

President's Message



FBI/LGBTQ SUMMIT

Sometimes a meeting isn't just a meeting. It's a milestone. That's the way it felt at the First Annual LGBT Summit hosted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. That's right--the FBI. Representatives from 25 LGBTQ organizations, including PFLAG Los Angeles, met on July 29th with an array of law enforcement officials. Deidre Fike of the FBI, Sheriff Jim McDonnell of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department and Asst. Chief Beatrice Girmala of the LAPD represented law enforcement together with a number of LGBT officers and agents from their various departments. The purpose of the meeting was to talk about the response to mass casualty incidents, including Orlando and San Bernardino, and to ask the question "what are we getting wrong."

Participants answered that question honestly. When an African American pastor challenged Asst. Chief Girmala to bring a community meeting to South Los Angeles, she replied: "Thanks for putting me on the spot. Our next meeting will be in your church."

As many at the meeting pointed out, relations between law enforcement and the LGBT community are still strained. But it was encouraging to hear, for example, that the FBI has an Association

of LGBT Employees and Allies (whose logo is a rainbow fingerprint). Representatives from this group went to Orlando to brief FBI Victims Assistance officers on the special needs of LGBTQ victims and their families, including the reality that some of the casualties came out in death and that families of choice are as important to LGBTQ persons as biological families.

It was a surprise to most of us that the FBI has a robust victims assistance program. Drawing on community resources from city and county emergency plans, Victims Assistance agents organize one-stop-shopping centers in Orlando and San Bernardino. These centers provided an enormous range of services including transportation vouchers from airlines, hotel rooms, counseling services, contact with mortuaries, help with obtaining necessary medical care, return of personal affects to family members, finding homes for pets, bringing in social security personnel to handle benefits for minor children, arranging for local utilities to suspend bills for two months, and more. In Orlando LGBT agents accompanied same sex partners through medical and bureaucratic mazes, often calming distraught persons with the simple words "I'm gay, too."

"We were no longer organizational names and titles to one another; face to face we were just people."

Progress is undoubtedly slower than all of us would prefer, but steps that seem small, like changing forms to eliminate male and female check boxes in favor of a blank space to fill in gender identity, encourage transgender and gender queer persons to apply for employment.

The most moving and most powerful part of the meeting was being face-to-face with law enforcement leaders. We were no longer organizational names and titles to one another; face to face we were just people. There is still a history of mistreatment to acknowledge and overcome. There are still far too many officers who express contempt for LGBTQ persons--a particular problem

for our transgender community. Facilities for incarcerated LGBTQ persons routinely lack any kind of safety. But we are no longer protesting outside of the building. We are at the table. Each participant went home with an array of phone numbers to call to report abuses and potential or actual hate crimes. More important, we have met the person who will answer that call. We know they are committed to serve the LGBTQ community. *(continued inside)*

Our Stories **Marc, Irv's Son**

When did I realize I was gay? Not until my early 20s. I went to summer camp from age four to like 14 or 15. I remember thinking that some of the camp counselors were handsome, but thought that everyone was thinking that. It didn't strike me as something unusual. So it wasn't really until I was in my early 20s when I was in college. I had a gay friend who thought I was gay. At that time I didn't know I was. So when he asked me if I was, I was kind of like, "Really? You think I am? No, I'm not, I'm not! But it's OK that you are!" That was at about age 20. I hadn't started to think about being gay. I was focused on doing well in school and getting into college.

I was bullied more in elementary school than in high school. But then also in freshman year in college. I got bullied by a roommate and some other people that were living on the floor. They never said antigay things but I think they probably picked up that I was. I didn't even realize that I was gay at that time, I was 17 or 18 then. People would call me "fag" and "gay." But people would say that to a lot of people. Someone who wasn't gay might get called that too. I remember my father saying, "Just ignore it and they'll eventually get tired of it. They're trying to get a reaction out of you. So if you ignore it they're going to get bored and eventually move on to someone else." Luckily I never got physically attacked for it or anything. So that was good.

At college there was a scary moment. I had to lock my roommate out of the *(continued inside)*



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info@pflagLA.org

1.888.PFLAG 88
(1.888.735.2488)
www.pflagLA.org

PFLAG Los Angeles is an all volunteer, non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization run by parents, family members, LGBTQ persons and their friends. Each of us came for help, found support, and joined the organization to assist others on their journey to acceptance. Our chapter, together with a group in New York City, founded the national PFLAG organization, which provides assistance to over 350 independent chapters nationwide.

