

PTOWNWEST

No Place Like Home



P TOWNWEST

*The mission of Ptownwest is to reconnect,
promote and create gay community*

Rhode Island & New York Restore Military Benefits to LGBTQ Veterans

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo (D) and Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo (D) both recently signed legislation that will restore state military benefits to veterans who were dishonorably discharged due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Cuomo signed the Restoration of Honor Act into law yesterday and Raimondo signed a similar bill last Friday.

While the new laws won't allow dishonorably discharged LGBTQ veterans to regain access to federal military benefits, they at least establish a process for such veterans to upgrade their discharge status and apply with the federal government to have their records upgraded, [according to the Modern Military Association of America](#).



Danica Roem Just Became the First Trans Person Reelected to a State Legislature

Democrats swept the state. Roem said that's a mandate to pass "a Virginia version of the Equality Act

Virginia Delegate Danica Roem (D) just became the first out transgender person to win a reelection for a state legislature.

Roem was first elected to the Virginia House of

Delegates in 2017 when she defeated her opponent, Bob Marshall, who was so conservative that he called himself the [state's "chief homophobe."](#)

This year, Roem ran against Republican Kelly McGinn, focusing her campaign on her accomplishments in health care, education, and transportation.

Organizations that supported [McGinn ran ads that brought up Roem's identity](#), referring to her support for an anti-discrimination health care law as a measure to "force all insurance companies to pay for harmful and unnecessary 'gender transition' surgeries" - the point, critics said, to bring up gender affirmation surgery in reference to Roem herself.

But Roem emerged victorious yesterday with 57% of the vote.

"In 2017, Danica wrote the playbook on how transgender candidates can defeat anti-LGBTQ opponents through authenticity and attention to everyday issues - and her reelection victory sets it in stone," said Annise Parker of the LGBTQ Victory Fund.

Delegates Dawn Adams, Mark Levine, and Mark Sickles - who are gay - were all reelected to the House of Delegates as well.

Their victories yesterday came as Democrats took control of the Virginia House of Delegates for the first time in two decades. Democrats gained six seats in the legislative body and two more in the state senate.

Roem said that the election shows a mandate from voters to pass "a Virginia version of the Equality Act." Currently, only public sector employees are protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the state.

"We have a mandate from the people to pass nondiscrimination [bills] that are comprehensive and inclusive of all our LGBTQ constituents," [she told the Washington Blade](#). "We will be getting that done."

Democrats now control both houses of the legislature in Virginia as well as the governor's office.

Two Supreme Court Justices Appeared in a Photo with a Hate Group Leader

Two Supreme Court justices are being urged to recuse themselves from upcoming LGBTQ rights cases after a picture of them with the president of an anti-LGBTQ organization.

Last week, Justices Samuel Alito and Brett Kavanaugh - both conservatives nominated by Republican presidents - appeared in a picture with Brian Brown of the National Organization for Marriage (NOM), which Brown shared on Twitter. Now the liberal organization Take Back the Court is calling on Alito and Kavanaugh to recuse themselves from upcoming LGBTQ cases.

NOM is an anti-LGBTQ organization that was set up to fight marriage equality, but also [opposes LGBTQ anti-discrimination measures and supports conversion therapy](#). Brown is also the [SPLC designated hate group International Congress of Families](#), which organizes internationally to oppose LGBTQ equality.

So a photo of Brown with two Supreme Court Justices is troubling, especially since the Court is currently considering [three cases related to LGBTQ rights: *Bostock v. Clayton County*, *Altitude Express v. Zarda*, and *R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes v. EEOC*](#). NOM filed amicus briefs in those cases, asking the Court to reject LGBTQ equality.

[Aaron Belkin of Take Back the Court sent them a letter](#) to ask them to recuse themselves from the cases "light of serious concerns about your impartiality raised by your decision to pose for a photograph for social media" with Brown.

Belkin cited the Code of Conduct for Federal Judges, which says that a judge should not allow "relationships to influence judicial conduct or judgment" and that a judge "should neither lend the prestige of the judicial office to advance" their own private interests.

But he also noted that the Code of Conduct does not apply to the Supreme Court, still asking the justices to hold themselves to that standard recuse themselves.

"The credibility and impartiality of the current Supreme Court is in tatters," Belkin wrote. "Posing for photographs with the president of an advocacy organization that has filed briefs in matters pending before the court makes a mockery of Chief Justice Roberts' assertion that a judge's role is to impartially

call balls and strikes.”

“If you refuse to recuse yourselves, this incident will further illustrate the urgent need for structural reform of the Supreme Court in order to restore a Court that understands its role is to protect individual rights and our democracy.”

