

Delga

The newsletter of DELGA, Liberal Democrats for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality

September 2008



Welcome to Bournemouth

- DELGA's Motion on LGBT Asylum Seekers
- Out To Win: LGBT Candidates Network
- Your Bournemouth Diary Highlights
- Partnership Rights Across Europe Campaign
- Lib Dem LGBT News Roundup

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Search for
"Lib Dems for LGBT Equality"

- over 110 members already!

Our Exec

The 2008 DELGA executive are:

Honorary President

Evan Harris MP

Chair

Jen Yockney

jen.yockney@delga.org.uk

Secretary

Adrian Trett

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Treasurer

Dave Page

dave.page@delga.org.uk

General Members

Richard Brown

Gemma Charlton

Eve Friday

Ross Pepper

Vice Presidents

Christina Baron

Bernard Greaves

Hannah Kaitlin-Boyer

Contact Us

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Take Charge?

DELGA's AGM will take place on Sunday 14th September. All positions on the exec are up for election, and there are a couple of constitutional changes proposed. Care to take charge of the organisation's finances or take the public lead as the new Chair, or simply want to get actively involved in driving the organisation and the Lib Dem representation in the LGBT communities? As well as Exec posts we are also looking for State and Regional Reps who are not exec members but act as a contact point in their areas, and can help co-ordinate our Pride representation in 2009.

If you're reading this after the AGM there's a good chance of spaces needing co-optees - don't assume the roles have all been filled!

Bournemouth - volunteers still wanted!

DELGA are already looking forward to the Lib Dem Autumn Conference 2008, to be held in Bournemouth - home to Britain's fifth biggest LGBT community. As usual there will be a DELGA stall in the exhibition area of the conference, and work towards it started early.

However, to ensure the stall is staffed throughout the conference we need volunteers to serve a slot or two on the stall rota. If you will be in Bournemouth for conference and can spare some time on any day of conference, please contact the secretary (secretary@delga.org.uk) to volunteer - or come and introduce yourself at the stall.

The essential Bournemouth Conference Guide

DELGA Annual General Meeting

Sunday, September 14 at 1:00pm

Connaught Hotel, Priory 1 room

DELGA / Stonewall Joint Fringe Meeting

Monday, September 15, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

The Wessex Hotel, Bryanston Suite

Speakers: Lord Chris Rennard, Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP, Lynne Featherstone MP, Ben Summerskill. Chair: Jen Yockney.

DELGA Drinks

Tuesday, September 16, at 8:00pm

Branscombe Arms, 152 Commercial Road, Bournemouth

The Official DELGA social

Out To Win

The Lib Dem LGBT Candidates Network

Even in 2008, standing for elected office as an out lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person can be challenging. Should you make reference to your gender or sexuality in your campaign? How should you respond if your opponents try to use it against you?

Launched at Lib Dem Conference in Bournemouth in September 2008, Out To Win is the peer networking organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Lib Dem candidates at every level - from Parish Council to the European Parliament.

You don't have to be a member of DELGA to join, though we welcome it if you are already or choose to join us. Obviously, you do have to be a member of the Liberal Democrats.

The network is specifically for self-identified lesbian, gay, bi and trans candidates. Heterosexual cisgender people who want to show their support are encouraged to either join or donate to DELGA or to help spread the word by passing Out To Win flyers to their LGBT Lib Dem colleagues or include weblinks to lgbt.libdems.org.uk/pages/out-to-win.html in websites and blogs.

New members are welcome - you can download a form from the website, or pick one up and join us at the DELGA stall at Federal Conference.

lgbt.libdems.org.uk/pages/out-to-win.html

Calling DELGA's women members!

If you're coming to Federal Conference, then the best present you could give DELGA is a little of your time.

While we welcome any supporter as a member, as an organisation we don't recruit nearly enough women - and it's time that changed. One of the things that we think can help change it is for our conference stalls not to look like we're a "boys club" - and that's where you come in!

Please spare a couple of hours on the stall to help change our image. Email secretary@delga.org.uk and let us know when you're free to help - or drop by the DELGA stall at conference.

Girls!
Girls!
Girls!



Westminster & More

A roundup of news from the Lib Dems on LGBT matters since Liverpool Conference

As April began DELGA welcomed the news that the new Equality and Human Rights Commission had given a commitment to prioritise legal cases in new areas of equality, including sexual orientation, to help start to build case law. DELGA Chair **Jen Yockney** said, "while winning legal rights to equality has been an important step, we now need to help bisexual, lesbian, gay and transgender people to understand the rights they now have, and to be able to act upon them. Test cases will send important signals both to LGBT people and to employers, businesses and wider society about how things have changed."

In May, the European Parliament voted to adopt a report by the Liberal Democrat MEP for the West Midlands, **Liz Lynne**, calling for protection for bisexual, gay and lesbian people from discrimination.

Speaking in Brussels Liz said: "Anti-discrimination and the protection of human rights are the fundamental principles of the European Union and it is vital that the millions of people currently excluded from anti-discrimination legislation in access to goods and services are given the equal rights they are entitled to as European citizens.

"Millions of individuals encounter discrimination everyday. A comprehensive horizontal directive covering access to goods and services would tackle this discrimination and break down the barriers currently faced by so many.

Also in May we saw the conclusion to a story that had come to prominence during Liverpool conference.

DELGA welcomed the announcement that **Mehdi Kazemi**, an Iranian who said he would be killed if returned to his homeland because of his sexual orientation, was at last granted asylum in the UK.

Ben Summerskill, chief executive of Stonewall praised the work that **Simon Hughes**, Mehdi's local MP, did in pressing the government to intervene when Mehdi's asylum application faced refusal and he was threatened with deportation.