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Legislative Corner

Excerpt from Equality California (eqca.org):

We're proud of the fact that California has just about the world's strongest laws protecting LGBT people anywhere in the world. But did you know that California still has laws that criminalize and stigmatize people living with HIV? That transgender and gender non-conforming people often face harassment and violence while simply trying to use the restroom? Or that California schools have only just begun to address the fact that LGBT kids are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their non-LGBT peers? These are some of the critical issues we are attempting to address with our 2016 legislative package.

Our nine sponsored pieces of legislation begin to address these serious gaps in LGBT protections:

AJR 45, Equality Act Resolution, Assemblymember (AM) David Chiu: The federal Equality Act would ensure that vulnerable communities have equal protection from discrimination under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Equality Act updates the federal definition of public accommodation, and expands the current prohibited categories of discrimination. The act ensures that all individuals in the United States are free to access and use public resources, no matter their gender identity, sex, or sexual orientation. AJR 45 calls upon Congress to pass this act.

SB1146, California Divestiture in Academic Discrimination, Senator Ricardo Lara: Would close a loophole that allows private universities to request a Title IX waiver if they feel requirements violate the tenets of their faith.

AB 2246, Suicide Prevention Policies in Schools, AM Patrick O'Donnell: Would require schools to adopt policies to give teachers the tools necessary to identify and combat teen suicide. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 10-24. Studies have also shown that LGBT youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their non-LGBT peers.

AB 1887, Prevent California-Funded Travel to States with A License to Discriminate, AM Evan Low: Would

prohibit state agencies and the Legislature from approving state funded or sponsored travel to a state that, after June 26, 2015, has enacted a law that voids or repeals existing state or local protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, or has enacted a law that authorizes or requires discrimination against same-sex couples or their families on these bases.

AB 1732, The Equal Restroom Access Act, AM Phil Ting: Would enact the most progressive statewide restroom access policy in the nation, requiring all single-occupancy restrooms in businesses, government buildings and places of public accommodation to be available to everyone. Compliance with the bill is a matter of changing a sign on a restroom door.

AB 1675, Diversion Instead of Prosecution for Juvenile Victims, AM Mark Stone: Would ensure that minors who participate in acts of prostitution are treated as victims of sexual exploitation instead of as criminals. Laws criminalizing minors disproportionately affect LGBT youth, some of whom have been forced from their homes due to lack of acceptance or even hostility from their own families and engage in sex work to survive.

AB 1888, Cal Grant Disinvestment in Discrimination, AM Evan Low: Died in committee. Under this bill, academic institutions that apply for the Cal Grant would not have been permitted to subject either students or employees to discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. This requirement of non-discrimination could not have been waived based on overly broad religious exemptions.

SB 1408, HIV Organ and Tissue Donation Equity, Senator Ben Allen: Signed into law. Allows for organ and tissue donation between HIV-positive donors and HIV-positive recipients, bringing state law in line with federal law under the HOPE Act.

SB 1005, Modernizing Code Language to Reflect Marriage Equality (Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson) Signed into law. Amends various code sections to reflect established case law and legal precedent with respect to marriage equality.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK!

Renew your annual donation or make a special gift today!

As an all-volunteer organization, our work is made possible only with the generous contributions of our donors. Your contributions support our monthly meetings, website, helplines, Speakers Bureau, and outreach to ethnic and faith communities. PFLAG Los Angeles is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization and 100% of your donation supports our programs.

Please Note: When you make a donation of \$35 or more to PFLAG Los Angeles, a portion of your donation (\$15) goes to PFLAG National and makes you a member of both PFLAG Los Angeles and PFLAG National. However, make donations directly to PFLAG National, 100% of your donation stays with PFLAG National.

Use the envelope provided or donate online at
www.pflagLA.org/join-donate.

Shop at AmazonSmile
and Amazon will make
a donation to:

PFLAG Los Angeles

Get started

amazonsmile

Smile, you're supporting PFLAG Los Angeles
Your everyday purchases or gifts
can help PFLAG Los Angeles expand its
mission of support, education, and advocacy.

