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LGBTQ HISTORY MONTH

Local laws filled the federal void for LGBTQ+ rights and offer a path forward today



Graphic: Movement Advancement Project.

By Lauren Rowello

Although no law can truly prevent unfair treatment, nondiscrimination laws act as a deterrent and offer a path to accountability when problems arise. But many state statutes do not explicitly protect LGBTQ+ people — and without federal nondiscrimination laws pertaining to the queer

community, most LGBTQ+ people in the United States are left vulnerable.

In 2025, approximately half of LGBTQ+ people in the United States live in areas where they can still be denied housing, credit and equal access to public accommodations. LGBTQ+ people in many parts of the U.S. can still be denied jobs, health

care, education and more because of their LGBTQ+ identities or self-expression.

Under the Trump administration, queer people — especially trans community members and people of color — are under attack as they face not just barriers to access or a lack

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Halloween Treats for LGBTQ+ Families

A Roundup of Good News

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

Halloween is a time when we temper the things that frighten us with something sweet. In a year full of frightening things for LGBTQ+ families and individuals, here are several recent treats—a few pieces of good news about books and media related to LGBTQ+ families. They will not completely banish the scary things, but they may bring us hope.

Let's start with two notable wins against book censorship, which dis-

proportionately impacts LGBTQ+ inclusive titles and those featuring other marginalized identities:

A federal judge ruled October 20 that Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools—on-base schools for children of servicemembers—must return books with content about race and gender to the shelves, after they were pulled in response to a presidential executive order. The ACLU, which filed a lawsuit on behalf

of six military families with children in DoDEA schools, noted in a statement that the censored items included “materials about slavery, Native American history, women’s history, LGBTQ+ identities and history, and preventing sexual harassment and abuse, as well as portions of the Advanced Placement (AP) Psychology curriculum.”

And October 21, a federal judge

see **MOMBIAN**, page 4

MA Couple Loses Foster Care License Over Refusal to Sign LGBTQ+ Nondiscrimination Policy

By Bay Windows Staff

A Massachusetts couple had their foster care license revoked in April after declining to sign a state nondiscrimination policy designed to protect LGBTQ+ youth in foster care.

Lydia and Heath Marvin, parents to three biological teenagers, had been fostering children under age four since 2020, caring for eight foster children

during that time. The state’s Department of Children and Families (DCF) withdrew their license when they refused to comply with agency requirements prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Speaking to CBS Boston, Lydia Marvin explained their position: “We

see **FOSTER**, page 2

Supreme Court rejects two LGBTQ+ -related appeals

By Lisa Keen

Keen News Service

The U.S. Supreme Court announced Tuesday (October 14) that it would not take up an appeal from four Colorado parents seeking to challenge the right of a public school district to provide confidential support to middle school students who are or might be LGBTQ+. It also denied review of a lower court dismissal of a lawsuit against the dating app Grindr.

The Colorado case started when two sets of parents became aware that their 12-year-old middle school

children had attended an after-school group called Genders and Sexualities Alliance. Following one meeting, one of the students announced plans to transition; following two meetings, the other student began suffering emotional distress and attempted suicide. The parents sued the school district, saying the school should have alerted them that their students were questioning their sexual orientation or gender and had attended the group meeting. The parents said the school’s failure to do so violated the parents’

see **SCOTUS**, page 3

Fenway Health Halts Gender-Affirming Care for Minors Under Federal Pressure

Faces community backlash over policy change

By Bay Windows Staff

Fenway Health, one of the nation’s leading LGBTQ+ care and research centers, announced it will halt gender-affirming care—including hormones and puberty blockers—for patients under 19, citing federal funding requirements under the Trump

administration.

The federally qualified health center, which serves over 30,000 patients, said the decision came after the Health Resources and Services Administration announced in September it would deprioritize funding for programs offering gender-affirming medical interventions.

“This change does not reflect our

see **FENWAY**, page 2



“I can definitely say that when we were shooting ‘Lois & Clark’, there was no Jesus... He’s very with the cross now. But he was, like, drunk and sleeping with a lot of beautiful women and, you know, having a good time as the star of a TV show. There was no conservatism in him—at least not that was displayed to me.”

- Teri Hatcher on Dean Cain joining ICE. She adds, “I’m not sitting here saying he’s a bad guy, but, yes, he is doing things that I think are bad.”

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

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Foster

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will absolutely love and support and care for any child in our home but we simply can't agree to go against our Christian faith in this area."

