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### LAMBDA from page 7

discriminated against the teachers because of their sexual orientation and subjected them to unwarranted public harassment.

Chiumento and Salbenblatt's displayswere in keeping with the school's theme of respect and dignity for all, and followed similar lesbian and gay history month displays that previously were created by a staff member who is not gay. When Chiumento and Salbenblatt created displays at their schools in 1999, however, the interim superintendent and members of the Board of Education attacked them for supposedly "promoting" their personal "lifestyles.

"For a school district to exclude lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students from

## SUPPORT from page 6

**Rep. Jerrold Nadler** 

Compensation Law.

for 21 years.

spousal benefits. The men were joined by US Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-Manhattan), a strong supporter of lesbian and gay rights.

benefits under New York's Workers'

companies are now challenging the right of

the surviving partners to receive benefits

under the law, asserting that same-sex

domestic partners do not qualify as spouses.

died on September 11 at the World Trade

Center, where Gene had been an ad-

ministrative assistant at Aon Consulting. Larry

and Gene, residents of Manhattan's West Side,

Bill Valentine's partner, Joe Lopes, was a

flight attendant on American Airlines Flight 587 when the plane crashed off Kennedy

Airport last November 12, claiming the lives

of all on board. Bill and Joe, also residents of

Manhattan's West Side, had been partners

documents to afford themselves protection

as couples. They had health care proxies

Both couples had executed various legal

had been partners for almost 14 years.

Larry Courtney's partner Eugene Clark,

The two surviving partners, represented by Lambda Legal, filed have claims with the New York State Workers' Compensation Board receive spousal

The insurance

a campaign of 'respect and dignity for all' is very damaging to all students," said Sawyer. "The arbitrator's decision rejects discrimination against gay students and teachers.

Sawyer and the teachers discussed their recent victory, as well as how to create safer schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teachers and students. National Education Association District 207 Union President Jean Miller followed up the discussion with an update on the climate of Chicago's public schools.

info:

www.lambdalegal.org

and documents designating one another's partners as insurance, 401k and pension

beneficiaries. Both couples also were registered as domestic partners with New York City. Larry Courtney said, "Just like married couples, Gene and I were a partnership in every way — emotionally, financially,

legally and in our everyday lives. Gene would want me to seek the protections we should have as a married couple because we always believed we were a married couple. I'm still wearing the ring to prove it." The insurance company opposing Larry

Courtney's claim is CNA Insurance, acting as third-party administrator for Trancontinental Insurance. The claim manager is Cambridge Integrated Services Group.

Bill Valentine said, "Joe was my spouse. It would be an insult to our relationship and loe's memory if he were recognized as anything less. And that's why I'm bringing this claim: to honor the reality of what loe and I and our families and friends all knew we had."

The insurance company opposing Bill Valentine's claim is American International Group (AIG), acting as third-party administrator for National Union Fire Insurance. The claim manager is Specialty **Risk Services**.

The cases are also the first to be brought by gay or lesbian partners seeking coverage under New York's Workers' Compensation Law. That law gives first priority to a surviving spouse to receive benefits of up to \$400/week for the remainder of the surviving spouse's life or until the spouse remarries.

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