

FINAL REPORT

OF THE

WISCONSIN GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON LESBIAN AND GAY ISSUES

January 2, 1987



State of Wisconsin

Governor's Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues

January 1, 1987

To Whom It May Concern:

Attached you will find the statutorily mandated final report of the Wisconsin Governor's Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues.

The final report summarizes the Council's history, structure, duties, conduct of business, statewide meetings, legislative activities and special achievements. As in all reports of groups doing business for almost four years, even this lengthy summary does not cover all of the activities of the Council's members and staff. However, we hope that this report will assure the gay and lesbian residents of Wisconsin that their virtually unique body of advocates always strove to judiciously employ the special power of being an executive advisory body to meet our community's needs. We hope as well that non-gay readers of this report will apprehend the importance of the Council to the fair governance of our state and will further understand the foresight and integrity expressed by Governor Anthony S. Earl in creating the Council.

Moreover, we hope that all residents who care about equitable government and desire the involvement of the resources of all of our state's citizens in the work of governance, will urge the new administration to create another group like the Council. There is so much left to do.

Sincerely,

Kathleen N. Nichols

Kathleen N. Nichols, Co-chair
Governor's Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues



State of Wisconsin

Governor's Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON LESBIAN AND GAY ISSUES January 2, 1987

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Section 1. HISTORY OF THE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON LESBIAN AND GAY ISSUES

The Governor's Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues was created by Executive Order 9, on March 29, 1983. Governor Anthony S. Earl created the Council because he believed that it is a governor's duty to uphold the laws of the state. Wisconsin had become the only state in the nation with a state law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation only one year earlier, and it was widely believed that many who could benefit by the law were unaware of its creation, as were many who may have been in violation. The Governor was also persuaded that gay men and lesbians were members of a minority group which had been discriminated against for most of the state's history and that to eliminate such a long history of discrimination would require informed advocates empowered by executive authority.

By Order the Council was to have fourteen members, serving two-year terms and the membership was to achieve gender parity, minority representation and cultural diversity. (See Attachment 1, Members of the Governor's Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues.) Furthermore, the Council was to work with government agencies, the public and the media to "eliminate discrimination against and victimization of lesbians and gays in Wisconsin" (See Attachment 2, Executive Order 9). During the first term of the Council the budget for both years totalled \$1000 and limited, as- needed clerical assistance was provided by Ms. Linda Lewis, an Administrative Assistant in the Executive Office. In the second term, due to the workload developed by an exceptionally active advisory council, the Council was granted use of the majority of the work hours of a new Constituent Relations Assistant, Earl Bricker. Along with all executive advisory committees, the Council's biennial budget was increased to \$2000.

The activities and achievements of the Governor's Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues are described in Sections 2 through 5 of this report.

Section 2. COMMUNITY MEETINGS

During the meetings held at Governor Earl's request by R. Richard Wagner and Kathleen Nichols, prior to the creation of the Council, gay and lesbian residents suggested that an advisory group to the Governor should dedicate a significant part of its time to meeting with gays and lesbians in all parts of the state to obtain direct information on our community's statewide needs and experience. It was also suggested that such meetings could serve to alert local officials about their responsibilities concerning gays and lesbians within their jurisdiction or service areas. This was deemed especially important for areas where there were no local gay and lesbian organizations and where there was strong belief in the negative repercussions of "coming out" for local lesbians and gays.

After the Council was created, the founding members agreed that meetings around the state would be an important activity of the Council.

Between June 1983 and October 1986 Community Meetings were held in:
(See Appendix 3 and map of Wisconsin.)

