feed to help potential allies figure out where they are in their own ally journey.

Recognize your neighbor but never introduced yourself? Do it today: You might meet a new community collaborator in the process.



- Print out an ["I'm a straight ally because..."](#), ["I need a straight ally because..."](#), or [trans ally](#) postcard, print it out, fill it in, and post it to social media. Let people know where you stand.

- Support and frequent small businesses owned by people from marginalized communities, from restaurants to bookstores and beyond.

Join the PFLAG National Rapid Response Team to be on call to make a difference, with legislator lookup, talking points, and frequent legislative updates. Sign up at [pflag.org/rapidresponse](#).



- The next time you have an ally slip-up, own it, make an apology, and then put that apology into action by changing the behavior in the future.
- Confirm that the places you hold meetings and do business are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- Plan an outing to a museum, gallery, or exhibit that celebrates art and artifacts from a culture, faith, race, gender, sexuality or other background different from your own.
- How diverse is your city? [Research your demographics here](#) to get a clearer picture of the diversity—or lack thereof—where you live. Use that information to inform your outreach to advertise your next chapter meeting.

## 2016: The Year in Review

PFLAG National had explosive chapter growth across the country, an expansion of our Straight for Equality program and PFLAG Online Academy learning sessions, and an advocacy slate that was full-to-bursting with meetings at all levels of government. All of these—combined with the launch of the brand-new [pflag.org](http://pflag.org)—have set a strong foundation for the crucial work to come in 2017.

### EXPANDING EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE



Our Straight for Equality® project reached more people than ever before, bringing new allies into workplaces, faith communities, and cities and towns across the country.

**74** learning sessions delivered

**13** events booked

**20** new clients

**11** PFLAG Academy Online sessions

### CREATING THRIVING CHAPTERS



**20** new chapters

**400+** chapters in total



## FEDERAL ADVOCACY

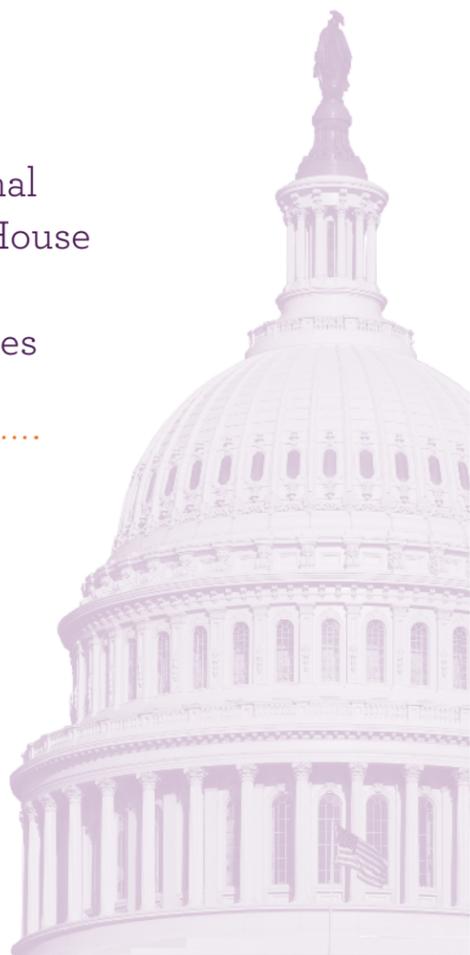
**110** White House and administrative meetings

**10** Congressional and White House events with speaking roles

**609** Congressional visits

**6** federal comments filed on rules and regulations

**179** coalition meetings, actions, and sign-on letters



## We Are the Change: The PFLAG National 2017 Convention

We're headed to the beautiful Pacific Northwest! *We Are the Change: The 2017 PFLAG National Convention* will be held in Portland, Oregon at the Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront. Plan to join us for the weekend as PFLAGers from across the country connect, converse, and collaborate in support of protecting the advances we've made, and working together to ensure that our progress is not reversed. We'll have a weekend full of learning opportunities, peer-to-peer networking, and a day of volunteering in the local community via PFLAG Gives Back.

Portland is Oregon's largest city, known for its parks, bridges, and bicycle paths, as well as for its eco-friendliness, its microbreweries, and coffeehouses. Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront is in a fantastic location with all that Portland offers at your doorstep, and the Pacific Northwest is a beautiful place to escape, no matter which part of the country you're traveling from.

Now is your opportunity to get the absolute lowest registration rate possible, \$175.00 for members. But act fast, because this low, low rate is only available until March 31, 2017.

Ready to enjoy the convention—and a vacation—of a lifetime? Visit [pflag.org/2017convention](http://pflag.org/2017convention) now to register!



**1** brand new website

[pflag.org](http://pflag.org), the comprehensive online resource for all things PFLAG, launches!



### PFLAG ON SOCIAL MEDIA

 **>60K** Twitter followers

**>76K** Facebook likes 

### HOT!

PFLAG National teamed up with Jenn-Air for year three of HOT!, a fundraiser to support PFLAG National's work and mission. Held at the Jenn-Air Showroom in midtown Manhattan, the event featured gourmet hors d'oeuvres, refreshing summer cocktails and artisan chocolates courtesy of acclaimed chocolatier, Chef Jacques Torres. Fredrik Eklund, star of BRAVO TV's "Million Dollar Listing New York" was the evening's special guest.

*All images by Dia Dipasupil/Getty Images.*



Bravo TV personality Fredrik Eklund looks on as Jenn-Air brand marketing director Brian J. Maynard auctions off a HOT! item in support of PFLAG National.



Guests mixed and mingled as the sun set on this fun event, which celebrated the penultimate day of summer 2016.

# PFLAG National Scholarships

For 15 years running, PFLAG National and its generous funding partners have made it possible for young changemakers from across the country—all of whom have worked tirelessly on programs, projects, and activities aimed at making schools and communities safe and welcoming—to advance their education and continue that important work.

Through funding from corporate donors, including Gays, Lesbians and Allies at Dow (GLAD) Employee Network, Walmart, and Lockheed Martin, and generous individual donors, PFLAG National provides crucial support to the next generation of leaders, giving them opportunities for secondary learning they might not have otherwise.

Throughout the coming months, we'll be highlighting this year's scholarship recipients on the PFLAG National blog. We look forward to sharing their accomplishments, accolades, and aspirations with you.

Ready to fund the next generation of LGBTQ and ally leaders? Visit [pflag.org/scholarshipgiving](https://pflag.org/scholarshipgiving), or contact Director of Development Amy Serafino [[aserafino@pflag.org](mailto:aserafino@pflag.org) / 202-683-9308] for more information.

Thank you to our partners for their generous support.

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