

## Project One America Fact Sheet

### What is Project One America?

- Project One America is an unprecedented and historic effort, led by the Human Rights Campaign, to dramatically expand LGBT equality in the South through permanent campaigns in Mississippi, Alabama and Arkansas.
  - With a **three year budget of \$8.5 million and a dedicated staff of 20**—is the **largest coordinated campaign for LGBT equality in the history of the South.**
  - **Project One America’s** chief aim is to improve the lived experience of LGBT people in these three states— **changing hearts and minds, advancing enduring legal protections, and building more inclusive institutions for LGBT people from the church pew to the workplace.**
- A **full time local staff and dedicated office space** will exclusively support this effort.
  - This is the first campaign of its kind in any of these three states--where there are **no nondiscrimination protections for LGBT people at the state or local level in employment, housing or public accommodations,** and where **each state’s constitution expressly prohibits marriage equality.**
- Project One America is necessary because, after last year’s historic U.S. Supreme Court rulings, this country is divided into **Two Americas** when it comes to equality.
  - **In one America,** mostly on the coasts, LGBT people enjoy nearly complete legal equality.
  - **But in the other America,** in the Midwest, the Great Plains, the Mountain West, **and particularly in the South,** even the most basic protections of the law are nonexistent.
  - In fact, too many consider the South to be the “finish line” for LGBT equality.
- **HRC rejects this characterization of the South, and that’s why we are making a deep and lasting investment to support the LGBT people and allies who have been working for decades to change hearts and minds in this region.**
- Project One America is not a press conference or an advisory board. **HRC Arkansas, HRC Mississippi, HRC Alabama** are not a flashes in the pan. This is a community-based effort with **full-time local staff** with **dedicated office space** focused on building lasting LGBT presence and infrastructure.

### Who is leading this effort?

- The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

- HRC is the single largest national LGBT organizer in the South, with a decades-long track record of political and field campaigns and grassroots education effort, as well as volunteer communities stretching from Texas to Florida, from North Carolina to Georgia.

### Why Arkansas, Mississippi and Alabama?

- **Simply put**, these three states have long been some of the least served by the national LGBT movement.
  - Unlike other states in the South—Texas, Georgia, Kentucky and North Carolina, for example—these three states lack fully resourced and staffed LGBT statewide equality campaigns.
  - These states have **no nondiscrimination protections for LGBT people at the state or local level in employment, housing or public accommodations**, and where **each state’s constitution expressly prohibits marriage equality**.
  - While HIV and AIDS affect Americans across the country and from all walks of life, the epidemic continues to disproportionately impact gay and bisexual men, transgender women, youth 13-24 and communities of color, particularly in the South.
  - Gallup data reveals that a similar percentage of people are LGBT in all 50 states.
    - Yet the LGBT population in these three states have a heightened need for enduring legal protections.
    - Economic inequality is a major problem across the entire population, yet LGBT people face an additional and painful burden of social stigma and second class citizenship.
  - The most important reason we chose these states: **we were asked**.
    - HRC staff members have traveled on regular fact-finding trips to these states. At every community meeting we’ve organized, everyday LGBT people have stated urgently the need and demand for this work in deeply personal terms.
    - **Central to Project One America—and to HRC—is the firm belief that the LGBT movement should be fighting for equality everywhere, for everyone.**
- Once these states were chosen, we undertook a thorough needs-assessment survey **conducted by Anzalone Liszt Grove** from 2/6/2014 to 3/20/2014. This is the largest survey of its kind on the needs, experiences and priorities of LGBT people in the South.
- Key findings from this needs assessment include:
  - In each of these three states, a quarter of LGBT people report experiencing discrimination in employment or public accommodation.
  - Nearly 65 percent report verbal abuse, and nearly one in five report physical violence.
  - **Most shocking of all, a quarter of all LGBT people raising children in these states do so with absolutely no legal relationship to their children.**

- A [2010 Census study by the Williams Institute](#) found that a greater percentage of same-sex couples in the Deep South raise children than in any other region of the country. **In fact, Mississippi has the highest rate of any state in the nation.**
  - [26 percent of same-sex couples are raising children in Mississippi, 20 percent in Alabama, and 21 percent in Arkansas](#)—and they do so with few, if any, of the legal protections extended to LGBT parents in other parts of the country.
  - Compare with [16 percent of couples in California](#) and [16 percent in New York](#).
  - This is precisely the children Justice Anthony Kennedy referred during oral arguments in *Windsor v. United States*.
    - [Kennedy proposed](#) that discriminatory laws like DOMA humiliate, “tens of thousands of children now being raised by same-sex couples. The law in question makes it even more difficult for the children to understand the integrity and closeness of their own family and its concord with other families in their community and in their daily lives.”
  
