

**ELECTIONS MATTER**  
INSIDE HRC'S BATTLE TO  
ELECT PRO-EQUALITY  
CANDIDATES NATIONWIDE

**CHILD WELFARE**  
AGENCIES PUT  
LGBTQ INCLUSION  
INTO PRACTICE

**BI+ HEALTH**  
ACTIVISTS WORK TO  
ELIMINATE HEALTH  
DISPARITIES



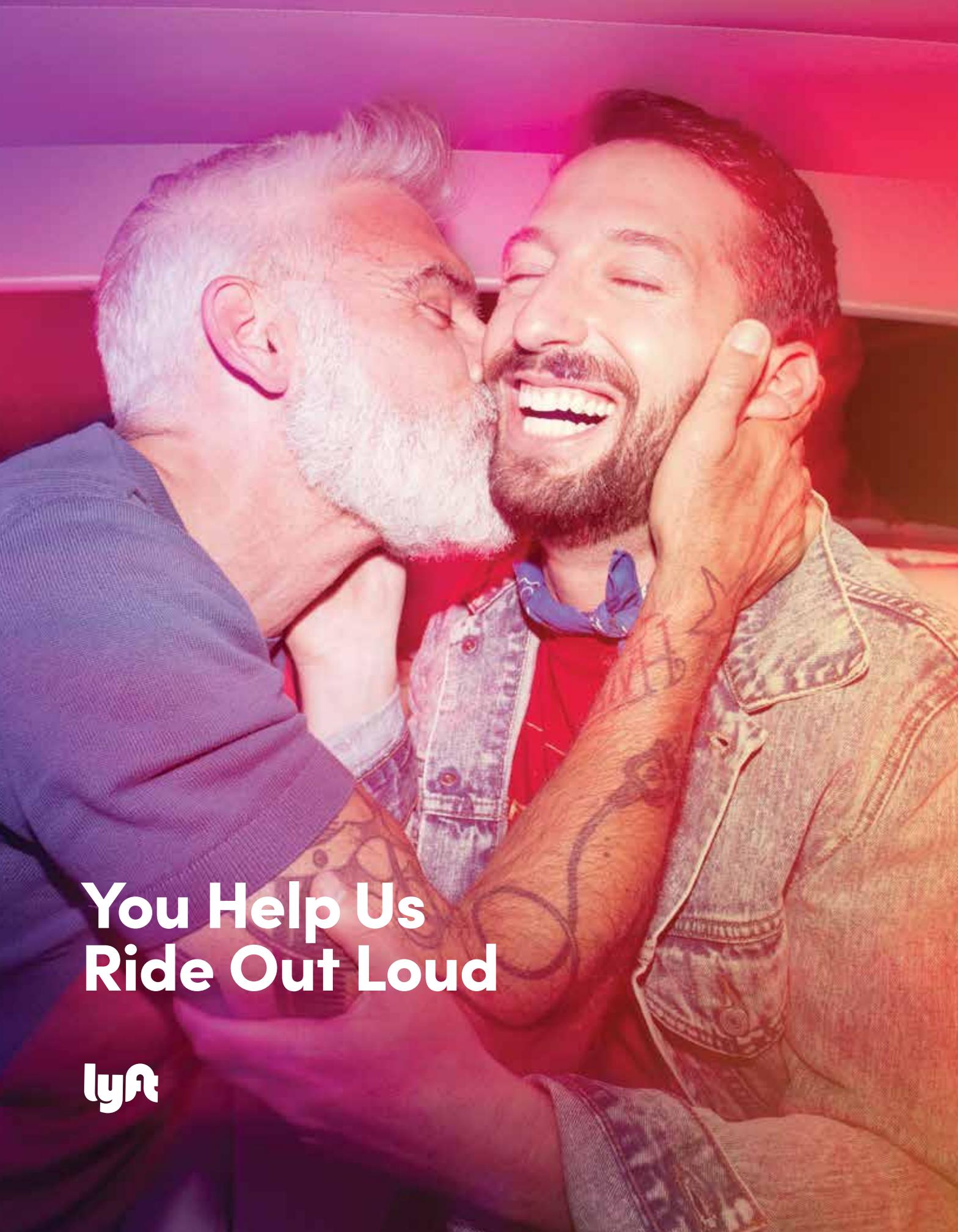
HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

# EQUALITY

WINTER 2019



# HISTORY MADE



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**DEAR FRIENDS,**

With your help, HRC made sure the 2018 midterm elections were a resounding victory for equality — and a clear rejection of Donald Trump and Mike Pence's dangerous policies and divisive politics. More than 7 million LGBTQ voters, representing 6 percent of the electorate, turned out in force in key House, Senate and state races. And together, our community helped pull the emergency brake on this reckless administration.

HRC's grassroots army of more than 3 million members and supporters sent a powerful message to anti-equality politicians: Attack us at your peril. When you come for us, we're coming for you on Election Day.

More than 480 HRC-endorsed candidates campaigned on a message of LGBTQ equality, and it helped carry them to victory. In Congress, we replaced more than two dozen anti-LGBTQ politicians and flipped the U.S. House of Representatives to a pro-equality majority that has pledged to pass the Equality Act this year.

