

Victories towards Family Recognition and Marriage Equality

- *June 2011* – The Empire State Pride Agenda’s multi-year organizing and education on marriage equality culminates in a broad-based show of support. The Pride Agenda holds press conferences across the state in May and June showcasing this depth of support for marriage. **Since 2004, the Pride Agenda’s Pride in Action programs have been building allies in communities of faith, corporate America and labor to demonstrate broad and diverse support for marriage.**
 - After seven years of work and relationship building via **the Pride Agenda’s Pride in the Pulpit** program, more than 730 leaders of faith come out in support for marriage equality. These faith allies stand up for us at press conferences in Albany and Rochester, issue statements countering false religious claims and meet with legislators and press. This impressive list is an invaluable resource for editorial board meetings and legislative visits.
 - The Pride Agenda and its coalition partners release New York Business for Marriage including over 250 statewide and local businesses, making the case that marriage improves the economy of the state, making it easier for companies to hire and increasing state revenue. **The Pride Agenda’s Pride in My Workplace’s** deep roots in companies across New York State provided inroads to decision-makers and helped secure large corporate support including The Corcoran Group, Armani Exchange, McGraw-Hill and Ogilvy & Mather.
 - Through years of work of **the Pride Agenda’s Pride in Our Union**, the Pride Agenda has the support of unions representing 2.4 million New Yorkers, which we were able to highlight at press conferences upstate and hosted by the New York State AFL-CIO downstate. We used the state-of-the-art facilities at 1199SEIU to host the coalition phone bank, and benefited from statements on our behalf from labor leaders.
- *June 2011* – As the result of **years of hearts and minds work by the Pride Agenda**, its supporters and its allies, **public opinion reaches a record high of 58%** according to the June Quinnipiac poll.
- *June 2011* – **Over the last several years, the Pride Agenda has met with the editorial boards** of the state’s major publications, sometimes multiple times, to help expand support for marriage equality in the media. Virtually all of them have written in support of the legislation, with Long Island’s *Newsday* and the Rochester’s *Democrat and Chronicle* joining the chorus in 2011.
- *April – June 2011* –As part of the New Yorkers United for Marriage coalition effort that results in more than 125,000 New York State voter contacts, the Pride Agenda helps organize phone banks upstate and downstate that result in thousands of calls from supportive constituents in key districts to their senators. The Pride Agenda also

generates thousands of calls and emails through action alerts and a click-to-call tool, delivers thousands of hand-signed postcards and sends hundreds of photos of families to Albany that include letters urging the senators to support marriage.

- *May 2011* – Longtime **Pride Agenda supporters** were featured in over 200,000 mailers and in television ads in key regions on behalf of the coalition.
- *May 2011* – The Empire State Pride Agenda holds its annual advocacy day, **Equality & Justice Day**, in Albany, where **over 1,200 New Yorkers rally for their rights** and meet with their legislators asking them to support marriage equality, the transgender rights bill and our fair share of health resources.
- *April 2011* - The Empire State Pride Agenda joins forces with Freedom to Marry, Human Rights Campaign, Log Cabin Republicans and Marriage Equality New York to form **New Yorkers United for Marriage**, a bi-partisan coalition dedicated to ensuring the passage of marriage equality legislation in the Empire State. **The Pride Agenda serves as the administrator and fiscal agent of the coalition.**
- *November 2010* – The Empire State Pride Agenda **endorsed 31 senate candidates, 46 assembly candidates and 4 statewide candidates in favor of LGBT equality**, with staff support in key districts, resulting in two more votes for marriage in the senate, all pro-LGBT candidates for statewide office winning their seats, and a champion for marriage in the governor’s seat. Due in part to our mobilization and positioning, Carl Paladino’s popularity took a nosedive after anti-gay comments. The elections show that being against LGBT issues in New York is a political detriment and being pro-equality is a political plus.
- *October 2010* – The Pride Agenda engages in **campaign activity across the state** on behalf of its endorsed candidates, including phone banking, volunteer recruitment and mass mailings. The Pride Agenda creates and sends flyers to thousands of its supporters in Queens highlighting pro-LGBT candidate Tony Avella versus longtime anti-LGBT incumbent Frank Padavan and his vote against marriage equality. Avella goes on to win the State Senate seat.
- *September 2010* – **The Pride Agenda’s endorsed candidate, Tim Kennedy, wins** the Buffalo State Senate primary election against incumbent and fellow Democrat Bill Stachowski who consistently voted “no” on LGBT issues, including the December 2009 marriage vote. Kennedy goes on to win the general election.
- *June 2010* - Passage of legislation to allow same-sex couples to adopt a child together. Although a same-sex partner had previously been allowed to adopt their partner’s biological child and for same-sex partners to adopt a non-biological child sequentially in a process known as “second-parent adoption,” it had been unclear whether New York law permitted a joint adoption by unmarried adult couples when neither is the biological parent.
- *June 2010* – Passage of legislation to require that any employer who provides bereavement leave for the death of an employee’s spouse, or the child, parent or

other relatives of the spouse must also provide the same benefits for a same-sex committed partner.