June saw the publication of the Equalities Bill. Liberal Democrat Youth and Equality Spokesperson, **Lynne Featherstone** responded, "Efforts to tackle entrenched inequality are welcome, but serious questions must be asked about why the private sector is getting off so lightly."

London Pride featured party leader **Nick Clegg** on the main stage giving a stirring speech emphasising the need for the fight against homophobic bullying and to ensure tolerance and freedom for all LGBT communities to which our party is at the forefront of ensuring those views are maintained, to which the crowd gave him a warm ovation.

Later in July, Shadow Health Secretary **Norman Lamb** spoke out on the need for better sexual health service funding. "It is particularly disturbing to see such a large number of young people contracting STIs. The Government must now ensure that all children receive quality sex and relationship education." It seems that sexual health services are one of the 'easiest' things to cut funding for when budgets are tight, though the consequences of doing so are clear.

Finally on a sad note, we lost two great LGBT campaigners from outside the Lib Dems this year too: **Leo Abse**, the Labour MP who piloted the original discrimination of sex between men in 1967, died in August. **Lynne Featherstone** said: "As a nation we should be grateful for his contribution as a Parliamentarian. He spearheaded some of the most momentous changes in legislation, paving the way for greater equality. His successes in Parliament freed many from the shackles of paternalism and bigotry, allowing us some of the basic liberties we now take for granted."

Also, **Paul Patrick**, co-founder of what is now Schools OUT and of the annual LGBT History Month died in March. He was a vivid and passionate communicator of the need to achieve real change for our communities.

LGBT Asylum DELGA Motion at conference: Sunday 530pm

If you're at Bournemouth and are a voting rep **please** make sure you are in the main conference hall for the debate on our motion (joint with Hackney Local Party) on LGBT Asylum Seekers. If you aren't a voting rep, encourage friends who are to go and support the motion. Actually, do that even if you **are** a voting rep!

The motion in question is "F21 Deportation to States which Persecute on the Grounds of Sexuality and Gender Identity"

The motion will be moved by DELGA's original Chair, Brian Stone, and summated by our current Secretary, Adrian Trett. Be sure to give them an extra loud round of applause!

Liverpool Spring Conference came amid lots of media attention for the case of Mehdi Kazemi, an Iranian seeking asylum who if returned home faced severe treatment (at best!) - his case is far from unique. As a result, asylum is a hot topic for debate in the LGBT communities at present and this motion should garner us plenty of attention from the "pink press" - so also remember to write letters to gay magazines and papers praising the party's policy if the motion is passed!

If you'd like to learn more, be sure to visit the DELGA stall in the conference exhibition area which will have plenty of information on the issue..



*The Brighton conference LGBT equality fringe panel l-r Ben Summerskill, Jen Yockney, Jo Swinson MP, Steve Williams MP.
This year's event is on Monday evening at 6pm - join us.*

MEP Champions Partnership Recognition Across Europe

Sharon Bowles, Lib Dem MEP for South East England is launching a campaign to gain equal recognition of UK civil partnerships in other EU Member States that also have same-sex partnership legislation.

Currently UK civil partnerships are not consistently recognised by other Member States. France for instance, though acknowledging them, does not give them the full status of their own 'pacte civil de solidarité' (PACS). A consequence of this is that there is no exemption from inheritance tax in France for a surviving partner in a UK civil partnership. Several couples who have purchased property in France have fallen into this trap with the surviving partner finding themselves liable to inheritance tax, maybe even having to sell up, at a time of bereavement. In contrast, the UK recognises French civil partnerships on a full and equal basis to UK partnerships, including exemption from inheritance tax (the same as applies to married couples).

"I see no reason for France and other Member States not to recognise Civil Partnerships on an equal basis. Several of my constituents have written to me concerning inheritance tax on property jointly owned in France. I am also aware several other MEPs have also received similar correspondence" says Sharon.

"The campaign I am launching endeavours to raise awareness of the issues surrounding civil partnerships across Europe. I personally raised this issue with the French Justice Minister, Rachida Dati, in June, both in the context of the French situation and also in view of their term in office as President of the European Council.

"Additionally, I have drafted a written declaration, with the participation of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) Europe. The declaration calls for Member States with existing same-sex partnership legislation to recognise the arrangements of other Member States that have also made provisions for same-sex partnerships, and also Calls upon the Commission to draw up guidelines for such mutual recognition by Member States with existing same-sex partnership legislation".



keep informed... at lgbt.libdems.org.uk

The best way to keep up to date all year round with what DELGA and the Party's spokespeople are up to on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues is on our website - www.delga.org.uk - take the time to register for regular email updates.

Join Us / Renew Now

About You

Name:

Address: Postcode:

Email Address:

Party membership number

Local Party:

DELGA membership number (helps us to process the form when renewing)

Return to:

DELGA
4 Cowley St
London
SW1P 3NB

Or join online with credit / debit cards or PayPal cash.

Payment by cheque, postal order or cash

Amount paid £.....
 - make payable to "DELGA".

Recommended membership rate: £15
 Unwaged / minimum £5
 Two people at same address £25

Payment by Standing Order - we will separate this to send to the bank so please complete in full

Your name and address.....

Your phone number.....

Bank name and address.....

.....Account number.....Sort code.....

Please pay £ every month/year (delete one) starting on (insert start date)
 to: Democrats for Lesbian & Gay Action Account, Lloyds TSB
 Our account number: 58572860 Our sort code: 77-15-01

Your signature.....
 Please return this form to: DELGA, 4 Cowley Street, London, SW1P 3NB