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/95-3707419>

MODELS of PRIDE

BE THE CHANGE



LOS ANGELES LGBT CENTER
LIFEWORKS

President's Message (continued from cover)

SIGN UP FOR MODELS OF PRIDE ON OCTOBER 29th at USC

One of the largest, free LGBTQ youth conferences in the world, Models of Pride offers a rare opportunity for your LGBTQ child: the chance to be in the majority. It's a life changing experience for youth. Everywhere your child looks, they will see happy, proud, and successful young people who are just like them. There are exciting workshops which include art, drama, health, exercise, coming out, trans issues, LGBTQ friendly colleges, spirituality, dating, and much more. Lunch and free entertainment are provided in a safe, supervised environment, where young people can make life-long friends.

Youth can register for the day at
www.modelsofpride.org/youth

PARENT AND PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODELS OF PRIDE

For once you don't have to be merely the driver. Models of Pride has a whole set of free workshops for parents (including grandparents and foster parents) on a wide range of topics. To name a few: understanding your LGBTQ teen, knowing the rights of LGBTQ students, having positive conversations with LGBTQ teens about sexuality, dealing with issues caused by religion, helping your child through transitioning and many more. Workshops appropriate for new parents, more experienced parents, parents of transgender youth, and workshops in Spanish will be provided. There will also be sessions tailored to the needs of professionals working with LGBTQ youth and educators overseeing Gay/Straight Alliance clubs.

Parents can sign yourself up at
modelsofpride.org/parents

Everywhere your child looks,
they will see happy, proud,
and successful young people
who are just like them.

MOP NEEDS VOLUNTEERS!

Board Member Polly Kim and President Mariette Sawchuk have been serving on the Steering Committee of Models of Pride 24, primarily working on the Parent and Professional Institute (PPI). This year Lifeworks is incorporating the PPI into its overall planning for the day. With this added support, outreach efforts are broadening and we are expecting larger numbers than ever for the 28 workshops planned.

As you can imagine, the logistical challenge is enormous, and that's where PFLAG Los Angeles volunteers come in. The committee estimates that 200 volunteers will be necessary to run the entire day. We need YOU.

Please volunteer your time for a few hours on that day. The excitement of youth and parents is electric. You will know that the short hours you spend will make a lasting difference in the lives of young people, parents, and families.

Sign up to volunteer at
www.modelsofpride.org/volunteer



Suspending the South Los Angeles Satellite Meeting

Effective immediately, PFLAG Los Angeles will be suspending our satellite meetings in South Los Angeles. Beginning in August the meeting will be closed as we transition to new leadership. We will make every effort to contact regular participants in this group and encourage them to attend other PFLAG meetings in the interim.

As an all-volunteer organization, we depend on the efforts of committed PFLAG members. Changes in their circumstances heavily impact the services we can provide.

Negotiations are underway with a LGBTQ affirming faith congregation in South Los Angeles, whose leaders have expressed an interest in starting a PFLAG meeting. Check our website and monthly emails for reports of progress on this partnership.

Send an email to southLA@pflagla.org if you'd like to speak with someone who lives in the South Los Angeles area.

We Need YOUR Stories!

We all have a PFLAG story to share. Some are a testimony of growth and understanding, others are painful and heart-breaking. These stories of real peoples' lives can be major teaching moments to some and life-savers to others.

Please e-mail your story, request to be interviewed, or any questions to NewsletterEditor@pflagLA.org.

We encourage you to share YOUR story with us. The focus should be on your personal story as it relates to the coming-out of an LGBT family member/loved one. Maximum number of characters with spaces is 4,300. If you prefer, we can interview you over the phone and write the story for you!

All stories are welcome and submissions are subject to editing. By submitting your story you give PFLAG permission to publish it in our newsletter, on our website or other media to promote PFLAG. If requested, your name will not be published.

Spreading the Word in the community through our Speakers Bureau engagements/ education, activism & advocacy

Marta Castillo provided a presentation in Spanish to parents at Studio School in Glassell Park.

Gizella Czene, Cara O'Donnell, and Liz Mullen were part of three panels covering most of the school day at Polytechnic Freshman School in Sun Valley.

Gizella Czene, Stuart Huggins, Liz Mullen, and Sarah Vitorino, among others, were invited by the LAPD in downtown Los Angeles.

Maurie Davidson, Chris Angel Murphy, Cara O'Donnell, and Sylvia Weisenberg spoke to students at Cleveland Humanities Magnet in Reseda.

