

# THE Agenda

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## 2009 FALL DINNER

On October 22, 2009, the Pride Agenda held its 18th annual Fall Dinner that brought together more than 1,200 supporters, elected officials and celebrities to celebrate our progress in this unpredictable year and demand action on marriage equality, protections for transgender New Yorkers and safe schools for our youth. With Margaret Cho as our emcee, the evening was inspiring and exciting.

At the event, Governor Paterson announced his intention to include the marriage equality bill on the agenda when he called an extraordinary session of the Legislature before the end of the year, which took place on December 2, 2009.

Our keynote speaker, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, spoke about his experiences fighting for equal rights for LGBT people on the federal level. He praised the Senate for passing the

Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act earlier that day, and pledged to continue to work for our community, including the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Finally, we honored the Hathaway family - actress Anne, her parents Gerald & Kate, and brothers Thomas and Michael, as well as Michael's husband Joshua Lawson - with our 2009 Douglas W. Jones Leadership Award. The Hathaways are an inspiring example of the important role that families play in our movement.

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the Fall Dinner. To see speeches made at the event, visit the Pride Agenda's YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/prideagenda](http://www.youtube.com/prideagenda).

(clockwise from top left)

U.S. Senator **Chuck Schumer** delivered the keynote address

2009 Douglas W. Jones Award recipients - **the Hathaway Family** - **Thomas Hathaway, Michael Hathaway, Anne Hathaway, Kate Hathaway and Gerry Hathaway**

**Governor Paterson** spoke, promising that the marriage equality bill would be on the agenda when he calls the legislature back to Albany

Former **Alan Cumming**, Co-Chair of the Pride Agenda Board of Directors **Frank Selvaggi, Anne Hathaway** and her brother **Thomas Hathaway**, Pride Agenda Executive Director **Alan van Capelle** and Co-Chair of the Pride Agenda Board of Directors **Mitch Karsch**

2009 Fall Dinner Co-Chair **J. Bland**, our fabulous emcee **Margaret Cho** and 2009 Fall Dinner Co-Chairs **Marla Hassner** and **Alfredo Paredes**

Photos by Stephanie Seliskar, Doug Meszler, and Steve DiMaio



## A Message from Alan van Capelle

We pushed hard for a vote and were able to do what practically no one else was able to do with a post-coup Senate: get a vote on a bill.

Without this, we would be going into the 2010 election year making guesses about who supports marriage equality in the Senate and who doesn't.

There's no easy way to talk about the outcome of the December vote on marriage equality in the State Senate. Losing was a punch in the gut to tens of thousands of LGBT families that need the same protections other families receive in New York, and was personally heart-wrenching for all of us here at the Pride Agenda and the many people around New York who worked so hard to win marriage equality.

It's never easy knowing that a majority of our state's Senators still believe that it's okay to treat a group of New Yorkers as "less-than" or second-class citizens. That's what this vote said—and that's what makes it so tough.

To pass the bill, we always knew Senate Democrats were going to need most of their members to vote "yes" and the Republicans were going to have to provide the rest of the votes needed to win. When Democrats couldn't reach the number of votes they needed in the hours leading up to the Senate floor debate, Republicans decided not to provide any support and vote "no" as a block; the first time they had ever done this

on one of our issues. And you know the rest. After spending a lot of time thinking about the vote and talking to a number of people, several things are now very clear to me:

- While we had hoped that the shaky majority the Democrats won in the 2008 elections would coalesce into a working majority on our issues in 2009, it never did. When the time came for the vote on marriage equality, the Senate was unable to hold the votes it had and secure the additional support it needed to win.
- The June coup pushed off any chance of a vote on marriage until the fall and showed that the chamber's dysfunction had only become worse since the beginning of the year.
- The November election results were not helpful. The Special Election in the 23rd Congressional District and the number of incumbents being defeated in local races across the state made Senators from both parties more cautious about supporting the bill.

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## Governor Paterson Signs Executive Order Prohibiting Transgender Discrimination in the State Workforce

In an important step in the fight for transgender rights, New York Governor David Paterson signed an Executive Order prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity and expression for state employees on December 16, 2009. The Executive Order ensures that all state employees, including transgender people, are protected from workplace discrimination. The Pride Agenda has been working with the Governor's Office on this important issue since Governor Spitzer was elected in 2006 and continued to work on it with Governor Paterson.

The Governor's Executive Order sends a strong message that it is simply not acceptable to discriminate against transgender people. Seven other states currently have similar Executive Orders protecting public employees, and 13 states and the District of Columbia have comprehensive laws prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity and expression.