The Supreme Court could seriously advance or hinder LGBTQ equality in these three cases. *Bostock* and *Zarda* are about whether the Civil Rights Act’s ban on discrimination “because of sex” applies to discrimination against gay and bi people, and *Harris Funeral Homes* is about whether those protections apply to transgender people. Some federal court have already accepted the argument that discrimination against LGBTQ people necessarily involves discrimination because of sex, and the Supreme Court could fortify those rulings into solid protections, or it could overturn them.

There are five conservative Supreme Court justices and four liberals. If Kavanaugh and Alito recuse themselves, then the balance on those cases would tip to 4-3 in favor of the liberals.



With Last Night’s Election, a ‘Rainbow Wave’ of 144 LGBTQ Candidates Have Won Office This Year

So far this year, 144 openly LGBTQ candidates won their races, [according to Victory Fund](#), an organization which supports LGBTQ political candidates nationwide. In addition, 12 races involving LGBTQ candidates remain undecided or are headed to runoff elections.

A total of 382 known out LGBTQ candidates ran in political races this year. Among last night’s winners were eight bisexuals, 20 lesbians and nine trans women, including Danica Roem who serves in Virginia’s House of Delegates, making her [the first-ever trans person to win re-election for a state legislature in the U.S.](#)

Victory Fund endorsed 176 of the candidates – as such, 63.1% of the candidates they endorsed ended up winning. While more men ran than women, women ended up winning at a higher rate of 46.2% compared to men’s win rate of 36.9%

Here’s a breakdown of the candidates’ gender identity and sexual orientation:

Interestingly, 83.2% of LGBTQ candidates ran as Democrats and only 2.4% ran as Republicans – hardly surprising considering the Republican’s party anti-LGBTQ platform. Some LGBTQ candidates even won in red states like Texas, New Mexico, Georgia, and Missouri.

“Anti-LGBTQ attacks on our candidates almost universally backfired,” said Annise Parker, President & CEO of LGBTQ Victory Fund, [in a statement](#). She added:

LGBTQ candidates are winning elections in numbers and in parts of the country thought unthinkable a decade or two ago. LGBTQ people are in every community - we are people of color, women, immigrants, and people with disabilities - and we come from families both liberal and conservative.

This beautiful diversity provides an opportunity to connect on some level with every single voter in America. That is the reason LGBTQ candidates are winning in unprecedented numbers, and this will only accelerate in the years ahead.

Victory Fund says there are currently [765 openly LGBTQ elected officials](#) serving nationwide.

Turkey Urged to Drop Legal Cases Against LGBTQ Activists Who Marched in Banned Pride Event

The activists were arrested following a Pride march in Ankara.

9th November 2019 by [Matt Moore](#)

Human rights organisations are urging Turkey to drop legal cases against 19 LGBTQ activists due to go on trial on Tuesday (12 November). 18 students and one faculty member from the Ankara-based Middle East Technical University were charged after holding a Pride event on campus.

[The Guardian](#) reports that the protesters were charged with “participating in an unlawful assembly” and “resisting despite warning”. Despite Pride marches having been held on the campus since 2011, the university warned that a ban on Pride marches in the region would be applied on campus. This is despite a ruling by a court in Ankara earlier this year [overturning that ban](#).

Björn van Roozendaal, the programmes director for the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe), who said they’d represent the accused, said: “The defenders were practising their right to assembly and standing up for the rights of others in a peaceful manner when the police attacked and arrested them.

“No one should be prosecuted for exercising their right to peaceful assembly. All charges against the human rights defenders should be dropped immediately, and this case should be closed.”

Amnesty International also condemned the arrests, with their European campaigns director, Fotis Filippou saying: “It is a dark day when university authorities call the police to silence students who are simply demanding their rights to dignity and equality.

“All those detained by police must be released immediately and unconditionally.”

Despite homosexuality being legal in Turkey, the authorities have cracked down on events like Pride marches and the [Queer Olympix](#), usually claiming “social sensitivities”.

Current Turkish laws allow governors and district governors to ban events for up to a month if they believe they may be a threat to “national security, public order, prevention of crime, protection of public health, public morality or the rights and freedoms of others.”

The lifting of the ban on Pride marches in Ankara earlier this year was welcomed by LGBTQ groups. In a statement after the ruling, a lawyer for Kaos GL, Hayriye Kara, said: “We can say that the court has accepted our arguments that we have advocated since the day when the ban has declared.

“Instead of banning fundamental rights and freedoms to protect social peace, they said that

the group that is vulnerable to any attack should be protected. It can be said that the court ruled that the state must protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of LGBTI+s.”