This is what happens when LGBTQ people and our allies mobilize, organize and turn out. Now we must use this momentum to propel us forward — to pass the Equality Act, extend local protections for LGBTQ people and lay the groundwork for wins in 2020.

We can't afford to let up for one moment — because our work is as urgent as ever. In a majority of states, LGBTQ people are at risk of being fired from their jobs,

evicted from their homes or denied services simply because of who they are. Our community — particularly transgender people — faces a scourge of hate violence, made more deadly by unfettered access to guns. Young people continue to struggle against high rates of bullying, homelessness and violence just because of who they are. We have yet to end the spread of HIV despite having the tools and technology to achieve an AIDS-free generation. In all these cases, LGBTQ people of color face a disproportionate number of barriers and risks.

But you are helping us meet these challenges head on, and turn resistance into action.

HRC has never been stronger or better positioned to tackle the battles ahead — in 2020 and beyond.

There is no doubt that today, we face some of our biggest battles yet. But we also face some of our greatest opportunities. And with you standing with us, we are ready to seize them. The true strength of the Human Rights Campaign comes from the fearless army of staff, members and volunteers — all of you — who are committed to ensuring that full equality reaches every LGBTQ person across America, and around the world. Thank you for standing with us as we continue to move equality forward.

In Solidarity,

Chad Griffin  
President  
Human Rights Campaign

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**Cover:** How HRC made history by helping elect pro-equality candidates nationwide.

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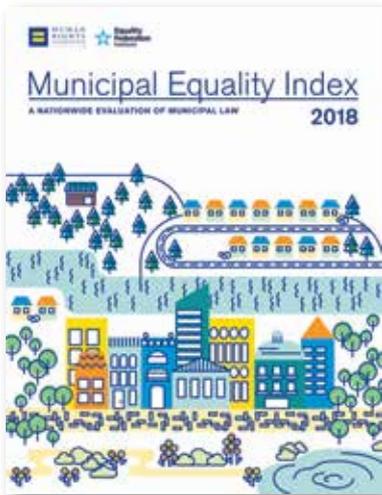


# 78

Number of municipalities across the nation earning perfect scores in HRC Foundation's Municipal Equality Index.

That's up from 11 cities in the first MEI 7 years ago. The MEI, produced in partnership with the Equality Federation Institute, is the only nationwide evaluation of LGBTQ inclusion in municipal law, policy and services.

The 2018 MEI evolved dramatically this year, instituting new benchmarks ensuring equal access to single-user facilities in public spaces, as well as protecting LGBTQ youth from bullying in city services and from dangerous so-called "conversion therapy." Read more at [hrc.org/mei](http://hrc.org/mei).



# up front

## FINDING PEACE

"We've given much thought to Matt's final resting place, and we found the Washington National Cathedral is an ideal choice," said Judy Shepard, mother of Matthew Shepard.

Two decades after he was killed in an anti-gay hate crime, Shepard was interred at the Washington National Cathedral. In his memory, HRC remains vigilant against hate and works to ensure no one is targeted because of who they are.

# 6

Number of states that banned so-called "conversion therapy" in 2018, joining 10 other U.S. jurisdictions that have done the same. The states that passed protections this year include New Hampshire, Delaware, Maryland, Hawaii and Washington, according to HRC Foundation's 2018 State Equality Index, which is a comprehensive state-by-state

report that provides a review of statewide laws and policies that affect LGBTQ people and their families.

Other notable wins: New Hampshire passed non-discrimination protections on the basis of gender identity in employment, housing and public accommodations, and Massachusetts voted to affirm non-discrimination protections for transgender people in public accommodations.

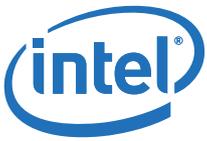
The SEI rates all 50 states plus Washington, D.C. in six areas of law. To learn more, visit [hrc.org/sei](http://hrc.org/sei).

## BLAZING A TRAIL WITH HBCU ALUMNI

"At a time when marginalized communities are under constant attack by anti-equality politicians, it has never been more important to build welcoming spaces that give LGBTQ people of color the opportunity to share their experiences and support one another," Leslie Hall, director of HRC Foundation's HBCU program, said after the HRC Foundation joined HBCU Buzz in creating the first-ever LGBTQ HBCU Alumni Network.

Through this partnership, HRC Foundation will engage LGBTQ students within the HBCU community to create an HBCU LGBTQ ombudsman, increase campus collaborations with student-driven association and produce a biweekly HBCU HRC column filled with HRC opportunities for both students and alumni.





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## EXPANDING OUR SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

A book about a lonely bunny who lives with his grandpa, Vice President Mike Pence, is teaching children about inclusivity and that love is love.

The HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools program partnered with First Book and Chronicle Books to offer educators, parents and others free copies of "A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo," a children's book by Jill Twiss about Marlon Bundo, a boy bunny, who falls in love with another boy bunny.

HRC will continue to support LGBTQ-inclusive literature that teaches children acceptance and love. Order your free Marlon Bundo books at [welcomingschools.org/marlonbundo](http://welcomingschools.org/marlonbundo).



# 17%

The percentage increase in reported hate crimes from 2017, according to FBI data.

These statistics highlight the ongoing epidemic of anti-transgender violence, as well as hate violence against other marginalized communities. Because hate crimes reporting is not mandatory, the numbers undercount — likely significantly — the reality of bias-motivated crimes.

