

LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA

**Located at Dickinson College
Archives & Special Collections**

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

Documents Online

Title: *PA Rural Gay Caucus Position Paper Repeal of Sodomy Law*

Date: 1976

Location: LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

Contact:

LGBT History Project
Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

POSITION PAPER--REPEAL OF SODOMY LAW
DRAFT

PHILOSOPHICAL PREMISE:

Movements and voices advocating the rights of persons, traditionally in Pennsylvania, have come from our two major urban centers, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. This is an understandable reality due to the large population and in many cases a much more liberal view concerning rights. It seems that many means have been attempted by these centers to foster an acceptance and speak to the problem of Gay Rights. It is the hope that the Rural Gay Caucus will be as successful in our geographical region as our two urban centers have been in theirs.

The Rural Caucus has an advantage in that we live within the area we are addressing and therefore would understand on a more gut level the type of approach which may effect the population in our more conservative areas. This is not to say we have excluded the urban areas but rather we desire a mutual respect concerning one another's roles and limitations regarding different geographical boundaries. This can also be said about our relationship with the Governor's Council on Sexual Minorities. It is believed that each of us must understand our objective, which is the repeal of the Sodomy law in Pennsylvania, and respect each others limitations in this attempt. To put it another way, we must each use one another in a positive way to create an environment which will allow a passage of this repeal. The following is a proposed method by the Rural Caucus to accomplish this goal:

STRATEGY:

Introduction: These thoughts and ideas were formulated through discussions with concerned individuals, the Governor's Office, Senator Hill's Office, Senator Lewis's Office, the Community Advocate Unit in Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, American Civil Liberties Union in Dauphin County, and my own knowledge regarding community organization.

Focus--

1. Revision of Crime Code which would include the repeal of Sodomy.
2. A separate Bill calling for the repeal.
3. Call for a review of all sexual and marriage laws in Pennsylvania.
4. Awareness to the heterosexual community about this law as it relates to them.

Implementation of the four points:

A. The Governor's Council would seek a Senator who would be willing to introduce a separate Bill which would eventually be voted down. The Governor's Council is perceived as the Governor's "arm", therefore attitudes may be negative. This separate bill would allow elected officials to vote "no" publically.
EFFORT SHOULD BE STRONG IN THIS ISSUE AS WELL AS THE NEXT.

B. The Rural Caucus with other Groups would seek for the inclusion of this repeal in the revision of the Crime's Code. A soft, conservative approach passed as a package thereby allowing the elected officials a way to excuse the repeal, "Can't get everything you want these days, "Must compromise to get the best for most."

C. Concurrently the Council for Women who are seeking a review of the marriage laws would incorporate this repeal in their suggestions. This could possibly take longer to achieve because studies must be made and hearings held, but it would keep the issue alive.

D. During the election campaign and possibly after, the threat of bringing awareness of this law to the heterosexuals may create too much of a controversy which politicians certainly would like to avoid. This awareness would bring many "nuts" out of the wood work. Elected officials would not want to deal with this.

ORGANIZATION:

It is important the communication be open between all principals involved in this effort. This must be vital so that duplication of efforts especially to legislators are not created. This would make us look divided and unsophisticated in our movement.

Therefore a joint meeting of all groups and individuals must be held immediately.

Timing is a vital component with persons, groups ready to go when the appropriate opportunity arises. Therefore there is a need for a grass roots organization both gay and non-gay who can be mobilized when that point in time becomes necessary. The key to this approach is a co-ordinator for a small geographical area. There also must be made a firm effort to all bars and other places where gays recreate to bring awareness and possible benefit performances on behalf of this cause. This will allow the less active members of the gay community to feel a part and possibly contribute in their own way to the goal.

Therefore the attached questionnaire should be distributed to gay publications, bars, baths, etc. to receive as much input as possible concerning priorities and involvement.

TIME:

The intention of these methods is seen within the context of One (1) to one and one-half (1½) years.

PURPOSE OF LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE--RURAL CAUCUS

To enable and coordinate these activities in the rural area and to create the grass roots approach with the cooperation of individuals and existing groups.

CONCLUSION:

This position paper is intended to be general with some specific suggestions. Each item, each idea, each strategy must be broken down to minor components. That is not the purpose of a position paper but the purpose of a well disciplined committee.