Crow Creek Second Tribe To Adopt LGBT Hate Crime Laws

By CHYNNA LOCKETT

Marlow Medicine Crow Jr. is on the Crow Creek Tribe Law and Order Committee. He says the hate crimes amendment is the first of its kind for the tribe.

“It was a long time coming. There’s a lot of things that go on that would necessitate that law and maybe help give more protections to them—the people that are being discriminated against.” Some federal hate crimes legislation applies to tribes. But adding codes to their own books helps ensure repercussions for offenders by adding on a one thousand dollar fine and increased jail time. The amendment Crow Creek adopted is modeled after the Mathew Shepard Act.

“Nobody wants their kids or families to be picked on and we’re kind of a small community. Where there’s a need out there the community really comes together.”

Two proponents spent months working to pass the amendment in the Oglala Lakota Tribe this year. Monique, or Muffie Mousseau was pleased with how quickly the Crow Creek Tribe got on board. “Well we were pretty happy because we got to meet Marlow’s mom and she’s the one that actually looked at us and said ‘We’ve been waiting for you girls to get here’. So it was a pretty spiritual amazing cultural thing.”

Mousseau’s wife Felipa Deleon is also a proponent. “To hear that acceptance and to have them approve it unanimously, it was an awesome feeling, to know that there is that protection for the LGBT community now.”

The hate crime amendment is expected to take effect for the Crow Creek Tribe next month.

In Indonesia, a Widespread Belief that “Homosexuality is a Disease”

LGBTQ people and rights advocates in the Southeast Asian nation - the world's most populous Muslim-majority country - say there has been an increase in people seeking ruqyah as a form of conversion therapy since 2016.

Early that year, incendiary statements by high-ranking officials, coupled with a countrywide shift to the religious right, set off a cascade of hate and persecution directed at gay and transgender people. More than 300 people were arrested in 2017 alone, according to Human Rights Watch, many of them during raids on homes, nightclubs and hair salons.

This “moral panic,” as many have taken to calling the current climate, is one manifestation of a rise in Islamic fundamentalism that represents a new chapter for this vast archipelago country which has long touted its pluralism as its greatest strength.

LGBT TV Characters at All-Time High With Women Outnumbering Men

Glaad's annual report has found that LGBT women now outnumber LGBT men for the first time on broadcast and cable television

LGBT characters on the small screen are at an all-time high according to Glaad's annual study of representation on TV.

According to the [Where We Are On TV report](#), LGBT characters now make up 10.2% of series regular on broadcast shows in the US, which is up 1.4% from last year's previous record. This equates to 90 out of 879 roles.

For the first time, LGBT women also outnumbered men with 53% to 47% thanks to shows such as *Batwoman* and *Pose*. The season has also seen more bisexual and transgender characters as well as those who have HIV/Aids.

There was also an increase of racial diversity for LGBT characters in both broadcast and television but on streaming, there was a 7% drop from last year.

“Last year, Glaad called on the television industry to increase the number of LGBTQ characters and more accurately reflect the world we live in, and they responded by exceeding this challenge,” said Sarah Kate Ellis, president and CEO of Glaad. “At a time when the cultural climate is growing increasingly divisive, increased representation of LGBTQ stories and characters on television is especially critical to advance LGBTQ acceptance.”

For the third year, the report also included asexual characters but representation is deemed insignificant with Aaron Paul's *Todd Chavez* on Netflix's *Bojack Horseman* the only one.

The overall number of LGBT characters on TV could well increase over the next year with shows such as *The L Word* reboot, Lena Waithe's sitcom *Twenties* and comedy *Work in Progress* starring gay comic Abby McEnany still to premiere.

LGBT Discrimination Denies 400,000 Children the Unconditional Love of Family

Well and Good
Marissa Miller

Nineteen years ago, when Greg Thomas and Ron Preston adopted Samantha, they didn't expect the process to run so smoothly. “A lot of that had to do with the attorney we had,” says Thomas, who lives with his family in Wichita Falls, Texas. “His wife was one of our best clients. And she was rooting for us and pulled every string in the system to make sure this was going to happen.”

Same-sex couples looking to adopt in the future might not be in so lucky. On November 1, the first day of National Adoption Month, the Trump administration issued a [notice of nonenforcement](#) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services proposing to override the Obama administration's anti-discrimination law, which included gender identity and sexual orientation as federally protected classes. If the rule becomes final after an upcoming 30-day comment period, department-funded faith-based adoption or foster care agencies would be within their rights to deny same-sex couples or LGBTQ persons from adopting a child, a decision many believe treats children as commodities to be traded rather than people deserving of safe and loving homes.