High Rates of LGBTQ+ Youth in Foster Care

The policy addresses a significant need within the foster care system. A 2019 Children's Rights study found that over 30 percent of foster youth identify as LGBTQ+ and five percent as transgender—substantially higher than the 11.2 percent and 1.17 percent rates among youth not in foster care.

Policy Requirements

The DCF guidelines mandate that "employees, foster parents, interns, volunteers, and others who interact with children and families must be respectful of how individuals ask to be identified and use the terms an individual uses to describe themselves."

Specific protections include allowing foster youth to access restrooms matching their gender identity, wear clothing and hairstyles consistent with their gender expression, and use their chosen names and pronouns.

The policy explicitly states that "foster parents and contracted service providers do not make attempts to convince LGBTQIA+ children/youth to reject or modify their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression," including prohibiting arrangements with "faith leaders" who attempt to change a child/youth's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression."

The department also facilitates legal name and gender marker changes for youth who seek them, and supports access to "medical care and mental health services for children/youth provided in a manner that is culturally responsive and affirming," though such services are not required for a youth's identity to be respected.

Medical Consensus on Gender-Affirming Care

Major medical organizations—including the American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, World Medical Association, and World Health Organization—recognize gender-affirming care as evidence-based and medically necessary for both adults and minors. Research indicates that social transition and treatment for gender dysphoria reduce depression and anxiety in transgender youth.

Legal Challenge

The Marvins are considering legal action and are following a lawsuit brought by other prospective foster parents who similarly refused to sign the nondiscrimination agreement. They are represented by Alliance Defending Freedom, an organization characterized as a "Christian legal army" by its founder. The Southern Poverty Law Center has designated the group as a hate organization due to its opposition to LGBTQ+ civil rights protections.

Alliance Defending Freedom has been involved in major Supreme Court cases including *Dobbs v. Jackson's Women's Health Organization* (which overturned federal abortion rights), and *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado* and *303 Creative, Inc. v. Elenis* (which permitted religious-based refusal of service to LGBTQ+ customers).

Advocate Perspective

Polly Crozier, Director of Family Advocacy at GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders, emphasized the state's responsibility in a statement to CBS: "The state has an obligation to children to make sure that they're safe and well protected." She added, "And foster parents, they're not parents. Foster parents are temporary. They're a stop gap to make sure children can safely go back to their families of origin."

Fenway

Continued from page 1

values, our belief that gender-affirming care saves lives, or our unwavering commitment to the transgender and gender-diverse community," wrote Fenway Health CEO Jordina Shanks. "It reflects a painful reality that we are working to change."

Legal Questions and Community Outrage

Josh Rovenger, legal director at GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD Law), told *The Daily Free Press* that a federal injunction granted in March prohibits the administration from tying federal funding to state-wide gender-affirming care programs. "The law does not compel these institutions to do that," Rovenger said.

The decision sparked immediate protests. Over 100 demonstrators gathered outside the health center on October 17, organized by ACT UP Boston, chanting "Trans youth are welcome here." A second protest followed on October 20.

Alejandra Caraballo, a former Fenway Health board member, called the move a "cowardly ca-

pitulation sacrificing trans youth" on *Bluesky*, the *Boston Globe* reported. Somerville City Councilor J.T. Scott urged residents to contact state officials, arguing the decision violates Massachusetts law protecting access to gender-affirming health services, according to the *Globe*.

Impact on Community

Nina Selvaggio of PFLAG Greater Boston told the *Globe* that no other local gender-affirming care providers are known to be limiting access to youth under 19, raising concerns that Fenway's decision could overwhelm remaining providers.

A 2022 study in *JAMA Network* found transgender youth receiving hormone therapy and puberty blockers were 60% less likely to experience moderate to severe depression and 73% less likely to have suicidal thoughts.

"For trans youth, it's life-changing access. This is life-saving access," said Shaplaic Brooks, executive director of the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth.

The Boston City Council passed a resolution supporting gender-affirming care at a meeting this week. Councilor Sharon Durkan noted Fenway was "devastated to have to make an impossible choice between following their mission and staying open."

SCOTUS

Continued from page 1

"fundamental right to make decisions about the care, custody, and control of their children."

The school district argued that the parents' rights did not include "curriculum or extra-curricular activities offered by the school." It also argued that the school district has a legitimate interest in "providing a safe and supportive environment for all its students, including those who are transgender or gender nonconforming."