Under various local ordinances, 60 percent of New Yorkers now live in cities and counties where discrimination against transgender people is already illegal. Work to protect all transgender New Yorkers will not be over, however, until New York passes the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA), the state's comprehensive law banning discrimination against transgender people. GENDA would amend the state's human rights law to prohibit discrimination throughout the state based upon gender identity and expression in employment (both public and private sectors), housing, public accommodations and credit. It also expands the state's hate crimes law to explicitly include crimes against transgender people.

The Assembly has passed GENDA by large bipartisan margins the past two years—most recently in 2009 by a vote of 97-38—and Governor Paterson has said he will sign GENDA into law when a bill is sent to him. The vast majority of New



Yorkers (78 percent) are also in support of GENDA. The State Senate is the only remaining hurdle, and the Pride Agenda's public scorecard shows a majority of State Senators support GENDA. The Pride Agenda will continue to work tirelessly in 2010 to bring GENDA to the floor of the State Senate so it can be passed and signed into law.

## ROSS LEVI CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY AT THE PRIDE AGENDA

Ross D. Levi, Esq. began his career with the Pride Agenda as Legislative Counsel in 2000 and then moved on to be the organization's Director of Public Policy and Governmental Affairs from 2004 to 2006, when he oversaw and conducted the organization's lobbying activities. Since 2006, Ross has served as the Director of Public Policy & Education. Based in Albany, Ross is responsible for developing the policy priorities and public positions of the Pride Agenda, and for the creation and maintenance of educational materials and programs.

### HOW DID YOUR CAREER WITH THE PRIDE AGENDA BEGIN?

When I started with the Pride Agenda in January of 2000 as Legislative Counsel, I was the organization's first staff lobbyist based in Albany. It was a great year to start. As the result of years of work, momentum was reaching a fever pitch around hate crimes legislation. When it became law later that year, it was the first time LGBT people appeared anywhere in New York State law. We were also successful that year in getting the consensual sodomy law taken off the books. So in my first year on the job we saw not only the first affirmative protections for our community codified into law, but the last remaining vestiges of our crimination removed as well.

### HOW HAS THE PRIDE AGENDA CHANGED IN THE TEN YEARS YOU'VE BEEN HERE?

I've been amazed at how we've grown as an organization. We've literally doubled in staff size and almost tripled in our organizational budget. That in itself doesn't make me as proud as what we have been able to show for it: dozens of state and local laws and regulations, millions of dollars of public funding for LGBT health and human services and real public education on our lives and our families. I also think we have been very smart to expand from being an organization that almost exclusively tried to help organize the gay and lesbian community to advocate for itself, to an organization that spends much of its time trying to help non-LGBT allies become better advocates for equality and justice.

### TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE YOUR LONGEVITY AT THE PRIDE AGENDA?

It certainly helps to have balance in life, through friends, family and a loving partner who give you support but also keep you in check and provide perspective. But the biggest reason would be the feeling that I'm still part of making a positive difference for the LGBT community that I care so much about. To be able to look at a law that allows same-sex couples to have equal hospital visitation or control of their loved one's remains, and know that I was a part of that is very satisfying. Like so many other people in our community, I would be doing this activist work as a volunteer. To be able to do it as a career remains a very humbling privilege.



### A Message from Alan van Capelle

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In short, as the year wore on the path to victory only got rockier.

Do I think it was a mistake having the Senate vote on marriage equality given everything that I've said above? No.

I have always believed that our community and New York deserved and needed to know where their Senators stood on this important human rights issue. We pushed hard for a vote and were able to do what practically no one else was able to do with a post-coup Senate: get a vote on a bill. Without this, we would be going into the 2010 election year making guesses about who supports marriage equality in the Senate and who doesn't. Without a vote, we wouldn't know where to focus our grassroots education work and how to assess what was working and what wasn't.

Even with the loss, there were also some good things we learned from the vote:

- The vast majority of African-American and Latino Senators supported marriage equality, dealing a blow to the unfair notion that communities of color somehow stand in the way of equality for our families. In fact, some of the most eloquent and moving arguments during the Senate debate came from African-American and Latino legislators.
- Only one Senator argued against our freedom to marry. The other 37 who voted "no" were silent because our community had proactively worked to dispel the myths opponents like to use against us. With these arguments neutralized, they had nothing to say and it became apparent that their vote was more about politics than anything else.

With the vote, we now have the information we need to develop a roadmap to win the next time the Senate votes on marriage equality. There will be some Senators who will be the focus of more of our time and energy, and there will be some who will simply need to be replaced. Already we have endorsed Jose Peralta in Queens who has a solid record on voting for marriage equality as a member of the Assembly and who is running against Senator Hiram Monserrate who broke his promise to vote for the legislation. In the coming weeks we will announce endorsements of other candidates who will help advance our work in Albany.

