

# **LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA**

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## **Documents Online**

**Title:** PA Rural Gay Caucus statement on Gay Pride Week Proclamation

**Date:** 1976

**Location:** LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

**Contact:**

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The following text is proposed to the Caucus by Joseph W. Burns representing the Gay Coordinating Society of Reading. The text is the body of a letter from the Rural Gay Caucus to the General Assembly of Pennsylvania. If adopted by the Caucus, the letter would be printed, disseminated to the House and Senate of Pennsylvania, and various newspapers in the state.

We, the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus, as the united representatives of nearly one million gay people throughout the state, wish to express to the General Assembly of Pennsylvania our profound shock and horror that the House of Representatives on June 15 voted a resolution rejecting Governor Shapp's Proclamation of Gay Pride Week. Never, in the annals of Pennsylvania History, has any people in peaceful pursuit of their civil rights been so put down.

The very Founder of this State began the great and proud tradition of tolerance and respect for differences in others. Pennsylvania has starred in the role of preventing the oppression of people within its borders. From Penn's Treaty with the Indians, to the Underground Railway, to the magnificent melding of immigrant workers and farmers whose sons and daughters we are proud to be, to the women, poor, and aged of today, those who felt oppression in this state have found fierce support in its political leaders - until now.

We as gay people, met with our legislators on March 23rd of this year. Then, our legislators were smiling and friendly. We told them that tens of thousands of Gays live in terrible loneliness, afraid to share their secret homosexuality, afraid to reach for love. We told them of the thousands of Gays beaten, robbed, publicly abused, and discriminated against for a sexuality they did not choose. We told them that the awful stigma of criminality applied to homosexuality threatens to shatter the lives of 1.2 million gay Pennsylvanians. We told them that in learning to accept ourselves, that in learning how to love one another, that in reaching to stand tall against a great weight of oppression, we have found pride and happiness.

They smiled on March 23rd, but, we now know, they did not listen.

We of the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus have vowed to give our message to our legislators again- and again- and again. We have found the pride, the strength, and caring love to carry on.

## LETS BE HEARD

The objective of this campaign is to get letters, phone calls and petitions to Governor supporting his position on Gay Pride Week and to make clear to him that there is considerable support from the citizens in the Commonwealth for gay rights.

It is important to note that this campaign is supported by feminists, civil libertarians, union leaders, religious leaders and others. The wide range of support, important in itself, will also protect those gays who cannot be presently identified with the gay movement.

It is important to get letters especially from professional people and from organizations.

It is important to circulate the call for letters and phone calls to all possible supportive groups for inclusion in their newsletters, in handouts and as announcements at their meetings.

It is important to get all possible groups and businesses to circulate petitions for the Governor.

1. It is suggested that in each community there be a meeting of feminists, gay leaders, ACLU and other supporters to identify persons and organizations to be approached in the campaign.

2. Enough petitions should be xeroxed and a system established for their distribution and collection. Petitions should be collected two weeks after distribution and the number of names recorded. The petition itself should be sent to the Governor with a cover letter from a local gay or non-gay organization.

3. Contact the widest range of gay and non-gay organizations for space in their newsletters. If organizations have a phone tree please try to use it.

4. There should be regional coordinators to gather information on the extent of the campaign and its success.

LETTERS TO: GOVERNOR DICK-THORNBURGH  
STATE CAPITOL BUILDING  
HARRISBURG, PENN. 17120

CALL GOVERNOR'S HOTLINE  
800 932- 0784