HRC continues to press for improved reporting, passage of state laws that protect LGBTQ individuals from hate crimes and expanded education and training initiatives.



## EQUALITY ABROAD

HRC Foundation is expanding its pro-equality efforts abroad with new programs in Peru and Chile.

HRC partnered with Presente, Peru's largest LGBT advocacy group, to promote, educate and mobilize the country's business community in support of LGBTQ workers and consumers. HRC also partnered up with Iguales, Chile's most influential LGBT advocacy group.

The HRC Foundation is leading efforts to advance LGBT workplace inclusion in workplaces as the Latin America region continues to experience significant progress in LGBT equality and inclusion.

For more information on HRC global programs, visit [hrc.im/GlobalWorkplacePrograms](http://hrc.im/GlobalWorkplacePrograms) and [hrc.org/global](http://hrc.org/global).

## ANNOUNCING HRC'S 2019 YOUTH AMBASSADORS

In continuing to amplify the voices of youth activists, HRC Foundation welcomed a new class of youth ambassadors. These LGBTQ advocates will represent the HRC Foundation, adding their voices and experiences to raise awareness about

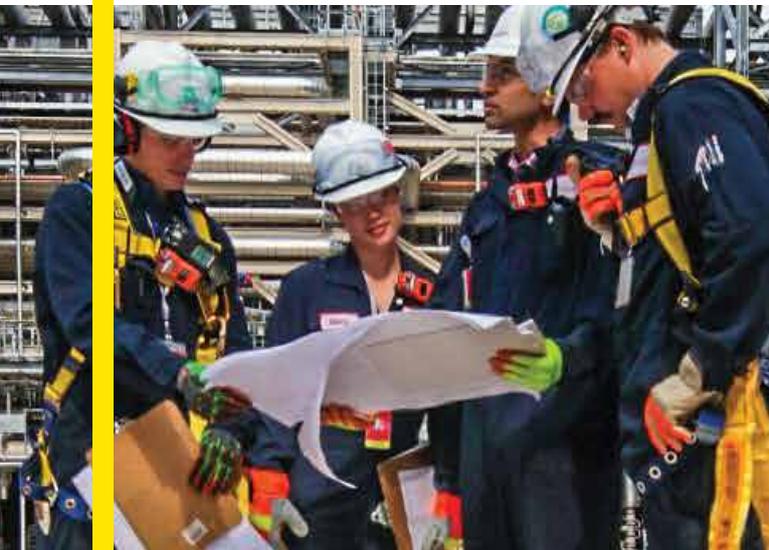
the most pressing concerns facing LGBTQ youth and our programs that promote well-being for LGBTQ youth.

They include Ace Auker, Zimar Batista, Sean Bender-Prouty, Makayla Humphrey, Sameer Jha, Jacob Kanter, Jonathan Leggette, Zoey Luna, Sam Moehlig, Ashton Mota, Seth Owen, Avi Pacheco, Gia Parr, Savannah Skyler and Nicole Talbot.





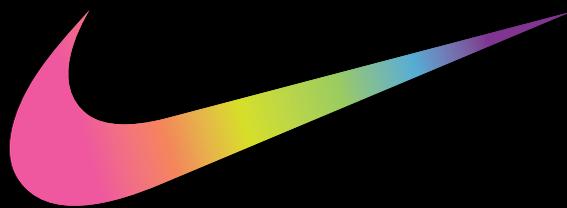
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**EQUALITY  
★ WINS ★**

# HISTORY ★ MADE

## ON ELECTION NIGHT 2018, WE MADE HISTORY.

Together, we helped elect pro-equality candidates nationwide and continued to build political power for LGBTQ people.

We have so much at stake — from the balance of the U.S. Supreme Court, to our fight for the Equality Act, to protections for transgender troops and LGBTQ students, to saving the Affordable Care Act, protecting voting rights, immigration and so much more.

HRC endorsed more than 480 pro-equality candidates nationwide and deployed 150 staff to organize and mobilize voters in more than 70 congressional, targeted Senate and key statewide races across 23 states.

Not only do we now have a pro-equality majority in the U.S. House, but we have a younger, more diverse, more female U.S. House membership than ever before.

In state legislatures, 46 states will have an openly LGBTQ person serving in a statehouse and more than 100 LGBTQ candidates were elected during the midterm elections.

Gone are the days when LGBTQ people are used as a wedge issue to turn out anti-equality voters. On the contrary, incumbents and challengers who voiced their support for equality on the campaign trail won — and they won big.