- *May 2010* – On the day he announces he is running for governor, **Andrew Cuomo provides the Pride Agenda with a video message** played at its Spring Dinner in Rochester where he proclaims his full support for LGBT issues, including marriage equality.
- *May 2010* - **The Pride Agenda launches a massive supporter identification campaign**, taking to the streets to find mostly non-LGBT New Yorkers who support marriage equality. The effort includes a door-to-door canvass in northeast Queens, where in three months, a team of staff and volunteers knocks on 10,970 doors, has over 6,000 one-on-one conversations and identifies 2,082 new marriage equality supporters.
- *February 2010* – Passage of legislation that enables a loved one to make health care decisions when the patient is not able to do so. The bill places a same-sex or opposite-sex domestic partner, just like a spouse, ahead of a surviving child or parent in making these decisions.
- *December 2009* – First-ever State Senate vote held on marriage equality bill, which fails by eight votes.
- *May 2009* - **The Pride Agenda releases its first-ever television ad campaign calling on the State Senate to pass the marriage bill**. The ad campaign depicts real New York families who are hurt when same-sex couples are not allowed to marry. The campaign runs for five weeks.
- *March 2009* - **The Pride Agenda releases a series of reports and video clips** aimed at neutralizing the distortions and lies it knows will be interjected into the campaign by opponents of marriage equality. The Pride Agenda's report and video clip "Marriage Equality and Religion: The Massachusetts Experience" is widely circulated online by activists and groups countering the favorite myth spread by opponents that marriage for same-sex couples jeopardizes religious freedom.
- *2009* - Governor Paterson selects Kirsten Gillibrand to fill the U.S. Senate seat formerly held by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. **The Pride Agenda speaks to Gillibrand the night before her nomination** about her positions on marriage equality, the Defense of Marriage Act and a range of other important LGBT issues, playing an important role in the Governor's final deliberations before he names Gillibrand to the seat.

Shortly after Senator Gillibrand's appointment and after years of work by the Pride Agenda and the LGBT community, Senator Schumer announces his support for marriage equality and a full repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act. Schumer becomes the highest ranking member of the U.S. Congress to support marriage equality.

- *August 2008* - The Pride Agenda's organizing program **Pride in Our Union succeeds in having the New York State AFL-CIO, representing 2.1 million working New Yorkers, unanimously pass resolutions** calling upon the New York

State Legislature to pass bills that provide marriage equality for same-sex couples, ban discrimination against transgender people and combat bullying and harassment of LGBT youth in public schools. This victory occurs after two years of union-by-union education work with rank-and-file members on the three issues and is a major milestone in the Pride Agenda's work to expand support for LGBT issues outside of the LGBT community.

- *June 2008* – Passage of legislation that allows domestic partners—including same-sex couples—access to the protections granted by Family Court.
- *May 2008* – Governor Paterson instructs all state agencies to respect legal out-of-state marriage of same-sex couples in regards to the 1,324 state-based rights and responsibilities that flow through those agencies. This decision by the Governor is the **culmination of four years of step-by-step work by the Pride Agenda and Lambda Legal** to have municipalities, state agencies and private employers affirm the New York State Attorney General's 2004 position that out-of-state marriages should be treated like all other marriages in regards to the provision of benefits and services.
- *September 2007* - The State Supreme Court in Albany County dismisses a case that challenged the New York State Comptroller's 2004 decision to treat out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples the same as any other legal marriage in terms of benefits afforded to state employees through the New York State Retirement System.
- *June 2007* – New York State Assembly passes marriage equality bill for the first time ever with bipartisan support.
- *May 2007* - **The Pride Agenda and the New York City Bar Association release a first-ever report showing that there are 1,324 New York state statutes and regulations that confer a right or duty on married individuals** in New York State. The report is regularly cited in newspaper articles and editorials as proof of why access to marriage for same-sex couples is a critical part of being treated equally in America.
- *May 2007* - The Pride Agenda's organizing **program Pride in Our Union wins support of labor unions representing 1,000,000 New Yorkers for marriage equality** and 320,000 New Yorkers for the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA). Winning labor support for marriage equality and GENDA forces labor-backed state legislators to begin re-examining their views on the political liabilities they believe are associated with supporting LGBT issues.
- *April 2007* – New York State Department of Civil Service mandates that all state and local government entities that participate in the New York State health plan will make legally married same-sex spouses of government employees eligible for spousal health and other benefits.
- *April 2007* - Governor Spitzer becomes the first Governor in the nation to introduce a marriage equality bill.