A federal district court judge (a Biden appointee) dismissed the lawsuit, holding that the school district's policy of providing gender support plans to transgender or gender nonconforming students is rationally related to the school's stated interests. The parents appealed to the Tenth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, where a three-judge panel (all Obama appointees) affirmed the district court ruling.

The parents appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court; but, on October 14, the high court declined to accept the appeal. It takes four justices to vote yes in order for the Supreme Court to take an appeal. The Lee v. Poudre appeal had zero; but, Justices Clarence Thomas,

Samuel Alito, and Neil Gorsuch did sign onto a one-paragraph statement to say they "remain concerned that some federal courts are 'temp[er]ed' to avoid confronting a 'particularly contentious constitutional questio[n]': whether a school district violates parents' fundamental rights "when, without parental knowledge or consent, it encourages a student to transition to a new gender or assists in that process."

Last December, it was Thomas, Alito, and Kavanaugh objecting to the Supreme Court's decision not to hear a similar appeal. That case was Parents Protecting Our Children v. Eau Claire School District, from Wisconsin. The district court dismissed the parent association's lawsuit, noting that none of the parents involved in the case had a child who was transgender or gender-nonconforming. As such, the parents did not have standing to press the lawsuit. The Seventh Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals agreed. The parents group then appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court apparently voted 6 to 3 not to take the appeal, but Justices Thomas, Alito, and Brett Kavanaugh begged to differ. Kavanaugh simply noted he would have granted the appeal. Thomas and Alito stated, "This case presents a question of great and growing national importance: whether a public school district violates parents' "fundamental constitutional

right to make decisions concerning the rearing of" their children.

Thomas and Alito have two more appeals for which they could potentially get Gorsuch and Kavanaugh on board for the necessary four votes: one from Massachusetts and one from Florida.

In the Massachusetts case, Foote v. Ludlow Schools, the parents of an 11-year-old middle school student said the public schools in Ludlow "secretly facilitated" their daughter's "social gender transition" despite the parents telling the school not to allow it. The parents did not claim a religious objection to their child transitioning; they said they have a moral objection and that they believe "gender transition harms their children."

"The Court should grant the petition and make clear that parents' fundamental rights do not depend on whether they are religious," said the parents' petition, filed by the Alliance Defending Freedom.

The Florida case, Littlejohn v. Florida, is very similar to Foote and Lee: The parents of a 13-year-old middle school student were aware their daughter was questioning her gender and had her in therapy. They told school officials they did not want their daughter "socially transitioning" at school. School officials provided support

for the student's transitioning, including use of a male name and pronouns, allowing her to use male bathrooms. And the parents sued. They lost at the district and appeals court levels and have now appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court will likely decide in the near future whether to take either, both, or neither of the Foote and Littlejohn cases.

The second LGBTQ+-related appeal denied Tuesday, Doe v. Grindr, was pressed by "John Doe," who says the dating app Grindr, popular with men, allowed him on the app when he was only 15. He sued the app for \$66 million, saying Grindr directed men to him who raped him (Three have been convicted; a fourth has eluded arrest.)

The legal questions in the appeal sought to clarify whether apps, such as Grindr, should be covered by a section of the 1934 Communication Decency Act (Section 230) that Congress added in 1996. Section 230 states that "no provider or user" of an app can be held liable for "any information provided by another" person posting content on the app. The district court for Central California and the Ninth Circuit ruled against Doe, citing Section 230. The Supreme Court denied Doe's petition, without comment.

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We must be one people

Resisting tyranny is our only option

by Richard J. Rosendall | rosendall@starpower.net
contributing writer

Donald Trump's demolition of the East Wing of the White House to build his golden ballroom is too obvious a metaphor. But then subtlety is not his thing.

He thinks he can smash anything or anyone in his way. But as is becoming increasingly evident, you cannot steal or fake the consent of the governed. If you try, those you claim to rule will not stand for it. Your power will never be secure because it will be built on sand.

I believe we will eventually defeat Trump and his minions; but their defeat will not be easy. Far too much damage has been done to turn a page and have the nightmare magically end. By the time America can be repaired, a great many people who spent our lives embracing America's constitutional separation of powers will be gone.

The new authoritarian climate of lawlessness, rapacity, lies, brazen stupidity and astonishing cruelty is causing a lot of wreckage. We will be a long time recovering.