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|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Appleton | 8. La Crosse | 15. Racine (2) |
| 2. Baraboo | 9. Madison | 16. Rhinelander |
| 3. Eau Claire | 10. Menasha | 17. Rice Lake |
| 4. Fond du Lac | 11. Menomonie | 18. Sheboygan |
| 5. Green Bay (2) | 12. Milwaukee (2) | 19. Stevens Point |
| 6. Janesville | 13. Monroe | 20. Superior |
| 7. Kenosha | 14. Platteville | 21. Tomah |
| | | 22. Wausau |

Over 1,200 hours of volunteer time were devoted to conducting all of the Community Meetings. The travel involved exhausted the funds available for reimbursement before the conclusion of each year, so most Council members received only partial reimbursement for expenses incurred.

At all of the Community Meetings where the Council was meeting for the first time the functions and history of the Council were explained and all members present were introduced. On most occasions, there was a presentation about the addition of sexual orientation to the state's equal opportunity law through Chapter 112 of the Laws of Wisconsin, 1982. Following these opening remarks the community members and local officials or agency representatives were introduced.

The nature of each meeting varied according to the composition of the group attending that particular meeting. Typically, attendance consisted of members of the lesbian and gay community of the city and surrounding area, often representing an organization, college officials, health care workers, counselors, women's groups, law enforcement officials and news reporters. Less often representatives from the mayor's office, county government, the schools and the District Attorney's office were in attendance. On only two occasions were legislative representatives in attendance.

Prior to all meetings every related governmental office or agency and all identifiable and appropriate local groups were invited to attend. All meetings were held in public places and publicly noticed. All were in compliance with the open meetings laws.

A very brief summary of the Community Meetings follows:

1983

Milwaukee, June 1983, Memorial Union, UW-Milwaukee: County Supervisor Penny Podell greeted the Council and urged more grassroots efforts to make local officials aware of the needs and contributions of the gay and lesbian community. Representatives from fourteen Milwaukee gay and lesbian and other civil rights groups made presentations to the Council concerning their activities. The presentations covered an impressive list ranging from religious ministry to business events.

Stevens Point, September 1983, Charles M. White Public Library: Mayor Michael Haberman welcomed the Council to Stevens Point saying that it was an elected official's responsibility to uphold the law without discrimination. UW-Stevens Point Vice Chancellor Patrick McDonough talked with members about harassment on campus. Representatives from Portage County's Departments of Health and Human Services discussed the need for increased sensitivity and knowledge in service delivery to gays and lesbians. The health care workers also expressed a need for AIDS information. John Osinga, Portage County D.A. told those attending that he thought the area's bad reputation for treatment of minorities was unwarranted. He discussed with the Council the responsibility of a District Attorney to prosecute discrimination in public accommodations. The high point of the meeting was the discussion with Ed Van Feldt, Principal of Stevens Point Area Senior High. Mr. Van Feldt expressed concern over harassment against more effeminate male students and the overall need to prepare students for adult life. Local gay activists offered to provide speakers and assistance to school counselors. Press coverage was ample and positive.

Eau Claire, October 1983, L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library: City Council Vice President Shirley Crinon greeted the Council noting that Eau Claire had no local ordinance against discrimination based on sexual orientation. Ruth Bachman, Eau Claire County Assistant District Attorney, discussed the failure of the D.A. to prosecute a locally originated case of discrimination in a public accommodation. A representative from UW-Eau Claire said the campus adhered to non-discrimination but said that there were no openly gay staff or student organizations. In contrast, a representative from

the Gay/Lesbian Community of UW-Stout described the vital student group on that campus. Counselling professionals from Dunn and Chippewa Counties indicated a willingness to make services more accessible to lesbians and gays. Jeanne Hugo, Uw Eau Claire Counselling Center, talked about the harassment that had forced her to abandon her efforts to assist a gay support group. She and a representative from the area's chapter of the National Organization for Women spoke about Eau Claire County's elimination of funding to the Women's Center because it allowed a lesbian support group to meet under its auspices.

