

Task Force Challenges Sodomy Laws

On November 20, 1983, representatives of all of the existing gay/lesbian legal organizations, the American Civil Liberties Union national staff, various ACLU affiliates, and attorneys involved in pending sodomy law challenge litigation met at the ACLU national headquarters in New York City to begin the process of developing a coordinated national strategy to challenge the sodomy laws in the remaining non-reformed jurisdictions and to express their commitment to fighting anti-gay discrimination in general.

The group agreed that it would not adopt any formal organizational structure, but would continue to meet together to develop strategy and to plan for its implementation in a cooperative effort. The group will unofficially call itself the "Ad Hoc Task Force to Challenge Sodomy Laws," and will initially focus on such challenges while anticipating future cooperative efforts that emphasize other aspects of the struggle for gay/lesbian civil rights.

The Ad Hoc Task Force agreed that it was the recommendation of all of the involved organizations and individuals that no further civil challenges to sodomy laws be filed pending the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of New York v. Uplinger.

However, pending that decision, the Ad Hoc Task Force will proceed with preparations to go forward with such challenges that arise in the criminal context. To implement those plans, the Ad Hoc Task

Force will work to publicize its efforts so that it can identify or be advised of criminal challenges as they arise anywhere in the country, and will solicit suggestions from interested ACLU affiliates, gay/lesbian organizations, or other groups in the remaining non-reformed states for affirmative challenges to the laws in their states. The Ad Hoc Task Force will also initiate efforts to target particular states in which successful challenges might be mounted, and will begin the development of a central directory of information and resources to use in such challenges.

The Ad Hoc Task Force will house its central directory of information and resources at the ACLU national headquarters in New York City. The directory will include lists of experts available to testify in such cases (dealing with health issues such as AIDS, with psychiatric issues, with sociological issues on homosexuality in general), existing briefs and/or legal memoranda dealing with sodomy law challenges, and memos prepared for the November 20 conference which analyze the statutes of each remaining non-reformed jurisdiction.

Persons or organizations desiring such information or briefs should contact either Loren Siegel of the ACLU or Abby Rubenfeld of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund:

132 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036

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