We as PFLAG Los Angeles Speakers Bureau members have the privilege of meeting with middle, high school and college students, employees and other members of the community who invite us to share a part of our personal journey with them. We are greeted with openness, interest and respect. It is quite an honor to be welcomed with open hearts and minds. We receive as much as we give to our audience.

We are looking for people who identify as LGBTQI and Allies to join the PFLAG Los Angeles Speakers Bureau. We are particularly seeking those individuals who are available during weekday hours. Participation is on a voluntary basis, based on your schedule. There is training available. Email Liz Mullen at speakersbureau@pflagla.org for further information..

Quote - Unquote

"We see you, we stand
with you, and we will do
everything we can to
protect you going forward."

—Loretta Lynch, U.S. Attorney General,

May 9, 2016, at a press conference
regarding North Carolina's House Bill 2
(discrimination against transgender individuals)

Our Stories (continued from cover)

room because he and his buddies were drunk and they wanted to drag me to this frat party. So, one of the guys, a psychology major of all things, ended up climbing through our screen window on the second floor and then pretending like he was going to commit a human sacrifice. He got on top of me, holding a knife like he was going to stab me. At the last second he would move the knife away from my head and into the bed. I'm laughing about it now but it was scary at the time. I don't know if it was motivated because I was gay or if they were just being jerks in general.

The first time that I saw anyone who was portraying somebody gay was when I saw an episode of "All in the Family" and there was a friend of Edith's who was a cross-dresser. While Edith was very accepting, her husband Archie wasn't, until the crossdresser got beaten up one night and Archie realized that this shouldn't happen to anybody and kind of changed his tune. But the message that was coming across was you don't want to be like this crossdresser. It was all very subconscious. Like, this is not a good thing.

A friend of mine was gay. One day we just ended up going to the gay bar. This was when I was in college. I remember the next morning feeling really bad and guilty. Nothing happened but I thought, "Oh my gosh, I went to this gay bar, does that mean I'm gay if I had a good time?" So I immediately signed up to go to a therapist to figure this out. That was a good thing to do because she was very understanding and didn't try to change me and she said there's nothing wrong with it. She was really good. I found her through the student association. It could have been bad if I got someone thinking or telling me, if you want to change you can change, you just have to want to badly enough. That would have been really horrible.

A few years later I decided to come out to my family. I told my sister first, about a year after I realized it myself. I told her on a trip visiting her at her college. She said that she wasn't surprised at all and that it doesn't matter. But then later I found out that she was going to a counselor to deal with it too. And then, a year after that, is when I told my parents. I was very nervous about telling them because I knew it wasn't something that they were going to want to hear. But I knew that they (continued on next page)

RESOURCES

MEETINGS - CONTACTS - ORGANIZATIONS

SUPPORT MEETINGS SPONSORED BY PFLAG LOS ANGELES Westwood*

Westwood United Methodist Church
10497 Wilshire Bl. LA 90024
3rd Wednesday of each month
7:30 - 10:00 pm / Free Parking
*Visit our website for upcoming speakers
www.pflagLA.org

Gender Focus

Metropolitan Community Church
4607 Prospect Avenue, LA 90027
2nd Thursday of each month
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Street Parking

Boyle Heights (Sólo Español)

Mi Centro - Boletín
553 S. Clarence Street, Los Angeles, CA 90033
2nd Wednesday of each month
7:00 - 9:00 pm / Free Parking

East LA (Sólo Español)

Bienestar East LA
5326 East Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles 90022
3rd Thursday of each month
7:00 - 9:00 pm / Street Parking

San Fernando Valley (Sólo Español)

Bienestar Centro del Valle de San Fernando
8134 Van Nuys Blvd., #200, Panorama City 91402
4th Friday of each month
7:00 - 9:00 pm / Free Parking

South LA

Meetings suspended until further notice

CONTACTS

PFLAG Los Angeles Speakers Bureau
Contact Liz Mullen at
SpeakersBureau@pflagla.org

HELPLINES

PFLAG Los Angeles
1.888.PFLAG.88 (1.888.735.2488)
English and Spanish

Transgender Support
818.985.9319 (Chris)

The TREVOR PROJECT
24-hour suicide prevention line
866.488.7386
www.thetrevorproject.org

ORGANIZATIONS

PFLAG National
202.467.8180
www.pflag.org

REMEMBER

When you no
longer need PFLAG
that's when PFLAG
NEEDS YOU!

www.pflagLA.org

Our Stories

(continued)

loved me. I thought everything would be OK. But then you never know once you come out with it. And it really didn't go that well.