Racine, November 1983, First Unitarian Church: City Council President Dorothy Constantine welcomed the Council and indicated that Racine was especially concerned about working with the gay community on public health matters. A representative from the health department talked about the sexually transmitted disease program and referrals to non-homophobic physicians. Representatives from two victim assistance organizations talked about their experience in working with gay victims of assault. A local attorney talked about the difficulties lesbians and gays have in obtaining justice in the family courts. Other presenters spoke about AIDS and the blood supply and alcohol dependency programming. Two speakers talked about their disappointment over the deletion of the component on homosexuality from a carefully prepared curriculum on human development. The minister of the Unitarian Church talked about his church's outreach to lesbians and gays. An officer of the Racine Gay/Lesbian Union (GLU) talked about the closeted nature of Racine and the dangers that gays and lesbians experience. Threats against a member of GLU and the attack against a Council member from Racine had prompted the presence of several police officers. However, the low point of the meeting turned out to be the discussion with Mr. Bloutinghouse, Assistant Editor of The Racine Journal-Times. Mr. Bloutinghouse was arrogantly unresponsive to questions and suggestions of Council members.

1984

Madison, April 1984, Governor's Conference Room, State Capitol: Hal Harlowe, Dane County District Attorney, spoke about his commitment to providing access to all excluded groups. He made it clear that his office would place special emphasis on violence directed against minorities. Openly gay police officers discussed the Madison Police Department's recruitment of gay and lesbian police candidates and of the dangers of being in a perilous occupation which depends upon cooperation with sometimes homophobic co-workers. Dane County Sheriff Jerome Lacke said he made it clear to his officers that discrimination in law enforcement was impermissible. Representatives from the Departments of Social Services and Unified Services said that gay foster parents and staff made valuable contributions to county services. Five representatives from lesbian and gay groups made presentations about their groups' activities and needs.

Milwaukee, June 1984, War Memorial: This meeting was held as a part of a weekend conference of Milwaukee gay and lesbian groups. Jill Nilles, representing the Cream City Foundation, a lesbian and gay charitable foundation, made a request that Governor Earl attend that organization's large fundraiser. The Governor did indeed appear as the keynote speaker several months later. Ron Geiman, editor of InStep, talked about his aspirations for that publication.

Appleton, August 1984, 1101 West Bar & Restaurant: This was the first meeting that had no local officials or agency heads in attendance. However, Mike Bielinski made an impressive presentation about the formation of a new group, Concerned, designed to meet the needs of Green Bay area gay men and lesbians. A survey conducted by Concerned indicated that the gay community felt isolated and surrounded by a hostile heterosexual population. A representative from Women's Alternative in Oshkosh and other women in attendance agreed that the Fox Valley is considered particularly unaccepting of homosexuality.

Janesville, October 1984, Main Branch Public Library: No local officials were in attendance. The Milwaukee Journal covered the meeting fairly. The officers of Together, the primary gay and lesbian group in the area, made a presentation about the organization which concentrates on emotional support and social activities. They felt that services for gay youth were the greatest unmet need in their area. Although the attendees said they thought the area was tolerant, that tolerance was predicated upon their invisibility.

La Crosse, November 1984, Tattoo's Bar & Restaurant: Approximately thirty people were in attendance, mostly members of the area's lesbian organization. Several people in attendance expressed an interest in being Council members. There was extensive discussion about the area's needs with a special interest in health care.

1985

Wausau, July 1985, UW-Marathon Center: The verbal and physical harassment of gays in Wausau and the difficulty of obtaining sensitive health care were the major topics of discussion. Coverage by the Wausau Daily Herald was thorough and fair.

Green Bay, September 1985, UW-Green Bay: The Council was greeted by a representative from the Mayor's Office, Mr. Nanning. He expressed a willingness to assist openly gay people seeking appointment to the city's Affirmative Action Commission. Mike Bielinski of Concerned spoke about the satisfactory working arrangement between the city health department and a new organization called Center Project, Inc. Together they will provide anonymous HIV testing, risk reduction information and counselling for persons with AIDS or ARC. Captain Wirtz of the Green Bay Police Department said that he felt his force was fair in upholding the law. Gay community members supported Capt. Wirtz, saying that there had been harassment of gays leaving the bars but the police had stopped it quickly. There were also presentations from two local gay groups. Overall, the meeting indicated a remarkable increase in gay and lesbian participation in local services and government in less than two years.