- Despite this need, these three states traditionally have received much less funding from LGBT advocacy organizations.
  - According to [a report by Funders for LGBTQ Issues](#), in 2011-2012, grant funding for LGBT advocacy totaled \$10.10 for per LGBT adult in the Northeast. That number was only \$1.71 per LGBT adult in the South.
  - The situation is even worse in these three states, [where the numbers are](#) \$0.71 per LGBT adult in Mississippi, \$0.35 per LGBT adult in Arkansas, and just \$0.31 per LGBT adult in Alabama. (See page 11).
  
- But this isn’t just about dollars and cents. It’s about real people spending entire lifetimes living in the shadows.
  - [A December 2013 story in the New York Times](#) revealed that for every openly gay male high school student on Facebook in Mississippi, there are 5.5 in Rhode Island—even though [Mississippi’s total population is roughly 3 times bigger](#).
  - A key part of this work will be empowering a visible and vocal LGBT community in these states.
    - Both [Pew](#) and [Gallup](#) have found that when someone knows an LGBT individual personally, they are more likely to support measures of LGBT equality.
    - In fact, Pew finds that a major source of equality’s progress is the fact that nearly 9 out of 10 people now say they have a gay or lesbian acquaintance.
    - Project One America aims to generate this same sort of effect in these three states in a targeted way.

- There’s plenty of reasons to be optimistic. Polling conducted last year in Arkansas and Mississippi by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner showed that there is enormous opportunity to empower fair-minded people in these states.
  - [In Mississippi](#), broad majorities—including 56 percent of Republicans—support workplace nondiscrimination protections for LGBT people. And 58 percent of Mississippians under 30 support marriage equality.
  - [In Arkansas](#), 61 percent under 30 support marriage equality, and more than 60 percent of the population supports workplace nondiscrimination laws.
- But there’s no denying that these states represent a unique challenge.
  - In 2013, stats guru Nate Silver flagged these states [as three of the bottom five in the nation](#) in terms of overall support for marriage equality.

### How will HRC make progress in these states?

- HRC has always made progress on three fronts: social change, institutional change and legal change.
- **At launch, HRC’s nine goals in these three states are:**
  - 1. Empower LGBT people (and straight allies) to come out.**
  - 2. Raise the visibility of LGBT people and issues with the general public.**
  - 3. Create safer environments for LGBT young people.**
    - Improve the climate within child welfare and foster care agencies.
    - Improve the climate within schools.
    - Improve the climate on college campuses.
  - 4. Build partnerships with faith communities, communities of color, business communities, and conservatives.**
  - 5. Create a more inclusive workplace for LGBT people.**
    - Engage small and medium-sized businesses in new ways to show their support for LGBT employees and the LGBT community.
    - Increase participation in HRC’s Corporate Equality Index in these states.
  - 6. Build support for enduring legal protections that ensure LGBT equality.**
  - 7. Expand participation in HRC’s Municipal Equality Index in these three states.**
  - 8. Create a more inclusive healthcare environment for LGBT people.**
    - Expand participation in HRC’s Healthcare Equality Index, and celebrate the VA hospitals in these states that already achieve “Leader” status.
  - 9. Equip LGBT people and non-traditional allies as spokespeople.**

### When will Project One America be complete?

- As an organization, we are invested in this effort for the long haul.
- HRC is not undertaking this work because it will lead to quick, easy or sweeping victories. We’re doing this work *because* it is difficult. These three states have been

under-resourced for too long. LGBT people in these states have spent too long celebrating other states' victories.

- **In short, Project One America continues until there really is One America when it comes to LGBT equality.**

**Will HRC only be focusing its work in the South in these three states?**

- Absolutely not. While these three states will have an intense focus, HRC remains the single largest national LGBT organizer in the South, with a decades-long track record of political and field campaigns and grassroots education efforts. One-third (500,000) of our 1.5 million members and supporters call the South their home and HRC is present at more than 50 LGBT pride events across the South each year.
- HRC's field team is working across the South supporting legislative and electoral initiatives with direct grants to local and state groups and campaigns, funding for research and lobbying, as well as staff resources – including three full time employees dedicated to the South, and five other full time employees that spend a large portion of their time working in the region.
- The HRC Foundation's public education and outreach programs – including nationally recognized benchmark ratings like the Corporate Equality Index, Healthcare Equality Index and Municipal Equality Index – are present across the South helping to transform the institutions that affect the daily lives of LGBT people. 46 Southern cities participate in the MEI, 286 Southern-headquartered companies participate in the CEI, 175 Southern hospitals participate in the HEI. Furthermore through our Religion & Faith Program, HRC has identified more than 1,500 LGBT-welcoming congregations across the South.