When I came out to my parents one of their first reactions was "We'll get you fixed." We'll go to the best psychologist, get hormone treatments if necessary. But I told them I didn't want to change to be straight. I was willing to go to a therapist if it was about dealing with the family issues of this new information, like how we could deal with it better. But not to change myself. My parents didn't throw me out of the house. That was good. Because I had just moved back home after going to graduate school. It was the first time I was living at home with my parents again full time and I just didn't want to lie if I was going out to places.

Now, strangely enough, before me coming out, my mother had asked me one day, did I want to see the play "Torch Song Trilogy" which was showing at that same time. And it was kind of surprising because I knew what it was about and I didn't know if she really knew what it was about. So I kind of thought, maybe she's trying to get me to say something and that would be a way that she could get it out of me. So we went, the whole family went. And my sister told me that she saw my mother crying during parts of the play and thought that our mother knows but she's not going to ask me. I kind of thought that she sort of knew too. So I thought, well, this is a good opportunity to broach the subject.

So the next day I told my mother. I guess I was sort of moping around the house. She kept saying, "What's wrong, what's wrong?" And I was like, "Nothing, nothing." And finally I was like, "Well, there's something I want to talk to you about but let's wait until my father gets home and I can tell both of you." And then when he came home we went to their room and I just told them that I was gay. My mother was very upset. She started crying, and my father started crying, and I started crying. And they suggested the thing about therapy. Well, not reparative therapy. But I guess that's what they sort of meant with going to a therapist.

And then my mother didn't want to talk about it. There were times she was mad at me. The sight of me would make her mad, like if I walked in the kitchen and she was there she'd get up and leave. But then another time she would say that she's sorry, that she didn't mean that.

To help them understand the subject I had gone out and gotten a whole bunch of books for them to read. And then my mother came home from

work one day and was like, "Get these books off the dining room table, I don't want to see them." But then I had to go back to where I was getting my degree from to finish things up. So I was away for the weekend and I think while I was not there they started reading some of these books. And about a month later I was able to convince them to go to a PFLAG meeting.

I read about PFLAG. People told me about it too. But that, I think, sort of scared my mother after attending one meeting because it turned out that that was the once-a-year coming-out workshop for how to come out to your parents. So instead of a small group of parents and their kids it was this big event that was over a hundred people. I think it was too much for my mother.

Here's what I learned: Just believe in yourself, that there's nothing wrong with you.

So then my father and I just went to the groups who met once a month. We went for a few months. My mother didn't go. And then one time I was sick and I wasn't going to go. And then my mother went. And they ran into friends of theirs from down the street and they're like, "What are you doing here?" And they said, "What are YOU doing here?" So I think at that point my mother was a little more comfortable with it because there were people that she knew that were dealing with the same things. So that was a groundbreaking experience for her.

And then we started going all three of us monthly. This change didn't happen overnight. But it got better over time. And you won't believe this, but the following year we were on the panel as one of the families that talked about the whole coming-out thing.

The scariest part for me when coming out to my parents was thinking that they would disown me. I mean I really didn't think that that would happen and luckily it didn't, but you never know. It's a possibility. I knew that it happens to other people. I knew my parents wouldn't be happy. It's not what they wanted. Like most parents they talked about grandchildren. But then you have straight people who don't have kids.

Here's what I learned: Just believe in yourself, that there's nothing wrong with you. Be sure of it, although even though sometimes you're not really sure. What I mean is, when I did it I should've said "I am gay" instead of "I think I'm gay" because that left the door open to like, "Oh, well, then

maybe there's a chance he's not" or "We can persuade him one way or another." I thought if I said "think" it would make it softer. But I've since read things explaining how you should come out to your parents. The one thing you should do is say it in an affirmative way. Because if there's any sense of you being in doubt it might make your parents think that there's a way to change you or there's an opening to make you straight.