Rhineland, October 1985, Nicolet College & Technical Institute: State Representative James Holperin welcomed the Council to the north. Dr. Jack Lundy, President of Nicolet College, welcomed the Council to the campus. Rep. Holperin spoke about AB 487, the bill dealing with confidentiality for HIV testing. The nursing director for Oneida County said that they were an alternative site for HIV testing but had performed only one test. She felt this was due to inadequate advertising by the state. The Council discussed the disproportionate number of gay and lesbian alcoholics with Linda Barker of the Lakeland Council on Alcoholism. The Council and local gay attendees discussed the need to prevent harassment and improve texts at the local high school. Officer Cable, a Rhineland police officer, said that he was unaware of any hostility towards lesbians and gays on the part of the local police force. Local gays present disagreed with him. Members of the area's gay rap group said that the area was very conservative, had a low average educational level and a small permanent population, all of which contributes to the difficulties lesbians and gays having in living harassment-free lives. Reporters from both newspapers and television were present.

Fond du Lac, November 1985, Morraine Park Technical Institute: Officials from both Taycheedah and Waupun prisons discussed the treatment of gay inmates in their respective institutions and of the efforts to educate staff and inmates about AIDS. Representatives from the county Departments of Social Services and Health said they were in attendance to obtain information. Although the county provides an alternative testing site for the HIV antibody virus, very few tests had been conducted. Fond du Lac Chief of Police Melvin Heller said that he believed his force was fair and non-discriminatory but also stated he would be interested in receiving training assistance from the Council. Representatives from the area's two gay groups, GRAND FLAGS and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, talked about their groups' activities and the problems of providing

services to a dispersed, closeted population. A community member with AIDS talked about his efforts to educate people about the disease and to receive adequate health care without discrimination

Baraboo, November 1985, UW-Baraboo / Sauk County Center: This was a small meeting. In attendance were two local Sheriff's Deputies, a high school guidance counselor and several representatives from BAGAL, the area's lesbian and gay organization. The Deputy Sheriffs impressed the Council with their interest and willingness to receive gay-sensitive training. The guidance counselor said that her experience with gay adolescents indicated that remaining in high school was very difficult for the students because of harrassment. A BAGAL representative described the organization as small and primarily focused on social activities.

1986

Kenosha, February 1986, UW-Parkside: The Council was welcomed to the campus by a member of the campus administration. Health care workers from the health department and local private hospitals discussed AIDS testing and patient care. The Council was concerned about the availability of risk reduction information. Police Chief Joe Trotta, a veteran officer, was very candid about police forces and the ways that sensitivity training can be integrated into overall officer training. The Council offered him assistance in future training programs.

Monroe, April 1986, Marine Bank: This was a very small meeting. No gay residents of the area were willing to attend. The Council discussed AIDS-related public health issues and treatment concerns with Ms. Maureen Wild, Infection Control Specialist at St. Clare Hospital and Clinic. Her knowledge and attitudes greatly impressed the Council.

Rice Lake, April 1986, Public Library: At this meeting the long anticipated disruption by religious fundamentalists finally materialized. The Rice Lake Police Chief Emmett Engstrom attempted to calm everyone down to no avail. His conduct at the meeting was very level-headed and respectful. However, gay residents said they have had difficulties with other representatives of law enforcement from the area. A reporter covering the meeting for the Barron County News-Shield, himself a fundamentalist, wrote a front page story that was objective and fair. The Council thanked him for his professionalism.