How will that be possible with a large portion of the population determined to thwart us? The aggressive Republican slanders will not abruptly stop. We have to make them pay politically. The longer we take, the likelier it is that a bloody civil war will be unavoidable. And wars do not build; they destroy.

Pardoned January Sixer Christopher Moynihan has been charged with a felony count of making a terroristic threat against House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries. This echoed Jan. 6 inciter Trump, whose constant lies and trash talk

have accomplished what another Moynihan, former Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY), called "defining deviancy down."

We need to define it right back up, in a way that recognizes America's thriving diversity, including LGBTQ people, as the norm and not a threat to it. So-called Secretary of War Pete Hegseth denies that our diversity is our strength. We must prove him wrong.

Trump's attacks on universities, museums, law firms, science, and journalism are an attempt to rewrite our history to suit one shrinking part of the population.

It will take a mighty, sustained battle to prevent the GOP from fatally interfering with the 2026 midterms. Unfortunately, Democratic leaders too often run away from portions of the Democratic base. At least Jeffries has finally, if belatedly, endorsed Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic nominee for mayor of New York City.

Republicans have already called Mamdani a communist. Challenger Andrew Cuomo obscenely chuckled at the suggestion that Mamdani would celebrate another 9/11 terrorist attack. It should be clear by now that the proper response to such smears is not to run in fear but to push back.

We handicap ourselves if we try to reason with people who continue clinging or pandering to Trump and the alternate reality that justifies and glorifies him.

Whether or not the Supreme Court allows Trump to invoke the Insurrection Act to declare

martial law, there is no insurrection. Our cities are not on fire. Trump's chaos is not making America great. Tariffs do not work. A No Kings rally is not a Hate America rally. A university that caters to a tyrant's demands is no longer a university, regardless of what it calls itself. White fragility is not a thing.

We are not just fighting for power. We are fighting to regain our nation's collective grip on reality. If we fail in that, roll the closing credits.

Trump's idea of elegance is tacky. His economic ideas are delusional. His idea of a peace deal is a deadly fraud. His idea of American power relies on bullying and makes America hated and mocked around the world.

We must restore the consent of the governed. Posting federal troops at voting places to intimidate them is designed to undermine that consent and steal power. Calling black and brown people vermin goes directly against the egalitarian principles on which our nation was founded but has struggled to make real.

Letting ourselves be hostage to the toxic brew of bigotries exploited by the GOP cannot be the Democratic path to victory. Either we resist fascism however we can, or we lose.

America risks declining into a feudal state of warring factions and a vanished middle class. Tucker Carlson, as it happens, defends feudalism. Those who long for such a miserable past tend to imagine themselves on top. But life expectancy even for kings back then was very short.

We must be one people, with policies to match, or we lose more than the East Wing; we demolish ourselves.

Richard Rosendall is a writer and activist who can be reached at rosendall@me.com.

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Mombian

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granted a permanent injunction against a Texas law that required all books in school libraries to be rated by the vendors based on a state-established rating system about what constitutes explicit material. The Texas Education Agency, however, could also "re-rate" books in order to keep them out of schools. The law, the court wrote, violates the First Amendment because it "fails to provide guidance on what community standard [of decency] applies, and fails to follow the definition of obscenity approved by the Supreme Court." Furthermore, it "is unconstitutional as it compels speech, is void for vagueness, and is an unconstitutional prior restraint," prohibiting books that may be protected by the First Amendment from being distributed.

Queer families are also prominent in two new films. First, "Fairlyland," Alysia Abbott's 2014 memoir about growing up with a single gay dad in San Francisco during the bohemian 1970s and the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, is now in theaters as a feature film with a stellar cast, including Emilia Jones as Alysia, Scoot McNairy as Steve, Adam Lambert as Steve's boyfriend Charlie, and Geena Davis as Alysia's grandmother Munca. Andrew Durham wrote the screenplay and directed, while Sofia Coppola produced. The film brings the Abbott's story to a wider audience as it shows us a little-documented time in queer family history, a

rare perspective on the AIDS crisis, and the difficult but loving relationship between a father and daughter.

Next, the powerful new documentary "A Mother Apart" shows how parenting her own daughter led Black lesbian poet and activist Staceyann Chin on a journey to reconnect with the mother who abandoned her. Director Laurie Townshend skillfully weaves in conversations between Chin and daughter Zuri, blended with clips from Chin's performances, personal photos, and animations of memories and imaginings. The result is a moving and thought-provoking look at the complexities and meanings of motherhood, seen through the lens of Chin's experiences as she finds a path towards healing. Co-presented with Black Public Media (BPM), "A Mother Apart" will stream on PBS.org and the PBS App through January 11, 2026.

