

# Anti-war sentiment grows

*NGLTF signs on to statement opposing US attack on Iraq*

by Duncan Osborne

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force joined a coalition of progressive groups that oppose a US war against Iraq when it recently endorsed a statement from the "Keep America Safe: Win Without War" coalition.

The Task Force signed on after senior staff and some board members reviewed various anti-war credos issued by groups across the country.

"Ultimately that group made the recommendation when 'Win Without War' came out," said Lorri L. Jean, NGLTF's executive director. "While we didn't find anything perfect, we felt this was a good, progressive coalition." The coalition includes groups such as the NAACP, the National Organization for Women, the Sierra Club, and the National Council of Churches.

The Task Force will not shift any financial or staff resources to anti-war organizing, according to Jean.

Queer, anti-war activists had pressed NGLTF to oppose the war during the Creating Change Conference, an annual event produced by the Task Force, held this past November 2002 in Portland, OR.

Initially NGLTF refused to take a position and insisted on further study which angered some activists who accused the group of avoiding a controversial stance for fear of losing funding.

NGLTF saw both positive and negative consequences when it opposed the 1991 Gulf War. The LGBT community did not see the Gulf War as a specifically related issue.

Oposing that war cost NGLTF "good will" and some financial support among some conservative supporters.

### Recent anti-war stance more positive

"It's been a very small response," Jean said. "By and large, I think this is an issue many people in our community are concerned about, but I also don't think it is number one."

The Task Force has received one negative email, four positive ones and a commentator on the Independent Gay Forum, a web site that features the work of moderate to conservative gay writers, chastised the group, according to Jean.

"We heard from many people who told us 'We will support the Task Force no matter what you do,'" Jean said.

Part of the reason for the muted reaction may be the timing of the announcement coming, as it did, the day after Christmas and right in the middle of the holidays. The announcement was posted on NGLTF's web site and distributed on its press and member email lists.

At least one activist who lobbied NGLTF to oppose the war during Creating Change was unaware that the group had issued the statement. He was happy to see it.

"I think it's great," said Joseph N. DeFilippis, coordinator of the Queer Economic Justice Network. "The statement looks fine. It was shrewd of them to do it as part of a coalition so they don't have to stand up and get attacked by the conservative elements in our community." There has been some criticism from left-leaning activists who see the "Keep America Safe" statement as insufficiently

tough — calling it, "anti-war lite."

Mandy Carter, a long-time black, lesbian activist, offered a similar critique.

"When I hear the line about patriotism — this is why we have wars in the first place," she said. "We continue to have wars because we are guarding the flag and the nation states." Still, Carter approved of NGLTF's position seeing it as part of a spectrum of positions that groups are taking against any US war with Iraq.

"I'm glad they are doing it," she said. "They are certainly in some very good company. Of course, there are varying degrees of how people are wanting to oppose this particular war. We need to have that wonderful range of people speaking out against the war."

Carter and DeFilippis agreed, the Task Force position will make it easier to convince other queer groups to oppose the war.

"Keep America Safe: Win Without War" — the statement:

*"We are patriotic Americans who share the belief that Saddam Hussein cannot be allowed to possess weapons of mass destruction.*

*We support rigorous UN weapons inspections to assure Iraq's effective disarmament. "We believe that a preemptive military invasion of Iraq will harm American national interests.*

*Unprovoked war will increase human suffering, arouse animosity toward our country, increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks, damage the economy, and undermine our moral standing in the world. It will make us less, not more, secure.*

*"We reject the doctrine — a reversal of long-held American tradition — that our country, alone, has the right to launch first-strike attacks.*

see SENTIMENT on 18



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