Menomonie, June 1986, UW-Stout: Chancellor Swanson welcomed the Council to the campus and promised to assure that text books used in 1987 would contain accurate information on gays and lesbians. The Assistant Chief of Police said that there had not been any difficulties in enforcement situations where the officer had known one of the parties was gay. Norman Rockwell, a member of the City Council, asked the Council questions about AIDS and modes of transmission. No gay students were in attendance.

Racine, June 1986, First Unitarian Church: The Council was welcomed to Racine by Alderwoman Patricia Obernberger. As this was the second meeting of the Council in this city, much of the discussion focussed on the Council's activities in the intervening two years. Judy Savard, Infection Control Nurse, for St. Mary's Medical Center talked about the hospital's policy work on creating a balance between protecting staff from HIV contamination and the need to provide compassionate, private care for patients with AIDS. The Council was very impressed with the information presented by Ms. Savard and by her obvious loving concern for her patients. Both the gay community members present and the health care workers in attendance expressed dismay over the apparent disinterest of Racine residents in obtaining information pertinent to AIDS. Several people in attendance also expressed concern that all other gay and lesbian issues are becoming subsumed into the overwhelming focus on AIDS.

Tomah, July 1986, Tomah Public Library: A small meeting with no gay community members present. Sheriff Donovan said that he was not surprised at the small attendance because the area was sharply prejudiced against gays. The discussion focused on law enforcement issues.

Superior, August 1986, UW-Superior: Because of the distance from Madison, the attending Council members stayed in Superior for two days at the home of the meeting's host Bob Jansen. This allowed the members to talk with many gays and lesbians from northwestern Wisconsin on an informal basis. The meeting was well-attended by health care workers, social service providers and gay people from the surrounding counties. There were reporters from three newspapers, one television station and one radio station. Overall, the continuing thread of information presented to the Council was that the area was very conservative on social issues and that the northwest is very isolated from the rest of the state. The isolation was perceived to be especially troublesome in the areas of access to information on anti-discrimination and health care.

Menasha, August 1986, UW Center - Fox Valley: The discussion at this meeting focused on AIDS care in the hospital setting, community nursing and police issues. The Fond du Lac Police Chief and Brown County Sheriff attending talked about the fear among officers stemming from an incident in the Outagamie County Jail in which an inmate with AIDS slashed his wrists and spewed blood on a guard. The Council asked what was being done to distribute AIDS information and train officers. The Appleton Post-Crescent covered the meeting.

Platteville, October 1986, UW-Platteville: The Council was welcomed to the campus by the Assistant Chancellor, Lloyd Linden, and the Assistant Dean of Students. The Assistant Chancellor said that his was one of the most conservative campuses with a predominantly male student population majoring in disciplines which do not delve into human social values. These circumstances combine to make the climate hostile to feminist and gay concerns. Two students from the Student Senate who had opposed recognition of the gay student group attended this meeting but were not disruptive. Nurses from the health service and a local hospital talked about their concerns that the area's health and social services had been so reduced by revenue losses that they would be unable to cope with many cases of antibody positivity or fullblown AIDS. The representatives from the gay student group presented their informational brochure and support activities.

Sheboygan, October 1986, UW-Sheboygan Center: This meeting focused upon health care and law enforcement, very similar to the meeting in Menasha. The gay community members present said that overall the police in the area were responsive. The meeting was covered by the Sheboygan Press.

Section 3. BUSINESS MEETINGS

The Council conducted Business Meetings in either Madison or Milwaukee at least one Saturday every other month except in December of 1984 and 1985. Business Meetings were usually four to five hours in length. The meetings in Madison were held in the Governor's Conference Room; in Milwaukee, most meetings were held at the War Memorial Center.

The agenda usually began with subcommittee meetings or reports and from there went to reports from the Co-Chairs and after August 1985, staff reports were part of the agenda. Subsequent to that there were usually presentations to the Council by state employees from Divisions with which the Council had business. Included in these presentations were the Divisions of Health, Community Services, Corrections, Equal Rights and the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance. Staff from the Executive Office attended occasionally to provide information.

