

Our clout is showing

NEW YORK, NY — Voters are finding in many races, a candidate's position on a gay civil rights issue is an accurate indicator of just how conservative or progressive these politicians are.

Shannon O'Brien, Democratic candidate for governor in Massachusetts, came out in support of marriage equality and accused Republican opponent, Mitt Romney, of trying to "mask a very conservative set of belief systems" on gay rights and other issues.

In New York, NY State Pride Agenda threatened not to endorse incumbent Gov. George Pataki unless he threw his support behind passage of a statewide anti-discrimination law. Pataki relented and

announced a deal had been brokered with the Republican head of New York's Senate.

In the race for Michigan Attorney General, Republican Mike Cox accused Democrat Gary Peters of supporting gay marriage, pointing to statements by Peters in support of civil unions.

Peters said civil union and marriage were different in the eyes of the law and accused Cox of being unqualified as a candidate if he didn't know or understand the difference.

In the US Congressional race for Hawaii's 3rd District, Republican Andy Smith and Rep. Eric Hamakawa, the Democratic incumbent also squared off over civil unions. In a campaign flyer mailed to district voters, Smith

attacked Hamakawa for introducing a bill in 2001 that sought to give all rights provided married couples to people living in a "civil union partnership."

"As a legislator, I'll do everything within my power to stop homosexual extremists who are being assisted by Hamakawa in their effort to legalize same sex marriage disguised as 'civil unions,'" Smith said. The language and tone were so harsh, the move actually damaged the candidate.

In the Illinois governor's race, both Republican Jim Ryan and Democrat Rod Blagojevich endorsed the passage of a bill adding sexual orientation to the state's human rights act.

Ramadaan observed at LGBT event

Holy month for LGBT Muslims begins during NGLTF's Creating Change Conference

by Faisal Alam

WASHINGTON, DC — Al-Fatiha, a US-based organization dedicated to LGBT Muslims, marked the beginning of the holy month of Ramadaan by holding an "Iftaar" (breaking of the fast) and "Jumah Salaat" (Friday prayer) at the largest LGBT activist conference in the country.

The 15th Annual Creating Change Conference, sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) was held from November 6 - 10 in Portland, OR. For the first time, the Creating Change Conference highlighted a theme:

"Building An Anti-Racist Movement: Working For Social and Economic Justice." The conference brought together more than 2000 people from across the United States and featured 160 workshops, roundtables and institutes.

This year marked the fourth time that Al-Fatiha has held a Jumaah Salaat at the Creating Change conference, but it is the first time Ramadaan fell during during the conference.

Ramadaan, began November 6 and is considered the holiest month in the Islamic lunar calendar, in which the *Quran* was revealed to Prophet Muhammad. Muslim adults are required to fast each day during the month, from sunrise until sunset and abstain from eating, drinking and sexual relations. Both the Friday service and the break fast were open to all conference attendees.

"Muslims who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender face many challenges and difficulties in reconciling their sexual orientation or gender identity with their faith," said Imam Abdullah, an Al-Fatiha board member and spiritual advisor to the organization. "In many cases, LGBT Muslims find themselves leaving Islam, because they are often rejected by their families and their religious communities," he said. "By holding an Iftaar and Jumaah Salaat at the largest LGBT activist conference in the country, Al-Fatiha hopes to create an understanding within the LGBT Muslim community, that you don't have to give up one part of your identity to maintain the other."

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