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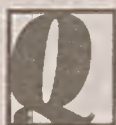
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staff editorial

Local leaders' silence speaks volumes on historic day

Tuesday, March 26, 2013, was one of the most important days in history for LGBT people, as the U.S. Supreme Court heard a case on marriage equality for the first time. We at *qnotes* were naturally curious and reached out to local officials shortly before noon on that day to see where they stood on marriage equality and the two historic cases in front of the Supreme Court.

By around 6:30 p.m. that evening, we received just four statements from the 21 elected officials we contacted.

Per usual, the first response was from Republican Mecklenburg County Commissioner Bill James, known for his conservative, anti-LGBT leanings. Supportive remarks were issued by County Commission Chairwoman Pat Cotham and at-large Charlotte Councilmembers Claire Fallon and Beth Pickering.

While Mayor Anthony Foxx made no statement, his press secretary did: "Mayor's unavailable for comment today. Sorry!" After a follow-up the next day, the response from Foxx's office was even blunter: "No comment."

Where were your LGBT-friendly elected officials? Even after a second request, no new responses were received. The city's

first and only openly gay or lesbian elected official, Charlotte Councilwoman LaWana Mayfield, also made no effort to issue a statement of support for LGBT people to *qnotes*. Neither did longtime ally and Councilmember Patsy Kinsey.

A pattern of silence has emerged time and time again when this newspaper tries to reach out to those officials this community has so loyally supported year in and year out, election after election.

It's important to note one singular exception. The elected representative who has without fail responded to this newspaper's request for comment is Bill James. He is either the first or the only local official to respond when this newspaper seeks comment on the LGBT issues we report in our community.

It's unfortunate that the only consistent conversation from elected officials that *qnotes* receives is from its most strident foe.

For years, LGBT community members have supported many of the individuals who currently sit on our city council and county commission. On such an important, historic day, what do we get for those years of support — in money, in volunteer campaign time, in our votes? Silence.

What a sad, sad commentary, indeed. . .

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Do you think it is appropriate for elected leaders who have routinely wooed LGBT voters to remain silent or refuse to vote on important matters of LGBT equality?

- **Yes**, paternalistic leaders should expect queers, like children, to be seen only and not heard.
- **Yes**, my LGBT campaign cash only buys access to handshaking and parties not to full equality under the law.
- **No**, candidates who take LGBT money and votes should be held accountable to their constituents.
- **No**, candidates who promise to be "straight allies" should learn the definition of "ally."
- **I don't care** as long as gay bars aren't raided, Grindr still functions properly and I can still get my picture taken with the mayor.

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