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David E. Clarenbach, State Representative

Chairperson:
Committee on Government
Operations

Member:
Committee on Agriculture
and Nutrition
Committee on Labor
Legislative Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

October 27, 1981

MADISON--The Wisconsin Assembly made history today by giving final approval to a Gay Rights Bill authored by State Representative David Clarenbach (D-Madison). This is the first time any house of any state legislature has furthered such a law.

Clarenbach credited his success to grass-roots support, especially from clergy, and the legislature realistically looking at the issue. "This is not a moral issue - it is a matter of bigotry," Clarenbach countered during debate on the Assembly floor. "It is a question of whether Wisconsin will tolerate discrimination."

The measure, Assembly Bill 70, was approved on a vote of 50 to 46 and now goes to the State Senate, which Clarenbach believes will favorably act on the bill early next year. "I am confident that we've cleared the major hurdle; the Senate will pass AB 70 and the Governor will sign it into law. Wisconsin will then become the first state in the country to guarantee gay people the legal right to recourse when they are discriminated against," said Clarenbach.

(MORE)

David Clarenbach
October 27, 1981
Add on -1-

Three other states, California, Pennsylvania, and Michigan have executive orders which offer limited protections against discrimination to gay persons. Clarenbach's bill provides broad protections from bias in all employment, housing, and public accommodations within the state. Also included is a requirement that all companies with state contracts not discriminate against lesbians and gay men.

"What has happened here today is a victory for gay people everywhere," continued Clarenbach. "Let the 'Moral Majority' and the hate mongers take notice that the gay rights movement and human decency is alive and well. This should serve to inspire enactment of similar laws in other states."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 16, 1982

MADISON-- The Wisconsin legislature has just become the first in the country to pass a gay civil rights bill. The State Senate by a vote of 19 to 13 approved Assembly Bill 70 which last fall passed the State Assembly.

"This is a significant victory for all people who value human rights and a blow to those who promote bigotry and prejudice," said State Representative David Clarenbach (D-Madison), author of the bill. "Passage of AB 70 can be credited to the understanding and concerns of persons throughout the state, especially in the mainstream religious community, who courageously spoke-up for the rights of all people."

The bill, expected to be signed into law by the Governor, will add "sexual orientation" to Wisconsin's existing list of discrimination bans and applies to employment in both the public and private sectors, housing and public accommodations.

(MORE)

David Clarenbach (AB 70)

February 16, 1982

Add on -1-

Clarenbach predicts this action will boost civil rights initiatives in other states which have suffered recently because of the success of right-wing causes. "I hope the passage of this historic law will send a message to those who propagate misconceptions and fear, that courage and human compassion are still very much alive in this country," Clarenbach said.

Wisconsin will join three other states-- Michigan, Pennsylvania and California-- which have more limited anti-discrimination protections for lesbians & gay men, mandated by executive order of their governors.

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MORE GOOD NEWS FROM WISCONSIN

11/9/82
Chicago Bay Life

Again, Wisconsin has furthered the rights of gay men and lesbians. Last February, our legislature enacted the nation's first statewide comprehensive anti-discrimination law. In the November 2nd election, voters overwhelmingly returned to office those incumbents who voted for our gay rights bill.

In key races where incumbents were attacked for their pro-gay rights stance, 14 out of 17 won reelection. I am saddened by the defeat of those three colleagues and good friends, but the substantial news from the election is good. Taking into account the returning incumbents and newly-elected lawmakers who support gay rights, and the defeat of several die-hard foes, things look very good indeed in both houses of our legislature for retention of our new law.

But the big news was in the governor's race. Wisconsin has elected Tony Earl, a Democrat, who will succeed retiring Governor Lee Dreyfus, a Republican. Though Governor Dreyfus signed our gay rights bill into law, his party at its convention this summer passed a resolution making the repeal of this historic law a major priority for the coming legislative session.

The Republican candidate for governor, industrialist Terry Kohler, not only made gay rights an issue in the gubernatorial contest by attacking Earl for his strong support of gay rights, but he tried to stir up the worse homophobic fears among voters. The threat of Terry Kohler as governor to both the new gay rights law and other initiatives on consenting adults and abortion rights was real.

Earl's response to Kohler's assault was an unfaltering, unequivocal reiteration of his support for Wisconsin's gay and lesbian citizens and a promise to veto any attempt at overturning the state's gay rights law. Earl went on to commit himself to a role for gay people in his administration, and to oppose restrictions of women's right to choose abortion. In a record landslide victory, Tony Earl defeated Terry Kohler with 57% of the vote.

Our new governor and legislature should translate into final passage of consenting adults legislation in Wisconsin next year. Our state is among half those in the country where sexual acts between consenting adults in private are illegal unless the participants are married. Last year, after six years of steady progress, legislation that would remove this prohibition failed by one vote. I'm optimistic that the balance has now finally tipped and this effort, too, will soon be realized.

Just as Wisconsin's gay rights law is spurring on similar action in other states, the electoral strength of Wisconsin's gay community should encourage everyone fighting the Moral Majority and New Right.

-- Rep. David Clarenbach
(D-Madison) has just been elected to his fifth term in the Wisconsin Assembly, and is the author of both Wisconsin's gay rights bill and consenting adults bill.

Madison-- Wisconsin's State Assembly narrowly defeated a gay rights bill earlier this month that would have legalized all sexual acts between consenting adults. The vote to kill Assembly Bill 235 was 50-49.

State Representative David Clarenbach (D-Madison) who authored the bill, however, is encouraged about prospects for gay rights legislation in the future. "Given the alleged strength of the 'Moral Majority,' the gay rights movement has great momentum and is gaining support every day," Clarenbach said.

Another Clarenbach proposal that would prohibit discrimination in Wisconsin employment, housing, and public accommodations because of sexual preference, was approved by a legislative committee this week.

"When the consenting adults bill passes, Wisconsin will become the 26th state to lift their bans on homosexual activity. I am confident that our Legislature will go on to become the first to pass a bill prohibiting discrimination against gay people," said Clarenbach. Only two states have successfully enacted anti-discrimination protections, and both by executive order.

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THE UNITED

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February 25, 1982

Contact: Barbara Lightner
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Madison Community United, Inc., an organization for lesbians, gaymen, and their families, issued the following statement upon the Governor's historic signing of AB 70:

"This is an historic moment for Wisconsin, demonstrating that common sense and courage can win the day. In enacting into law a lesbian and gay rights bill, the state has overcome its own worst history as exemplified in the tactics of fear and intimidation so frightfully espoused, first, by Joseph McCarthy and, more recently, by the state's Moral Majority and other individuals and groups following in that tradition.

The victory is one for us as lesbians and gay men whose equal access to the basic necessities of life-- like food, clothing, and shelter-- have now been assured through this legislation. That fact alone is of utmost significance.

The victory is, however, also a victory for all men and women, regardless of sexual orientation.

For Wisconsin has stood up and said "NO" to those few who have tried to use the tactics of fear and intimidation to destroy the principles of freedom, and the right to be different, which lie behind this country's founding.

The state can be grateful to those whose courage made this historic piece of legislation possible-- Rep. David Clarenbach, the churches, members of the state Assembly and Senate, and all of those who responded quickly and sincerely to the campaign to defeat the bill through answering to an opposition call-in campaign to the Governor's office. Also of importance has been the work of Leon Rouse of Milwaukee."