Kids' music, too, saw a recent nod to queer families, when Rapper Snoop Dogg partnered with GLAAD and queer singer Jeremy Belote to release "Love Is Love," a new kids' song about family diversity, loving who you are, and loving your family and friends. Part of Snoop's animated children's series "Doggyland" on YouTube, the song features anthropomorphic cartoon animals, including one young child with two moms.

The track comes after Snoop drew widespread criticism in August for his response to a grandson's questions about same-sex parents in a movie. While watching the Disney film "Lightyear" with his grandson, Snoop had told the It's Giving pod-

cast, the boy asked how one woman could have a baby with another. Snoop complained to the podcast, "I didn't come in for this shit. I just came to watch the goddamn movie." He continued, "These are kids. That we have to show that at this age ... like, they're going to ask questions. I don't have the answer."

His answer was offensive, but seemed more uneducated than hateful. Yes, the new song is Snoop doing damage control. But he has a huge platform, and I'm happy to see him now using it to spread a message of love and family diversity rather than doubling down on his previous comments. Time will tell if he's sincere, but I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt until proven otherwise.

I'll close with a bit of Halloween advice about media and LGBTQ+ families. Halloween time means that social media is awash in images of LGBTQ+ families in elaborate and coordinated costumes. I love to see this burst of queer creativity and visibility—but please know that it's also okay if you don't dress up with your kids or if their costumes are more earnest than astounding. Do what feels right for your family and the energy you have at this moment, whether that means pulling out all the stops or cutting two holes in a sheet to make an old-school ghost. Your kids will likely have fun either way, and that's something truly sweet.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of *Mombian* (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog for LGBTQ+ parents plus a searchable database of 1,900+ LGBTQ+ family books.

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History

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of protections but more formal and overt restrictions to their rights. Amidst these struggles, there's something to learn from those who came before us and the significant anti-discrimination advances they made during other hostile times in history.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids unfair treatment in employment, education, public accommodations and some other aspects of life based on a person's race, skin color, religion, sex or national origin. But those are the only protected classes named in the law, which means that experiences of mistreatment based on LGBTQ+ identity or expression are up for debate and interpretation.

A 2020 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court found that firing an employee based on sexual orientation or gender identity is sex-based discrimination.

But employment discrimination is only prohibited when a private employer has 15 or more employees — and a strong majority of American businesses do not meet that threshold. Approximately 80% have just 10 or fewer employees, and about half of those small businesses have just one to four workers.

Additionally, the ruling could be overturned in the future — potentially excluding LGBTQ+ people from these employment protections.

Various LGBTQ+ rights — including marriage equality — are suddenly at risk for similar reasons. These rights are only upheld by court rulings, which may or may not continue to stand over time.

Workplace discrimination poses a significant threat to economic stability — making it an important first stop in the battle toward equal rights. Many of the first local ordinances banned discriminatory hiring practices or at-will firing based on sexual orientation.

San Francisco and East Lansing, Michigan were the first municipalities to establish ordinances prohibiting discrimination against gay and lesbian people in city employment in 1972.

Over 50 years later, less than half of states have nondiscrimination statutes that specifically mention any LGBTQ+ people at all, and those that do often aren't as comprehensive as they need to be. They leave out some members of the queer community or don't apply to many crucial aspects of life.

Trans and gender nonconforming people weren't formally recognized within a nondiscrimination statute until 1975 when Minneapolis, Minnesota became the first city in the United States to ban discrimination on the basis of "having or projecting a self-image not associated with one's biological maleness or one's biological femaleness."

The law was part of a slew of progressive pieces of legislation passed by outgoing leaders before a more conservative mayor took over. Not only was this law the first to explicitly recognize gender diversity, the Minneapolis ordinance specifically protected access to more than just employment — prohibiting discrimination in labor union membership, property ownership, property rental, enrollment in schools and use of public services and accommodations.

As local laws evolved, some added explicit protections pertaining to local topics du jour

or addressed areas of life that were observed as hardships. Efforts to implement or expand local nondiscrimination laws turned into a movement as options at the state and federal level stalled, leading to approximately 400 municipalities passing statutes that prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in employment, housing and public accommodations by 2025.