## ★ BY THE NUMBERS ★

**10**

Number of openly LGBTQ members of Congress after the election — with 2 in the U.S. Senate and 8 in the U.S. House

**65**

The percentage of voters who support the Equality Act, federal legislation that would guarantee non-discrimination protections nationwide

**80,000**

The number of doors HRC staff and volunteers knocked during get-out-the-vote efforts the last four days before Election Day

**8,500**

The number of shifts that 4,200 HRC volunteers worked in support of pro-equality candidates, clocking 30,000 volunteer hours

**32,000**

Voters HRC helped register

**97.2**

The success rate of HRC's "Equality Votes" super PAC, which is "the best track record of any group that spent on at least ten different races," according to *OpenSecrets.org*

**2:1**

The margin of voters who oppose Trump's plans to define gender entirely by gender assigned at birth and thereby remove civil rights protections for transgender people

**36,400**

The number of conversations HRC staff and volunteers held with voters at their doors and by phone on behalf of our endorsed candidates the last 4 days before the election

*continued on p. 13*



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EQUALITY WINS *cont'd from p. 11*

## ★ IN THE SENATE ★

**Tammy Baldwin** (WI), LGBTQ trailblazer, won her re-election bid.

**Kyrsten Sinema** (AZ) became the first openly bisexual senator.

## ★ IN THE HOUSE ★

**Angie Craig** (MN) became her state's first openly LGBTQ Congress member.

**David Cicilline** (RI) was re-elected and became the first openly gay member elected to U.S. House leadership.

**Sharice Davids** (KS) became the first Native American LGBTQ Congress member.



**Katie Hill** (CA) became her state's first openly bisexual Congress member.

**Sean Patrick Maloney** (NY), his state's first openly gay Congress member, was re-elected.

**Chris Pappas** (NH) became his state's first openly LGBTQ Congress member

**Mark Pocan** (WI), who's openly gay, was re-elected.

**Mark Takano** (CA), who's the first openly gay person of color elected to Congress, was re-elected.



## ★ IN STATES ★

**Jared Polis** (CO) became the nation's first openly gay governor.

**Kate Brown** (OR), who is the country's first openly bisexual statewide office-holder and first openly bisexual governor, was re-elected.



## ★ BIG WINS FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY ★

Election Day 2018 was a win for the transgender community.

Two states elected three transgender candidates to their state legislatures:

**Brianna Titone** (CO)

**Gerri Cannon** (NH)

**Lisa Bunker** (NH)

These pioneers joined Virginia's Danica Roem as the only openly transgender members of any state legislature nationwide.

Additionally, Massachusetts voters upheld transgender protections on Election Day by voting yes on 3, a ballot question that asked voters whether the state should keep a non-discrimination law that protects transgender people in public spaces.

By respecting the dignity of transgender residents and visitors, Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly made their values clear: The Bay State supports the transgender community.



## ★ HRC RISING SUCCESSES ★

Nearly two years ago, we launched HRC Rising, the largest grassroots expansion in our 39-year history. As part of that expansion, we made significant investments in key races nationwide and in six priority states: Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

**Across the six priority HRC Rising states, we:**

- Won all six U.S. Senate races, including re-electing LGBTQ pioneer **Tammy Baldwin** and electing two new pro-equality senators in **Kyrsten Sinema** and **Jacky Rosen** (NV).



- Elected four pro-equality governors, including re-electing **Tom Wolf** in Pennsylvania, and electing **Tony Evers** of Wisconsin, **Gretchen Whitmer** of Michigan and **Steve Sisolak** of Nevada.
- Flipped seven House seats in the six states alone: **AZ-02, MI-08, MI-11, PA-05, PA-06, PA-07, and PA-17.**
- Elected three new pro-equality attorneys general in **Josh Kaul** (WI); **Dana Nessel** (MI) who is openly gay and the second out attorney general; and **Aaron Ford** (NV); as well as a pro-equality secretary of state in Arizona, **Katie Hobbs.**

*continued on p. 15*



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EQUALITY WINS *cont'd from p. 13*

## ★ YOU DID IT ★

Exit polls show the LGBTQ community exceeded turnout levels from the 2016 presidential race. An estimated 7 million LGBT voters provided the margins for victory in key and critical races across the country.

In a post-election survey of voters by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, HRC found that voters recognize the actions and rhetoric of the Trump-Pence administration as a significant threat to our country. And the leading reason they voted for pro-equality candidates is because

**“THEY STAND UP FOR IMMIGRANTS, PEOPLE OF COLOR, LGBTQ PEOPLE AND OTHERS TARGETED BY TRUMP!”**

## THE EQUALITY ACT

The Equality Act — a federal bill to extend comprehensive non-discrimination protections to LGBTQ people nationwide — is HRC’s top federal legislative priority. And thanks to HRC’s millions-strong grassroots army, we’ve elected a pro-equality majority in the House has made it their top priority, too.

In fact, when Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi took the gavel on the first day of the 116th Congress, she spoke from the floor and declared, “We will make America fairer by passing the Equality Act to end discrimination against the LGBTQ community.”

Why is this bill so crucial for our community? Because despite significant steps forward, half of all LGBTQ Americans live in places where they are not protected by explicit, uniform non-discrimination protections. In 30 states, LGBTQ people are still at risk of being fired, denied housing and denied services for who they are or whom they love.

The bipartisan Equality Act would rectify that — and support is snowballing. Already, 2 out of 3 Americans say they support legislation like this, and more than 130 American businesses have signed on as corporate co-sponsors.

You can help us make history too by becoming a citizen co-sponsor today: [hrc.im/CitizenCosponsors](http://hrc.im/CitizenCosponsors).

## ★ WHERE HRC STAFF WAS DEPLOYED ★

HRC deployed staff around the country in 23 states to #TurnOut Equality Voters.





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# 'WE WILL NOT BE ERASED'

The transgender pride flag waved in the background as chants of “we will not be erased” echoed outside the White House, Washington Square Park and more locations nationwide in October.