When we talk about selective adoption, we often concentrate on the injustice of denying the rights of same-sex couples. But [more than 100,000 children](#) in foster care cannot be returned to their biological families and thus await adoption. Is their right to the best chance at a family not also denied when adoption agencies are allowed to discriminate against members of the LGBTQ community? Prohibiting same-sex couples from adopting a child not only bottlenecks the adoption process, but also sends children the message that identifying as anything other than cisgender is inherently wrong. Compounding this trauma is the fact that many LGBTQ youth entered the child welfare system because they had been rejected by their families, according to research from the [Child Welfare League of America](#).

“Young people in foster care are now being subjected to living in this fear that their identity is something wrong or bad, and that because of it, they will have less of a chance of finding a safe, loving home,” [Denise Brogan-Kator](#), chief policy officer at Family Equality, an LGBT advocacy and support organization, tells Well+Good.

Same-sex couples are valuable assets to child welfare since they’re more likely to adopt children of color or those with disabilities, both of which are overrepresented in the foster care system, according to [Abbie Goldberg](#), PhD, author of [Open Adoption and Diverse Families](#) and psychology professor at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. “LGBTQ parents are a resource for, not a drain on, the child welfare system,” she says.

Of the estimated [442,995 children](#) in foster care, according to the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, racial and ethnic minorities comprise 53 percent of the population. A study published in the journal [Children and Youth Services Review](#) found that up to 47 percent of the child welfare system population has some form of disability (compared to less than [eight percent](#) of the general youth population), with same-sex couples more likely to adopt [children with special needs](#). In the child welfare system, children with disabilities are also more likely to be mistreated, abused, and overlooked, warranting an even greater pressing need for committed adoptive parents.

“Barring LGBTQ people from adopting or fostering makes no sense from a child welfare or economic perspective.” —Abbie Goldberg, PhD

Numerous large bodies of research cite equivalent parenting styles across a variety of orientations and identities, with a landmark study from the [Journal of Marriage and Family](#) showing that children

adopted into same-sex or LGBTQ families are equally well adjusted both socially and academically. “Trump is not basing his agenda on empirical research, period,” says Dr. Goldberg. “Barring LGBTQ people from adopting or fostering makes no sense from a child welfare or economic perspective.”

Thomas, a devout Christian, explains that he proudly raised his daughter Samantha with his partner even at the expense of his relationship with his traditional parents. “I was raised in the Church of Christ so all of this was craziness to my parents, and they didn’t know that we were going to do this,” says Thomas. “So the day Samantha was born, I called to tell them. My mother said, ‘Oh, did you get another dog?’ and I said, ‘No, mom, it’s a little girl.’ ‘Well, what are two gay guys doing with a little girl?’ and I said, ‘Mom, we’re just going to love her.’”

And love her they did. “They have always treated me like they gave birth to me themselves,” Samantha tells Well+Good. “Never missed a basketball game or a dance recital. Been there for homework and boy troubles. Gave me a roof my head and unconditional love.”

If the ruling does become final, Dr. Goldberg says not all hope is lost for youth in the child welfare system and their prospective same-sex parents. “Many agencies and social workers do recognize LGBTQ people and parents as incredible resources when it comes to fostering and adopting, and this cannot be overstated,” she says. “Not all agencies want to engage in and nor will then engage in discriminatory practices.”

And if the ruling does not make it past the 30-day comment period, Brogan-Kator says the administration’s proposal still raises an important question: “If the government allows us to be discriminated against here, where else can we be discriminated against?”

Uganda Police Confirm Arrest of 120 LGBT People

VOA
By Halima Athumani
November 11, 2019 01:49 PM

KAMPALA - Ugandan police said Monday that in an operation around Kampala’s city center, they arrested 120 people suspected to have been using narcotics. However, members of the LGBT community say it was a health meeting that police interrupted.

Patrick Onyango, the Kampala Metropolitan Police spokesperson, tells VOA they received intelligence information that the site of the raid – The Ram Bar – is used as a massage parlor during day and for smoking opium and shisha during the night.

Both products are outlawed in the Tobacco Control Act 2015 and people found guilty of using them are liable for a fine of \$130 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months.

"We are charging them under the Tobacco Control Act," said Onyango. "We have started the process of screening and recording statements from them. There are those we shall give police bonds, students, and those who claim that they are innocent. They were just there for a dance and they were not participating in the smoking."

At the Central Police Station in Kampala, friends and members of the local LGBT community move around, seemingly worried. Among them is Sean Mugisha a paralegal who is trying to secure bail for the arrested members.