- *August 2006* – **The Pride Agenda develops a multi-year strategy to educate and organize support for marriage** across the state with the goal of passage of the bill through the New York State Legislature.
- *July 2006* – New York State’s Court of Appeals finds no Constitutional mandate to provide same-sex couples access to marriage. The decision came after more than two years of litigation, community education and organizing around the issue. The Pride Agenda mobilized thousands to turn out at seven rallies across the state hours after the decision was made public to officially begin the campaign to pass a marriage equality bill in the legislature.
- *May 2006* - On May 30, the evening before the New York State Court of Appeals holds oral argument on the right of same-sex couples to marry, **the Pride Agenda holds six community gatherings across the state in houses of worship** to send a message to New York that all families deserve the freedom to marry. **Over 1,000 LGBT New Yorkers and allies in the faith, labor and choice communities attend.**
- *April 2006* – Passage of legislation giving surviving domestic partners legal authority to control a loved one’s bodily remains on the same basis as spouses. This marks the first time that domestic partners, like spouses, are given legal priority over other blood relatives like parents, children or siblings.
- *January 2006* – The **Pride Agenda reinvents its Marriage Ambassador program as a Community Ambassador program**, creating a corps of well trained multi-issue activists in local communities to build support for LGBT issues on the ground.
- *April 2005* - In a letter to the Pride Agenda, the Bloomberg Administration announces it will treat marriages of same-sex couples performed out-of-state the same as other marriages in those areas where marital status is a factor in the city's provision of services and the rights and responsibilities it provides city residents.
- *February 2005* - A lower court in Manhattan finds it is unconstitutional to deny same-sex couples marriage licenses and orders New York City to begin issuing licenses. Mayor Bloomberg appeals the ruling, refusing to issue licenses based upon a lower court's decision. He also states his support for New York State legalizing marriage for same-sex couples, becoming the first Republican elected official in New York State and one of the few in the nation to do so.
- *October 2004* – Comptroller Alan Hevesi says New York State and Local Retirement System will treat the Canadian marriages of same-sex couples the same as an opposite-sex New York marriage, making them eligible for such things as an accidental death benefit and cost-of-living adjustment for surviving spouses.
- *August 2004* - Pressure builds on the State Senate to pass a Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). **The Pride Agenda works with local LGBT organizations and activists across the state to pressure Senators not to act.** The State Senate adjourns for the year without voting on the measure, keeping New York State as one of only eleven states without such a law.

- *August 2004* – Passage of legislation amending the state's racing, pari-mutual and breeding laws to explicitly give free racetrack passes, cards and badges to spouses, domestic partners and children of owners, trainers and jockeys.
- *August 2004* – Passage of legislation guaranteeing same-sex and opposite-sex domestic partners the same rights as spouses and next-of-kin when visiting loved ones in hospitals, nursing homes and health-care facilities. This is the first New York State legislation to actually use the term "domestic partner" and include a definition of that term.
- *April 2004* – New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer issues an opinion saying that state law does not authorize the issuance of licenses to same-sex couples, but that this raises important constitutional questions involving equal protection that must be decided by the courts. Same-sex couples across the state immediately file lawsuits to resolve these questions. The AG also states that, under state law, marriages of same-sex couples performed in jurisdictions outside the state should be treated like all other marriages in New York. This opens the door to couples getting married elsewhere and coming home to ask for equal treatment and recognition of their marriages.
 - **The Pride Agenda works with municipalities and state agencies to have them affirm the Attorney General's position on out-of-state marriages.** Buffalo, Rochester, Nyack and Brighton agree to treat marriages of same-sex couples the same as other marriages in the provision of city services.
- *February 2004* – A permanent change in New York State Department of Labor policy provides unemployment benefits to same-sex partners in committed relationships who voluntarily leave a job to follow a partner to another locality. With this change in state policy, same-sex partners are now treated the same as married spouses in similar circumstances.
- *February 2004* - Jason West, Mayor of New Paltz, solemnizes marriage of same-sex couples, moving the national spotlight on marriage from California to New York. Spontaneous marriage actions and rallies take place in New York City as the LGBT community expresses its frustration at being denied the right to marry.
 - **The Pride Agenda holds a series of town meetings on marriage all across New York State** with local LGBT organizations and activists to provide the LGBT community the information and resources it needs to build support in local communities for marriage.
- *January 2004* – **The Pride Agenda launches the "Marriage Ambassador" program**, an intensive messaging, media and organizing program designed to train local activists to speak powerfully on marriage equality to legislators and the press. The goal of the Marriage Ambassador program is to increase the capacity of local leaders and community activists to conduct outreach and education in their community and to coordinate local initiatives to build support for marriage equality. This will eventually result in over 600 trained ambassadors working across the state.