While that's a success worth celebrating, it means more than 19,000 municipalities across the country may not have any nondiscrimination protections that support the queer community.

Some leaders may feel that state guidelines are robust. For example, New Jersey — which first banned discrimination based on sexual orientation in 1991 — added gender identity and expression in 2006. The state bans discrimination by all employers — even in businesses that only have one employee. Many of the state's municipalities haven't yet established nondiscrimination ordinances — likely because people tend to feel protected by state statutes.

But not all states have such strict standards. The number of LGBTQ+ inclusive municipal ordinances continues to grow — with efforts in various states, including Kansas, which does not have a statewide ban on LGBTQ+ discrimination but has the highest percentage of its LGBTQ+ population covered by these kinds of local ordinances instead. Approximately half of the state's queer community is protected by local laws.

Activists are also expanding definitions of protected classes to include more members of the queer community as they write these laws. One recent example in Pennsylvania extends protections to people living with HIV, nonbinary people, intersex people, survivors of domestic abuse, people living with long COVID and more.

And those local laws can serve as templates for statewide statutes — including updates in states that are already attempting to be inclusive.

It took ten years following the first municipal nondiscrimination laws for any state to enact similar statutes protecting LGBTQ+ people. Wisconsin was the first — passing a law affording gays and lesbians nondiscriminatory access to housing and employment in 1982, a year before queer sex was actually decriminalized by the state.

The language of the bill was significantly influenced by a local ordinance passed by leaders in Madison, Wisconsin in 1975. Former state legislator David Clarenbach — who didn't necessarily hide that he was gay while serving in public office — was a big part of these efforts alongside his former partner, Jim Yeadon — who was the first openly gay man to be elected to public office when he joined the Madison Common Council two years later.

Throughout the 1970s, Yeadon was considered an expert in municipal nondiscrimination ordinances. In 1978, Yeadon helped Madison avoid a repeal of the city's ordinance.

Clarenbach said religious leaders were also part of the movement to change the state law, partnering not with the intention to promote queer identity from any moral lens but instead to denounce discrimination.

"We didn't ask the Catholic church, for instance, whether homosexuality was good or bad

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billy masters

Could somebody please put **Liza Minnelli** under house arrest? Where are those Luft kids when you need 'em? Where's **Lorna**? Where's **Joey**? Don't get me wrong—I love Liza as much as any gay man (of a certain age). But there comes a time when you've got to make the hard choices. The last few years, she's shown up about as often as Halley's Comet, but these do nothing but tarnish a once-glorious career. Let's forget about the Oscars. Do you remember when she was honored on "RuPaul's Drag Race"? They wheeled out a gigantic easy chair with Liza kinda slumped in it—ringing those bells. She's a little bit of a thing—she looks like Edith Ann Minnelli! Perhaps because she doesn't have the musculature to sit up, she just slouched lower and lower into the chair. At one point, her legs were higher than her head, and I thought she was going to slide onto the floor. Liza Down!

I say all of this as a preamble to last week's Dancers Against Cancer Gala of Stars here in Beverly Hills. We all agree that Liza is the hooper with a heart of gold. So, naturally, they called upon her to present the Icon Award to **Janet Jackson**—because when I think of Janet, I obviously think of Liza. A bunch of dancers were onstage doing Fosse-esque choreography. Suddenly, two of them spin around this giant thing—that turns out to be...you guessed it, a giant easy chair! And there she is—Liza Minnelli (more or less). And all of the people around her are dancing, and she kinda did some "jazz hands". Then she made sort of a speech—except I'm not entirely sure she knew where she was or who she was honoring. But she sure looked happy to be there and people were cheering. And all I was thinking is, "How are they getting this chair home? Does **Michael Feinstein** back up a truck and a couple of Teamsters drag the chair onto the back—with Liza still in it?" God knows, I truly believe that Liza has earned the right to do whatever she wants. And you can watch her "honoring" Janet Jackson on BillyMasters.com.

On to the story that keeps on giving—the **David Geffen** divorce. Last week, the mogul's estranged spouse **David Armstrong** withdrew his complaint that he had been "groomed". The document claimed that Geffen used seduction and control to entrap Armstrong. Wait—we're talking about David Geffen, right? Not that the 82-year-old can't be appealing—but seductive? Armstrong previously alleged that Geffen entrapped him in "a cycle of dependency, submission, and humiliation". While I have no reason to question the veracity of these allegations, I do think they say more about Armstrong than Geffen. You know what else speaks volumes? That the tabloids no longer refer to Armstrong as a hooker and a porn star. They now call him a "former go-go boy". Oh, how the mighty have fallen.

