

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

SERVING WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA'S LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDERED COMMUNITY

## HELMS AMENDMENT HAS NO SUBSTANCE NOTHING BUT AN ACT OF POLITICAL POSTURING

**HELMS AMENDMENT  
ACCOMPLISHES NOTHING BUT  
SENDING AN ANTI-GAY MESSAGE,  
SAYS HRC**

WASHINGTON - The Human Rights Campaign called today's passage of an amendment sponsored by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., a blatant example of political posturing that has nothing to do with improving education in this country. The Helms amendment, which passed 52 to 48, prohibits federal funding to schools that choose not to offer facilities to Boy Scout troops because of their discriminatory policy banning gay scouts. However, the measure is pointless, because the Constitution already dictates that the Boy Scouts have equal access to school facilities, asserts HRC.

"The Boy Scouts already have complete and unbridled access to all community facilities in which the general public has access," says HRC Political Director Winnie Stachelberg. "The purpose of

the Helms amendment is to bully schools into granting the Boy Scouts special privileges not offered to other groups. This is really an underhanded attempt to reward those who practice discrimination and punish those who value equality." The courts have already ruled that school districts must allow the Boy Scouts to have equal access to public facilities, just like any other group. But school districts are still entitled to deny the Boy Scouts special benefits not offered to other groups. For instance, as the U.S. District Court explained, local school districts are not required to "endorse, participate, or solicit others to participate in Boy Scouts activities." What the Helms amendment seeks to do is intimidate school officials into continuing to offer the Boy Scouts these special privileges, even if their discriminatory policy conflicts with a community's values and standards, says HRC. "This is really about forcing Helms' anti-gay viewpoint on local school districts across

America," said Stachelberg. "It is putting the congressional stamp of approval on exclusionary behavior by having the Senate officially say that 'discrimination is good.' We believe this sends a terrible message that conflicts with the values of most Americans." Helms said on the Senate floor that "radical militants" were trying to ban the Boy Scouts from campuses. He also said they [gay activists] "demand that everybody else's principles must be cast aside in order to protect the right of homosexual conduct." On May 23, the House passed a similar anti-gay amendment sponsored by Rep. Van Hilleary, R-Tenn. The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian and gay political organization with members throughout the country. It effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and educates the public to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

## AMNESTY REPORTS DETAILS TORTURE OF GLBT PERSONS

**GOVERNMENT INACTION & ABUSE  
DRIVES TORTURE, SEXUAL  
ASSAULT, FORCED PSYCHIATRIC  
TREATMENT OF LESBIANS AND  
GAYS WORLDWIDE**

Latest Report in Amnesty International's Anti-Torture Campaign Documents Violations in 30 Countries; Urges US and Others to Dramatically Increase Protection of LGBT People (New York) ? Government inaction — and at times government provocation — is a driving force behind the torture and mistreatment of lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people,

Amnesty International said in a report launched July 27, 2001. The report includes documented examples of torture and ill-treatment in some 30 countries, including Uganda, Pakistan, Argentina, the United States and Russia, and details cases of LGBT people who were antagonized in custody, physically and sexually assaulted, subjected to unnecessary medical or psychiatric treatment, and sometimes forced to flee their countries because of persecution based on their sexual identity.

The report, *Crimes of Hate, Conspiracy of Silence: Torture and Ill-Treatment*

Based on Sexual Identity, is the latest in the organization's yearlong campaign to fight torture worldwide. It notes that LGBT people are frequently subjected to torture and abuse by state agents in police stations and prisons; that over 70 countries, including parts of the US, still criminalize same-sex relations; and that some countries even mete out the death penalty as punishment.

However, government abuse represents only one part of the picture. All people, as a result of real or perceived sexual

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## PFLAG PROGRAMS FOR EQUALITY IN THE SCHOOLS

By Doug Wade

The Asheville chapter of PFLAG hosted a safe school training weekend for 10 PFLAG chapters in Tennessee and South Carolina as well as North Carolina. The seminar was conducted by staff from national PFLAG, and was intended to help local activists work more effectively for gay and lesbian students in our public schools. My sense is that the time is ripe for this work. Public school administrators are becoming aware that they have a very big problem with their GLBT students, but don't know what to do about it, and are scared to death of the Christian conservatives. I think that many schools will welcome helpful community assistance in solving this problem. The Asheville PFLAG chapter is committed to working in our schools.

The program for this month's support and discussion meeting will be on GLBT teenagers and the public schools. We will talk about the work we are doing on this issue and show part of the video, *Something In Common* produced by UNCTV and is an excellent video on different programs being tried in various schools in North Carolina to solve problems caused by diversity in the student population. We will be showing the parts of the program which relate to GLBT students.

We encourage GLBT folks who need support to attend our monthly meetings, and many are. For the first half of the meeting the group breaks up into smaller discussion groups. One of these groups is usually primarily GLBT. We also welcome those of you who might be interested in participating in our education and advocacy

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