“We are fighters. We are resilient. We have been around and we are not going anywhere,” said Jay Brown, HRC Foundation’s acting senior vice president at the rally in Washington, D.C.

The rallies came on the heels of a *New York Times* report that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services intends to redefine “sex” to intentionally exclude LGBTQ people and their families, particularly transgender people, from non-discrimination protections. The rumored language would also harm intersex people. The LGBTQ community and intersex global rights movement are battling similar societal constraints associated with narrow understandings about bodies and identities.

It’s part of the Trump-Pence administration’s destructive strategy to eliminate federal protections for LGBTQ people. And it underscores the

need for the Equality Act, which would extend non-discrimination protections to LGBTQ people nationwide. With a pro-equality majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, we are closer to this reality than ever before.

The latest discriminatory actions of the administration were met with loud and clear messages of solidarity, love and inclusion for transgender, gender non-conforming and intersex people.

“Just know that we are strong, we are powerful and our stories are heard and felt around the world. Keep speaking out and know you are not alone,” HRC Youth Ambassador Jonathan Leggette, told HRC. Leggette is also an ambassador for InterACT, an advocacy organization for intersex youth. “You are valid and #WontBeErased. Our ancestors fought for us, and we will fight for future generations.”

HRC Foundation’s Parents for Transgender Equality Council — a vocal force of parent-advocates fighting for equality — released a letter signed by more than 1,500 parents of transgender people from all 50 states and Washington,

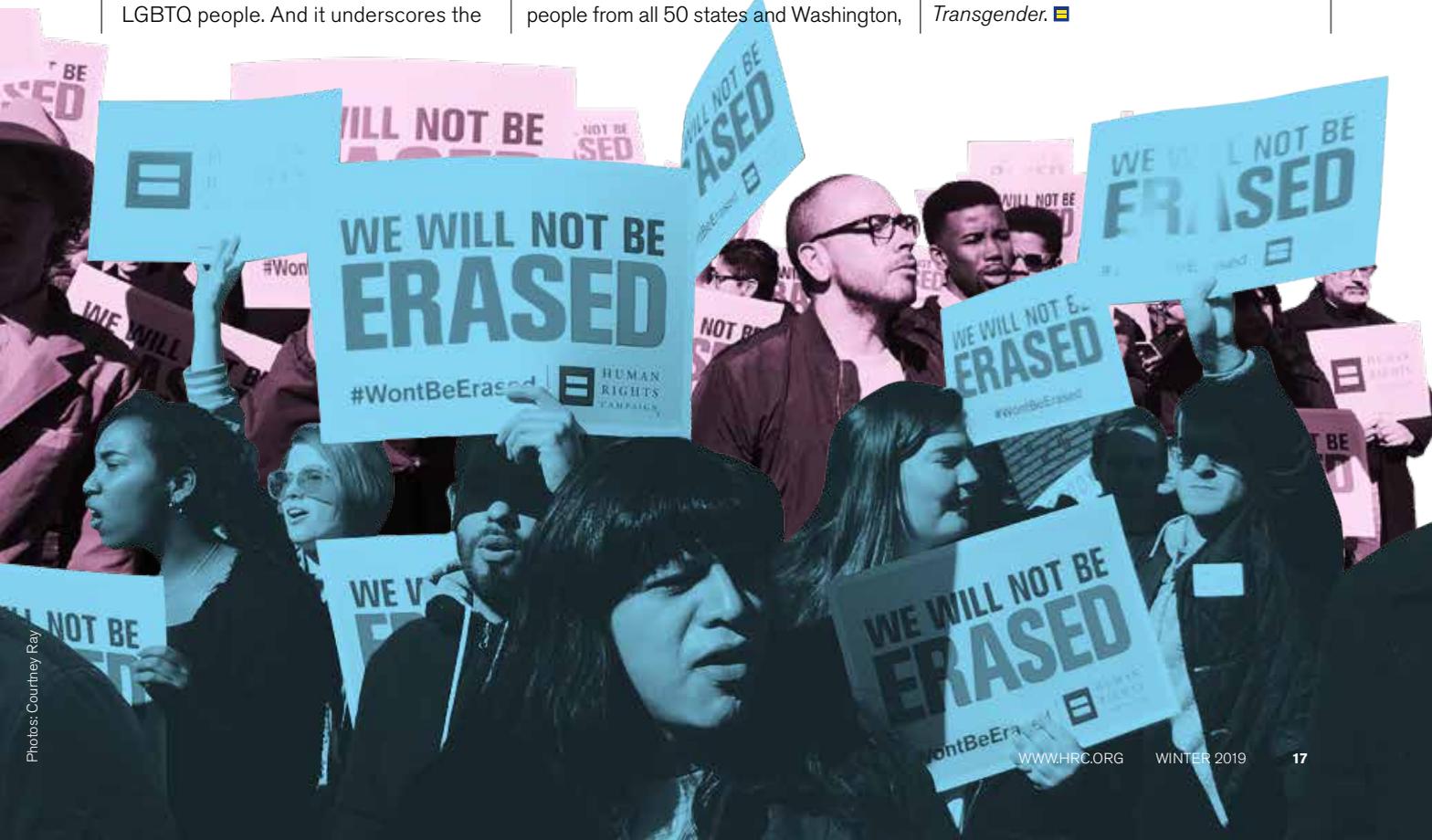
D.C., denouncing the dangerous proposal.