Recently, **Cybill Shepherd** told "People" magazine that she had mended fences with both **Bruce Willis** and **Christine Baranski**. In a much-touted "exclusive interview", Cybill said, "It was time." One could argue it was well past time, but that's another story. When it came to Baranski, Shepherd added how the two were able to get to a better place in a most cryptic and grammatically curious statement: "Just a talk and be real open-hearted with each other." Well, that clears up...nothing, actually.

Don't read anything into the fact that **Zac Efron** hasn't shown up to see brother **Dylan** on "Dancing with the Stars". It's just he has better things to do. Really! When asked where Zac was, Dylan said, "Hey, he's doing his thing." He didn't even show up when Dylan danced to "Rewrite the Stars", which Zac sang with Zendaya. "Zac's always taken care of me and he did things that were so selfless," said Dylan. Except for brave LA traffic, apparently.

The Broadway production of "Chicago" likes to rotate people in and out of the role of Roxie—typically in between **Charlotte d'Amboise** appearances (she's played Roxie over 2,500 times). Of course, our pal **Roz Ryan** has played Matron "Mama" Morton close to two thousand times. And now, they're welcoming a new and not particularly matronly Mama.

Our very own **Alex Newell** will join the Broadway cast on November 17th. Newell, of course, made history as the first openly non-binary performer to win an acting Tony back in 2023 for "Shucked". This isn't one of those hit-and-run gigs. Alex will be playing Mama through the holidays and depart on January 11th.

Following up on a trend I noted in a recent column, **Ben Platt** has announced a residency. He'll be playing the Ahmanson Theatre in LA. From December 12th through the 21st, he'll do 10 performances. I remember when a residency was weeks or months. I guess technically this is a residency—but I still say it's on the cusp.

Rather than tour with her holiday show, this year **Mariah Carey** will have a "residency" of her own...in Las Vegas. "Mariah Carey's Christmastime in Las Vegas" will also run for 10 performances at the Dolby Live from November 28th through December 13th. If you go, please do me a favor. I've been concerned for Mariah's well-being. In the past, I'd note that she'd wear dresses that were about five sizes too small. This required her to kinda shuffle around—because if she took a normal-size step, she'd burst out of her outfit and take out the first three rows. Lately I've noticed that her head no longer moves. It's not like she's had bad Botox. It's more like she's got a stiff neck. For her to turn her head, she has to start at her toes and work her way up. So, if you see her, report back to me.

We're getting the best Christmas gift courtesy of the BBC—a reunion of **Jennifer Saunders** and **Joanna Lumley**! Ever since the "Absolutely Fabulous Inside Out" special in 2024, the consensus is that we'd seen the end of the gruesome two-some. Well, think again. Alas, they won't be reprising their "AbFab" characters. Joanna is a regular on the BBC series "Amandaland", which is a sequel to "Motherland" (which I realize doesn't clear up anything for you Yanks!). Lumley plays Amanda's glamorous and oppressive mother, Felicity. For the Christmas special, they will be visited by Felicity's sister, Joan, played by Miss Saunders. The character is described as "a ball of country-living, enthusiastic upper-class bluster—very different from Felicity". One can only assume hilarity will ensue.

This week's "Ask Billy" question came from Gerald in Maine: "What do you know about **Max Parker** on 'Boots'?"

Gerald has got his finger on the pulse of something, because last week the ratings for "Boots" on Netflix doubled! Since not everyone reading this column has watched it, let me first tell you that "Boots" is about a closeted teenager who joins the Marines back in the 1990s—well before "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (and certainly before it was repealed). That means "Boots" shows you lots of hot guys running around boot camp in and out of showers—or at least that's what it looked like in the clip I saw. The young recruit is played by **Miles Heizer**. Max plays his "drill sergeant"—oh, so that's what they call it these days. He can drill me anytime—especially because the lovely Mr. Parker is indeed gay. Alas, he's married. Well, you win some, you lose some. He met actor **Kris Mochrie** on the set of "Emmerdale" in the UK, got engaged in 2022, and married this past summer. Did I mention that they played brothers on the soap? I've heard of brotherly love, but this is ridiculous. Going back to "Boots", Max is paired with the very fetching **Sachin Bhatt**, who you might recognize from "Queer As Folk". Should you care, Max is the big spoon—as you'll see on BillyMasters.com.

