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32nd ANNIVERSARY OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN ACTIVISTS ALLIANCE OF WASHINGTON, DC

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 29, 2003

- **Ms. NORTON.** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a Washington, DC institution that has been in the forefront of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered civil rights movement, and that I have the distinct honor and pleasure of representing in this body: the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC (GLAA), the oldest continuously active gay and lesbian rights organization in the United States.
- Since its founding in April 1971, GLAA has been a respected and persistent advocate in District politics tirelessly asserting equal rights and social equality for lesbians and gay men living in the city.
- GLAA has long fought to improve relations among the District's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities and DC's public safety agencies. GLAA also has long been at the forefront of the efforts to strengthen enforcement of the DC Human Rights Act of 1977.
- On April 15th, GLAA holds its 32nd Anniversary Reception honoring the 2003 recipients of its Distinguished Service Awards: Councilmember Kathy Patterson; the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit of the Metropolitan Police Department; longtime District activist Karen Armagost; the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, DC; and former GLAA President Bob Summersgill.
- Councilmember Kathy Patterson has been an ally of gay citizens and a leading force for government reform and accountability. Councilmember Patterson wrote and secured passage of the law that established the DC Office of Human Rights as a separate, independent agency. She has supported strengthening diversity and sensitivity training in the police and fire departments and establishing an effective Office of Citizen Complaint Review.
- DC Metropolitan Police Department Chief Charles Ramsey created the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) in June 2000. The work of Sgt. Brett Parson, head of the GLLU, and Ofc. Kelly McMurry, its founder, along with community volunteers, active, auxiliary and reserve police officers, has resulted in a dramatic improvement in community-police relations; an increase in the mutual respect of gay people and the police; and a focus on previously ignored problems in the community.
- Karen Armagost has been an activist in Washington, DC for over fifteen years. As a professional canvasser, GLBT activist, and past President of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, Karen has exemplified the dedication and hard work that makes grassroots organizing a powerful political force. Karen works for the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy through the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network.
- This year marks The Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, DC's 22nd Season. The Chorus has performed at inaugurations of a mayor and a president, and most recently performed in tribute to Elizabeth Taylor at the Kennedy Center Honors Gala before President and Mrs. Bush.
- Bob Summersgill is the immediate past President of GLAA. He has led efforts to secure legal protection against harassment in our schools and workplaces; to open the DC HIV/AIDS Administration to public accountability; and to ensure the full rights of transgender and intersex people under the DC Human Rights Act.
- GLAA's thirty-two year fight to secure equal rights for the LGBT citizens of Washington, DC is more poignant because it is being celebrated on April 15th. It is a reminder to us all that United States citizens living in our Nation's Capital, who have fought in every American war, including the present war in Iraq, are taxed without representation.
- I ask the House to join me in congratulating the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance and its honorees.