“As parents, all we want is for our children to be safe, healthy, and fulfilled... Sadly, however, our children also face ostracization and discrimination in far too many places,” the letter read. “We fear every day that our children will encounter bullies — but we never imagined that the most threatening bullies would be in the White House.”

Additionally, nearly 180 businesses signed a statement opposing any administrative and legislative efforts to erase protections for transgender people through reinterpretation of existing laws and regulations.

This discrimination is part of the ongoing anti-equality agenda of the Trump-Pence administration. We need a permanent solution to efforts that seek to undermine the rights of LGBTQ people. We need the Equality Act. And HRC will be working directly with members of Congress on the passage of this top priority of the new pro-equality House.

To learn more about HRC’s transgender justice work, visit [hrc.org/Transgender](http://hrc.org/Transgender). 🇺🇸



Photos: Courtney Ray



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# U.S. SUPREME COURT ALLOWS TRUMP TO IMPLEMENT TRANSGENDER MILITARY BAN

**A**fter serving two tours in Iraq, Laila Ireland — a trans veteran and spouse of an active duty trans service member — deserves better than the harm Donald Trump and Mike Pence are inflicting on her family.

“To have a leader who is pushing back on the very people who are fighting for his rights and not listening to them... We’re fighting for the rights we deserve, fighting for the people that are dying next to us in battle, just so that we can come home and be treated like second-class citizens,” Ireland told HRC in an exclusive video.

On January 22, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear cases challenging the Trump-Pence administration’s transgender military ban, but decided to allow the administration to proceed with kicking transgender troops out of the military and denying trans people the opportunity to enlist, regardless of pending lawsuits — including a case in which HRC, the American Military Partner Association, and Gender Justice

League are being represented by Lambda Legal and OutServe-SLDN.

“Allowing Donald Trump and Mike Pence’s unconscionable and unconstitutional ban on transgender troops to

**“WE’RE FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS WE DESERVE, FIGHTING FOR THE PEOPLE THAT ARE DYING NEXT TO US IN BATTLE, JUST SO THAT WE CAN COME HOME AND BE TREATED LIKE SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS”**

go into effect harms both transgender service members and our national security,” said Sarah McBride, HRC’s national press secretary. “As this critical matter makes its way through the courts, brave

transgender patriots deserve to have their constitutional rights protected.”

Banning brave, qualified transgender troops from openly serving their country is discriminatory and unconstitutional — and a majority of Americans in all 50 states oppose the ban.

It’s also dangerous: top military officials, bipartisan lawmakers and national security officials have warned that the policy will harm our military readiness.

“It’s an enormous miscarriage of justice ... it’s terribly damaging to those who are serving in our country’s Armed Forces,” said HRC Press Secretary Charlotte Clymer, a transgender veteran.

That’s why HRC is doubling down and continuing to fight to protect thousands of brave transgender troops until we defeat this discriminatory policy once and for all. We’re thankful to Lambda Legal and Outserve-SLDN for their tireless work representing us in this case. HRC will remain on the frontlines of this fight until we defeat this ban once and for all. 🇺🇸



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(From L to R) Dr. Amena Johnson, Harry Morgan Jr. and Tia Brooks

# **BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM FOR LGBTQ YOUTH**

By Rokia Hassanein

**T**o Dr. Amena Johnson, having empathy and understanding are the most important ways to protect LGBTQ youth in child welfare systems.

"In order to make a difference in a person's life, you have to serve the whole person," Johnson told *Equality*. "Their race, gender identity, sexual orientation and more. We cannot focus on certain parts and ignore others if we want to make things better."

Johnson is the supervisor for the AFFIRM program at Prince George's County Department of Social Services in Maryland, which supports LGBTQ youth and their families in the county by helping youth improve coping skills and providing peer support. It also helps parents and caregivers celebrate, honor and validate LGBTQ identities and experiences and recognize the impact of discrimination and stigma on the well-being of youth.

HRC Foundation's All Children — All Families program, which helps

child welfare agencies serve LGBTQ children, youth and families, teamed up with the county to provide staff training on ensuring safety, permanency and well-being for all LGBTQ youth in the county's care.

**BY EDUCATING STAFF AND EQUIPPING THEM WITH THE SKILLS TO ASSIST YOUTH, HRC FOUNDATION AIMS TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF LGBTQ YOUTH IN THE SYSTEM.**

This work, along with the AFFIRM program, is funded by the LGBTQ2S Quality Improvement Center at the University of Maryland School of Social Work, a groundbreaking national effort to build new evidence-based strategies for improving services for LGBTQ youth and their families.

"I have had foster parents tell me that this training gave them information and resources that they used to go home and talk to their youth. They have also liked the fact that we are a resource for them and their youth to use if they need," Johnson said.

The ACAF training is an educational initiative tailored to child welfare agencies. The goal of the LGBTQ training is to provide foundational knowledge and skills to child welfare professionals. By educating staff and equipping them with the skills to assist youth, HRC Foundation aims to improve the lives of LGBTQ youth in the system. The training is one of 13 different interventions being evaluated through the national program.