When I'm ladling out such hot stuff, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. We're definitely come to the end of yet another column. We're all over the place this week. From Liza to Christmas to Don't Ask, Don't Tell. My God, if the Garland-Luft-Gumm-Minnelli family believed in that, none of them would have gotten married! If you want someone who will ask and tell and even show, check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that doesn't hold anything back. If you have a question for me, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Liza joins the cast of "The Voice"—and brings her own chair! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Liza Minnelli



Alex Newell



Jennifer Saunders & Joanna Lumley

Photo by John Mathew Smith & www.celebrity-photos.com via Wikimedia Commons

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History

Continued from page 5

or to be encouraged or discouraged or sinful or not sinful," Clarenbach said during an interview for the Wisconsin LGBTQ History Project. "We asked if bigotry and discrimination could be tolerated against any group in our society. And when that's the question, the answer is an overwhelming no, it cannot be tolerated."

Wisconsin's state law continues to lack mention of gender identity and other LGBTQ+ people in its language, which Clarenbach has said is inexcusable.

"For anyone to fail to make that part of their agenda, even for people who don't know anyone who's trans, is an ethical and moral shame," Clarenbach said. "Shame on any politician today who doesn't recognize that reproductive rights and trans rights are part and parcel of the movement of civil rights, and that should be the mantra of our society today."

The city of Madison has adopted amendments and additional laws to broaden the scope of its original ordinance. For example, discrimination on the basis of gender identity is now banned.

These kinds of laws aren't just for show. They're offering tangible guidance to many LGBTQ+ people who seek justice and accountability when they believe they've been wronged.

For example, trans athletes should be safeguarded by state and local nondiscrimination laws in locations that have these protections, and some athletes who have faced hardships are leaning on these laws as the basis of lawsuits, intending to prove that they deserve access.

Although the Supreme Court ruled that sex-based discrimination applies to LGBTQ+ people in employment, there is no Supreme Court ruling definitively mandating that Title IX — which safeguards students from sex-based discrimination — applies to the queer community. It's possible that we'll hear from the Supreme Court about this in the future, but for now, lo-

cal ordinances and state laws supersede those executive orders and threats.

The Equality Act, a federal bill first proposed in 1974, has been updated multiple times since it first failed to pass decades ago. Today's version was passed by Congress with bipartisan support in 2019, but the legislation continues to die every time it hits the Senate.

The bill hopes to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics in employment, housing, public accommodations, federally-funding programs, education, credit and jury service. It also seeks to clarify sex-based discrimination by explicitly stating that stereotyping and other conditions can constitute as discrimination.

The principles explored in the Civil Rights Act have been expanded before. For example, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) added disabled people to the list of protected classes and broadened anti-discrimination principles by mandating that certain aspects of accessibility be built into public life and workplaces.

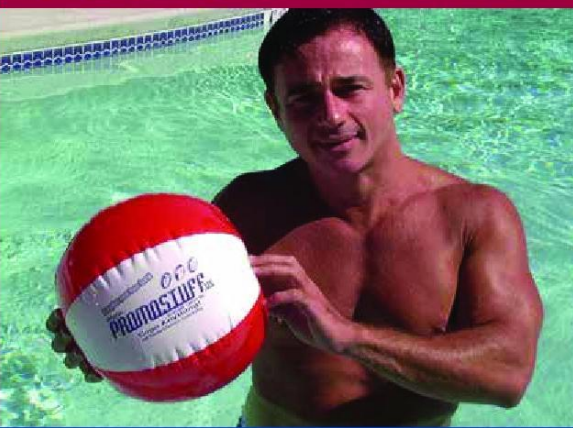
Although these hopes for federal protections may one day turn into a reality, history shows us that there's a long road ahead. In the meantime, taking action closer to home may have the biggest impact on people's everyday lives.

Those with state guardrails might not understand the importance of doubling down by implementing local ordinances or filling in the gaps for aspects of state laws that aren't as robust.

But any ordinance protecting even just one right is a buffer to safeguard LGBTQ+ people from being treated differently than their peers, an added cushion during an uncertain time in history when the federal government is not only failing to address the needs of LGBTQ+ people but is actively working to harm them.

"It is a matter of life and death," Clarenbach said. "Not just oral and civil rights, but it's a matter of living and breathing."

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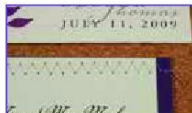
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