- *September 2003* - Passage of a resolution by the New York State Democratic Committee supporting the right of same-sex couples to civil marriage and promising to work to defeat any measure in New York State that limits access by same-sex couples to civil marriage.
- *June 2003* - Passage of legislation enabling the domestic partners, both same-sex and opposite-sex, of credit union members to also become members and have full access to banking services.
- *January 2003* - Following the passage of the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act (SONDA), the Pride Agenda re-focuses its legislative priorities, placing a greater emphasis on family issues and winning the legal rights and protections the state provides to all other families through marriage. This is a natural next step after the Pride Agenda's work in 2001 and 2002 on behalf of LGBT families who lost loved ones in the 9/11 attacks and pre-dates the battle on marriage that few people realize is just over the horizon.
 - **The Pride Agenda launches a new organizing effort called *Pride in Action to build support among New Yorkers on issues that are fundamental to winning equality and justice for LGBT people***. The program places a priority on reaching out to communities of faith (Pride in the Pulpit), labor (Pride in Our Union) and business (Pride in My Workplace) for support.
- *October 2002* - New York State's Crime Victims Board extends Governor Pataki's 9/11 Executive Order that granted surviving partners of gay victims of the terrorist attacks benefits equal to those that spouses receive. With this action, domestic partners of all homicide victims, and not just those of 9/11 victims, will receive benefits equal to spouses.
- *September 2002* - Approval of a domestic partner registry in Westchester County by the county legislature.
- *June 2002* - Passage of legislation amending the state's insurance law to enable individuals to take out life insurance on their domestic partner.
- *December 2001* - the Albany County Legislature votes to extend health benefits to domestic partners of county employees.

September 11 Changes Everything - The Pride Agenda begins advocating with relief agencies and New York State for equal treatment of same-sex surviving partners and families of 9/11 victims. The 9/11 work the Pride Agenda does in subsequent months shines a national spotlight on the plight of same-sex survivors and families of 9/11 victims and re-ignites a discussion in the press and in policymaking circles across the nation about "family" and "who is family." As a result of this work, all public 9/11-specific relief in New York is fully inclusive of LGBT families. This includes the following victories:

- *October 2001* - Governor Pataki issues an Executive Order making surviving domestic partners of 9/11 victims eligible for governmental relief through the

state's Crime Victims Board. He extended this Executive Order in October 2002 making it permanent for domestic partners of all crime victims, not just 9/11.

- *November 2001* – New York State's World Trade Center Relief Fund explicitly treats domestic partners as the equivalent of surviving spouses in the application materials for the fund.
 - *May 2002* - "The September 11th Victims and Families Relief Act" is introduced by Governor Pataki, Attorney General Spitzer, Speaker Silver and Majority Leader Bruno and signed into law, including language in the legislative intent section of the bill specifying that it is the legislature's desire that domestic partners be eligible for federal fund awards. This provision was included to provide Special Master Kenneth Feinberg an additional basis in state law to award federal fund compensation to gay partners of 9/11 victims.
 - *June 2002* – Passage of legislation that amends the state's workers compensation law to provide domestic partners of 9/11 victims, which includes same-sex partners of 9/11 victims, the same death benefits that are provided to spouses under the state's workers compensation law.
 - *June 2002* – Passage of legislation making domestic partners of 9/11 victims and their children eligible for the state's World Trade Center memorial scholarship program.
- *January 2001* - Domestic partnership health, dental and vision benefits extended to Senate employees.
 - *1998* - Passage of a comprehensive domestic partnership law in New York City. Passage of this bill ended a 10-year struggle to achieve equal recognition of couples in domestic partner relationships. It set a new national benchmark by covering all areas under city jurisdiction, extending to registered domestic partners equal access to services and responsibilities currently extended to spouses. This followed a **1997 letter from Mayor Giuliani pledging to the Pride Agenda to support passage of comprehensive domestic partner legislation**, which had been stalled in the New York City Council by his supporters.
 - *June 1997* - Preservation of rent succession rights for same-sex domestic partners in the state's rent regulation law.
 - State Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno announced his intention to end succession rights for gay and lesbian partners in rent-regulated apartments. **The Pride Agenda organizes a series of countermeasures**. One month later, Bruno drops his plans to end these rights.