Harry Morgan, AFFIRM caregiver specialist, told *Equality* that he considers the agency to be a safe space for LGBTQ youth, but there is always more work to be done.

"Having this epiphany sparked a major interest in LGBTQ advocacy and education," Morgan said. "I am especially interested in bridging my passion for coaching and educating human service professionals with improving outcomes for LGBTQ youth."

Social worker Tia Brooks, who has been involved in creating spaces for LGBTQ youth since college and is now a youth specialist at AFFIRM, said that to be successful, county officials are taking an intersectional approach. That means recognizing that barriers and experiences around race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion and other identities can create different environments for youth in care.

"In today's climate we must always remember that this work is intersectional," Brooks told *Equality*. "The way youth filter life or deal with discrimination may have a different impact on their emotional well-being. They may need to know that you are comfortable with their LGBTQ+ identity if things arise that are impacting their intersecting identities."

In April 2018, ACAF trained 210 child adult and family services staff. In early 2019, ACAF trainings will be implemented in the community services and family investment divisions. Once

*continued on p. 23*



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these trainings are complete, the entire agency will have received LGBTQ competency training.

There have already been success stories. One staff member told Johnson how much of a difference the training made in her professional and personal life.

"She comes from a very religious background where being LGBTQ is taboo," Johnson said. "She felt that the training helped her be more accepting with the families that she worked with as well as be more accepting of her own LGBTQ child."

This type of acceptance saves lives. Research shows that as many as one out of every five youth in foster care identifies as LGBTQ. Too often these young people have entered care partly due to some level of family rejection because of their diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and then they continue to face discrimination while in care.

HRC Foundation's 2018 research report in partnership with the University of Connecticut found troubling trends

# 210

## CHILD ADULT AND FAMILY SERVICES STAFF TRAINED IN 2018

among the more than 12,000 LGBTQ youth respondents. Sixty-seven percent report that they've heard family members make negative comments about LGBTQ people. Nearly half of LGBTQ youth who are out to their parents say their families make them feel bad for being LGBTQ. Trans youth are more than twice as likely as their LGBTQ cisgender peers to be taunted or mocked by their family.

The findings also underscore Johnson's and Brooks' points around serving the whole person. LGBTQ youth of color are twice as likely as their white LGBTQ peers to hear their family make negative comments about their LGBTQ

identity and only 11 percent of LGBTQ youth of color respondents believe their racial or ethnic group is regarded positively in the U.S.

These groundbreaking ACAF trainings could have an impact on child welfare systems nationwide.

"These trainings afford child welfare systems the opportunity to examine current practices and policies to determine if they are equipped to deal with the needs of youth," Morgan said. "Those agencies who rise to the call to overhaul their system and become more inclusive and affirming can serve as models to other counties across the U.S."

As the agency continues to serve as a model for LGBTQ inclusivity, county officials know they have a long way to go.

"This work requires compassion, not only for LGBTQ youth and their families, but for human service professionals as well, who are embarking on this journey of inclusion," Morgan said.

Learn more about the HRC Foundation's work to support LGBTQ youth in foster care at [hrc.org/acaf](http://hrc.org/acaf). 🏳️‍🌈

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# ACTIVISTS WORK TO SAY BYE-BYE TO BI+ HEALTH DISPARITIES

By Rokia Hassanein

Even after 42 years identifying as bisexual, coming out as bi remains a difficult experience for international speaker Robyn Ochs.

"I am part of a community that faces serious health disparities," Ochs, who is also the editor of *Bi Women Quarterly* and two anthologies, told *Equality*. "To this day, I fear that when I come out to them as bi, people will see me differently, that they will perceive me in a negative light and that their stereotypes about my bisexuality will become the only thing they see and an obstacle to our interactions."

As we work to address anti-LGBTQ bias and discrimination in the health care system, it's imperative to understand the specific needs of people who identify as bisexual — or bi+, an umbrella term that also includes queer, pansexual or fluid identities.

Experiences among bi+ people in health care settings remain rarely discussed by community organizers, medical professionals and researchers, but activists like Ochs and Lauren Beach are working to change that.

"The biggest challenge to researching bi+ health issues is simple: biphobia," Beach, an LGBTQIA health researcher at Northwestern University and a co-founder of the Chicago Bisexual Health Task Force, told *Equality*. "That answer, of course, begs the question, 'How does biphobia present a challenge to bi+ health research?'"

As March marks Bisexual Health Awareness Month, Beach said that it is important to address the biphobia that contributes to the health disparities bi+ people experience.

"Biphobia leads people to think that bisexual people either don't exist or that

bisexual populations do not experience health disparities," Beach said. "Due to the powerful force of biphobia, even in the face of clear evidence that bi+ people experience elevated risk behaviors and health outcomes, neither private nor scientific research funding organizations are funding bisexual health research studies at a high rate."

HRC Foundation's own research shows that bi+ people face striking rates of poor health outcomes ranging from cancer and obesity, to sexually transmitted infections to mental health problems.

Moreover, transgender people and people of color comprise large portions of the bisexual community, making these groups vulnerable to further disparities that occur at the intersections of biphobia, racism and transphobia.