It seems like it's a more accepting world now than like 30 years ago when I came out. Which was more accepting than 20 years before that. So it's getting easier, I think, because there's more awareness about gay people in movies and TV. And it seems like younger people tend to be more accepting anyway. So I think it really is easier now. In some ways. But for some parents it's still difficult. It's about expectations. Parents want to have grandkids. Parents also have to go through their own coming-out process in the group of friends they're in. Maybe they know people who are against gay people. They're worried about losing their own friends if they tell them they have a gay child. I think that was part of it with my parents. They grew up in the 50s, it was a different time then. Being gay was considered an illness. Luckily in the 70s that changed. But it still takes a long time for it to trickle down to the general population to realize that being gay is not an illness.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with being gay or lesbian or transgender. Nobody should ever feel like there's something wrong with them. Because there's not. You're just you. If there was someone who was able to wave a magic wand and make me not gay, I wouldn't do it. Because then I wouldn't be me. So this is part of me being me.

I believe being gay is the way you're born. I don't think it can be changed. The only thing that can change is people's attitudes about it and that there's nothing wrong with it. More people need to come out and admit they're gay. Because people sometimes think they don't know anyone who's gay. But everybody knows somebody whether they know it or not. They might think they don't know anyone but there are so many gay people in the world that someone they come in contact with in their life, whether it's someone in a store that they shop in, or a relative ... it's inescapable.

And to all the parents out there struggling with this, please look up a PFLAG chapter that's close to you and get in touch with them. When my parents were in tears when I came out, neither of them could even imagine that one day they would be part of a PFLAG panel helping other parents with a gay child. You can get there too, even if you're very scared today.



P.O. Box 24565
Los Angeles, CA 90024

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

OUR VISION: PFLAG envisions a world where diversity is celebrated and all people are respected, valued, and affirmed inclusive of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

OUR MISSION: By meeting people where they are and collaborating with others, PFLAG realizes its vision through:

SUPPORT for families, allies and people who are LGBTQ; **EDUCATION** for ourselves and others about the unique issues and challenges facing people who are LGBTQ; **ADVOCACY** in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ.

SUMMER 2016

TransAction

Let's TRANSFORM California!

On April 18, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti joined individuals from the transgender community, statewide LGBT organizations, local officials, civil rights groups, businesses, faith-based leaders, and community members to launch Transform California – a statewide movement founded by Equality California and the Transgender Law Center to promote respect, understanding, and safety for the transgender community. “Our tax dollars won’t fund intolerance here,” Garcetti said at a rally outside City Hall. As part of the effort, coalition members signed a Transform California pledge – opposing discrimination against transgender people. [From: <http://www.transformcalifornia.com/>]

Laverne Cox and Shannon Minter Honored

On June 19, the Williams Institute honored Laverne Cox, actress and activist, and Shannon Minter, Legal Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) and nationally renowned civil rights attorney. The event held at The Edison in Los Angeles raised more than \$70,000 to support California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) transgender population data collection.

Historic Guidance on Transgender Students

In May, in a “Dear Colleague” letter, the Department of Education and Department of Justice issued guidance making it clear that schools must treat transgender students according to their gender identity in all respects and cannot ban transgender students from using facilities that match the gender they live as every day. [From: transgenderlawcenter.org]

New ACA Rule Bans Anti-trans Discrimination in Health Care

On May 13, the federal department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Civil Rights issued final regulations on Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act. The rule specifically bans discrimination in most insurance coverage and the denial of health care on the basis of gender identity. “This groundbreaking rule makes clear that health care discrimination against LGBT people—particularly transgender and gender non-conforming people—is unlawful under existing federal law,” said Transgender Law Center Executive Director Kris Hayashi in response to the rule. “Nobody should face harassment or discrimination in the doctor’s office or be denied the medical care they need just because of who they are.” [From: transgenderlawcenter.org]

Victory For Transgender Service Members

On June 30, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced that transgender service members in the U.S. military can now openly serve their country without fear of retribution, a policy decision that overturns the ban on transgender service across all branches of service, effective immediately. By ending the ban on transgender service members, “we’re eliminating policies that can result in transgender service members being treated differently from their peers based solely upon their gender identity, rather than their ability to serve,” Carter said. The secretary said he and senior DoD leaders met in the past year with transgender service members who have deployed all over the world, serving on aircraft, submarines, forward operating bases, and in the Pentagon.

The yearlong study was carefully examined for medical, legal, and policy considerations that have been rapidly evolving in recent years and in light of DoD’s unique nature of military readiness “to make sure the department got it right,” Carter said. After talking with doctors, employers, and insurance companies, he said, it became clear that “transgender” is becoming common and normalized in public and private sectors, and he noted a “sea change” in the past decade. [From: defense.gov]