The Pride Agenda has also decided that we will not be organizing our annual Equality & Justice Day. For several years we have helped to bring thousands of people to Albany for one powerful day of lobbying. The current legislative climate demands that we spend more time on the ground in Senate Districts across New York and less time in Albany. The State Senate has come to expect that they will see us for one day each year in Albany. I promise you that they don't expect to see us walking door to door in their community and talking to their voters about our lives. It's in your face. It's grassroots organizing at its best and it is a new approach the Pride Agenda will launch later this year.

So this is where we will start in 2010. We've said throughout this campaign that we will never stop fighting until we win and that continues to be our commitment to you.

We must also remember that there are two other important bills that did not get votes in the State Senate last year: GENDA, the transgender civil rights bill, and Dignity, the bill combating bias-based harassment in schools. These will be at the top of our legislative agenda in 2010 while we go back to work building support for marriage equality.

Legalizing marriage in New York didn't happen in December, but it will. It's just going to take a little longer. In the meantime, we need you to stay connected to our work, and one of the ways you can do this is to go to our website at [www.prideagenda.org](http://www.prideagenda.org) and join our email list to receive our action alerts. Thank you for continuing to fight with us.

## Pride Agenda Wins EEGO Charitable Outreach Grant

The Pride Agenda is proud to be the recipient of one of the East End Gay Organization's (EEGO) 2009 charitable outreach grants. This grant will support the Pride Agenda's education campaign around marriage equality.

EEGO's mission is to address the issues and concerns of the LGBT community on the East End of Long Island. Through education, public policy advocacy, communications, and health, cultural and charitable outreach programs, the EEGO Foundation promotes the equal rights of this community and is further committed to the dignity of all individuals.

The Board and staff of the Pride Agenda thank EEGO and its members for its generous support and commitment to fighting for equality and justice for LGBT New Yorkers.



EEGO Co-Chairs Barbara Glassman and Ken Allan present the grant to Pride Agenda Executive Director Alan van Capelle and Development Director Lynn Faria

## ELECTION HIGHLIGHTS

**In the 2009 General Election in November, several candidates endorsed by the Pride Agenda won their races. These elected officials' support on LGBT issues will help further our public policy agenda in Albany:**

### ROCHESTER AND MONROE COUNTY

**Robert Duffy** was re-elected for a second term as Mayor of Rochester. Mayor Duffy announced his full support for marriage equality in May 2009 in an op-ed in the Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle*. He also played a leading role in the passage of a resolution putting the U.S. Conference of Mayors on record in support of marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Also in Rochester, **Matt Haag** was elected to one of five seats on the City Council. As an openly gay man, Matt has served as a tireless advocate for LGBT equality and justice in the Rochester community and works with numerous LGBT organizations, including the Pride Agenda, to help achieve these goals. His election continues a quarter-century of openly LGBT representation on the Rochester City Council.

In Brighton, Town Supervisor **Sandra Frankel** was re-elected. Serving as Supervisor since 1992, her long record of work on behalf of the LGBT community includes being one of the first elected officials to proactively announce in 2004 that her locality would recognize the legal out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples as fully valid.

In Monroe County, **Harry Bronson** was re-elected to a second term as the Legislator representing the 24th District. As an openly gay man and an attorney, he has been a strong advocate for equal rights and has a long record of involvement with numerous LGBT organizations.

### NEW YORK CITY

In the New York City Council, Speaker **Christine Quinn** was re-elected to her seat in the 3rd District where she will continue to serve as a vocal advocate for LGBT issues.

The 26th District in Queens elected **Jimmy Van Bramer**, an openly gay activist with a long history of community activism and organizing around LGBT issues.

### BINGHAMTON

**Matthew Ryan** was re-elected to a second term as Mayor. He signed a local law expanding protections against discrimination in employment, housing and education to transgender people. He is the first-ever Mayor of this city to support

marriage equality and signed an executive order having Binghamton recognize same-sex marriages legally performed in other jurisdictions as fully valid.

### SYRACUSE

**Stephanie Miner** was elected as the Mayor of Syracuse, and is the first-ever Mayor of this city to support marriage equality. Stephanie has pledged to work toward equality and justice for all LGBT New Yorkers.

SAVE THE DATE  
*winter*  
**HEAT**

WEDNESDAY,  
MARCH 24, 2010

BLVD Nightclub  
New York City

For more information go to  
[www.prideagenda.org](http://www.prideagenda.org)