*continued on p. 27*



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BI+ HEALTH *cont'd from p. 25*

“Until very recently, reporting on disparities in risk behaviors and health outcomes for LGBTQ people either bundled bi-identified people in with lesbian and gay people or it excluded bi-identified people from reports,” Ochs said. “But now we have evidence and it is clear there is great need, and much that needs to be done.”

For Beach, it's imperative that advocates realize that bisexual people are everywhere and that the “beautiful diversity of who we are” is visible in media and beyond.

“Intersectionality isn't optional in these pursuits,” Beach said.

“Intersectionality is the reality. Bi+ people and community organizations need allies to help us gain the support that is needed to broadcast these realities to each other and to the world.”

Through her work, Ochs shines light on both best and worst practices for health care providers to challenge biphobia stigma.

**“BEING A TRUE ALLY TO BISEXUAL PEOPLE MEANS THAT YOU SHOULD BE READY TO PUSH BACK AGAINST BIPHOBIA NOT ONLY FROM STRAIGHT PEOPLE BUT ALSO FROM GAY, LESBIAN AND OTHER LGBTQ PEOPLE.”**

“As an educator, I try to provide bi+ folk and our supporters with useful tools to deflect the biphobia and bi-erasure that is pervasive and causes bi+ people so much stress. It is healing for bi+ folks to understand that the negative noise about us is not because of us,” Ochs said. “We too often internalize negative stereotypes and feel that we are re-

sponsible for them. But I show that we are not.”

When working with health providers, Ochs provides examples of both best and worst practices of health care providers to help practitioners provide competent care.

Beach said that building a supportive, inclusive community is one of the most important ways to address biphobia and start to chip away at the stigma bisexual people face both inside and outside the LGBTQ community. For bi+ people who are newly out or who are feeling isolated, joining online or in-person bi+ community groups and building community with other bi+ people can do a lot to support mental health.

“If someone says they are bisexual, they are bisexual,” Beach said.

“Being a true ally to bisexual people means that you should be ready to push back against biphobia, not only from straight people, but also from gay, lesbian and other LGBTQ people.”

To learn more about health disparities bi+ people experience, visit [hrc.org/bisexual](http://hrc.org/bisexual). 🏳️

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FEBRUARY 23, 2019

- Le Meridien Hotel
- [hrccarolina.org](http://hrccarolina.org)

**GREATER CINCINNATI DINNER**

MARCH 2, 2019

- Hyatt Regency
- Pamela Kravetz, Aaron Weiner & Jordan Young
- [hrc.org/cincinnati/dinner](http://hrc.org/cincinnati/dinner)

**NASHVILLE DINNER**

MARCH 2, 2019

- Renaissance Nashville
- Katie Nipper & Eric Patton
- [hrc.org/nashvilledinner](http://hrc.org/nashvilledinner)

**PHILADELPHIA DINNER**

MARCH 9, 2019

- Loews Philadelphia Hotel
- Ron Stroh & Kiara Cox
- [hrc.org/philadelphiadinner](http://hrc.org/philadelphiadinner)

**ARIZONA DINNER**

MARCH 23, 2019

- Renaissance Phoenix Downtown Hotel
- Christiana Hammond & Jeff Rahm
- [hrcazgala.org](http://hrcazgala.org)

**LOS ANGELES GALA**

MARCH 30, 2019

- LA Live/JW Marriott
- Jessica Bair, Nam Lam & Justin Mikita
- [www.hrcladinner.com](http://www.hrcladinner.com)

**HOUSTON DINNER**

APRIL 6, 2019

- Marriott Marquis Houston
- Krystal Gilliam & Ian Barrett
- [hrc.org/boxoffice](http://hrc.org/boxoffice)

**ATLANTA DINNER**

MAY 4, 2019

- Hyatt Regency Atlanta
- Rebekah McCorvey & Percy Brown
- [hratlanta.org](http://hratlanta.org)

**LAS VEGAS DINNER**

MAY 11, 2019

- Venue: TBD
- Latoya Holman & Sean VanGorder
- [hrc.org/LasVegasGala](http://hrc.org/LasVegasGala)

**WESTERN NY DINNER**

MAY 18, 2019

- Rochester Convention Center
- Carol Ebersole-Weiss, Frank Novak & Dr. Chunkit Fung
- [hrc.org/wnydinner](http://hrc.org/wnydinner)

**COLUMBUS DINNER**

JUNE 2, 2019

- Ohio Union at The Ohio State University
- [hrccolumbusdinner.com](http://hrccolumbusdinner.com)

**LOUISIANA DINNER**

JUNE 22, 2019

- Hyatt Regency New Orleans
- [hrc.org/louisianadinner](http://hrc.org/louisianadinner)

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- Our Get Out the Vote efforts helped flip the U.S. House and pulled the emergency brake on the Trump-Pence administration
- We stopped nearly every anti-LGBTQ bill in state legislatures and passed a wave of state bills outlawing conversion therapy

### Let's make more progress together in 2019:

- Work with the new Congress to advance the Equality Act and prioritize LGBTQ equality
- Fight back against the Trump-Pence administration's ruthless attacks on the rights of LGBTQ people
- Support LGBTQ people in communities all across the country — working to ensure school, hospitals and companies are free from discrimination and welcoming to all

**Members like you make a difference — thank you for your commitment to HRC!**



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