Mugisha tells VOA that Ram Bar is the only safe place that the LGBT community has in Kampala.

"But most importantly it is a center for most outreaches.," he said. "All these guys who give health care services, when they want to do outreaches for the community, it's one of those venues that they have been accessing. So, last night there was an arrest. I consistently got calls. I decided to come and follow up what is here."

Frank Mugisha, the executive director Sexual Minorities Uganda, says the arrests Monday are based on trumped up charges by the police.

"We don't know what will happen next. I think we are still looking at the worst. I think its totally aimed at intimidation of the LGBT Community," he said. "The police is coming up with trumped up charges. I don't think all 120 people were publicly smoking. So, we are waiting for court tomorrow and see what happens."

This is the second time in less than a month that Ugandan police have raided a place frequented by members of the LGBT community. Last month 16 members of the LGBT Community were arrested but later released on police bond.

LGBT Pride Flag Stolen Multiple Times From Outside Local Church

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. (WDTV) -- The First Presbyterian Church has been a part of Morgantown for hundreds of years.



In the last ten years, it has made a push to be welcoming to the LGBTQ community.

Until recently, it hung the rainbow LGBTQ flag on its marquee, a public sign of its support.

It's no longer there because it was stolen.

Mavis Grant-Lilley chairs the church's LGBTQ Task Force.

"We don't know why you did it, we love you anyway, but please don't do it again," Grant-Lilley said.

She said someone took the flag out from the marquee and damaged part of the sign.

But it hasn't happened once or twice.

She said it's happened three or four times now.

"We keep putting it back up because we want to make a statement that we're supportive of the LGBT community," Grant-Lilley said. "Not only supportive, but we embrace the LGBT community."

After it was most recently stolen a couple of weeks ago, the church updated its marquee with a message that told the thieves because they stole their flag, they made a donation to PFLAG.

It's an organization that supports LGBTQ persons.

The church was instrumental in bringing the organization to Morgantown last spring.

The church's pastor made the initial donation. Since then, multiple people who attend the church have also made donations.

Church leaders are considering painting a flag here in the future so it can't be stolen.

Either way, they say they'll continue supporting diversity and their neighbors.

"It's an open message of love to the LGBT community," Grant-Lilley said.

A Baseball Player Refuses to Visit the White House. He Wants to be an Ally to His Wife's Two Moms.

A professional baseball player with the Washington Nationals refused to visit the White House after his team won the World Series, in part because he wants to be an ally to LGBTQ people.

The Nationals won the World Series last Wednesday, winning four games against the Houston Astros. Pitcher Sean Doolittle, though, decided not to visit the White House on Monday with the rest of the team.

"There's a lot of things, policies that I disagree with, but at the end of the day, it has more to do with the divisive rhetoric and the enabling of conspiracy theories and widening the divide in this country," [he told the Washington Post](#). "My wife and I stand for inclusion and acceptance, and we've done work with refugees, people that come from, you know, the 'shithole countries.'"

He said that his wife, Eirann Doran, has two mothers.

"I want to show support for them. I think that's an important part of allyship, and I don't want to turn my back on them," he said.

He also brought up [Trump's call to execute the Central Park Five](#) — a group of black and latino teenagers who were wrongly convicted of raping a white woman and were released from prison over a decade later when the real rapist was found — and Trump's comments about white supremacists at Charlottesville being "very fine people" as well.

"I have a brother-in-law who has autism, and [Trump] is a guy that mocked a disabled reporter. How would I explain that to him that I hung out with somebody who mocked the way that he talked or the way that he moves his hands? I can't get past that stuff."

Doolittle said that the decision was hard because this was one of the last few times he would get to see his teammates. After the World Series, they had a parade, the White House visit was scheduled, and then everyone went home.

"At the end of the day, as much as I wanted to be there with my teammates and share that experience with my teammates, I can't do it," Doolittle said. "I just can't do it."

He said that on Twitter people were telling him that he should respect the office of the presidency and just go.

"People say you should go because it's about respecting the office of the president," he said. "And I think over the course of his time in office he's done a lot of things that maybe don't respect the office."

A Drag Queen News Reporter Snatched Wigs at The Trump Impeachment Hearings

Twitter is in love with the drag queen hired by a news app to cover the impeachment hearings

Although today is the first day of televised impeachment hearings against President Trump, a New Jersey-based drag queen named Pissi Myles is the one grabbing all the attention.

The self-proclaimed singer, comedienne, Wigstock performer and winner of *Philly Drag Wars* and *Miss Fish NYC 2014* is in D.C. covering the Trump impeachment hearings for [Happs](#), an independent-journalist startup app.

Related: [The son of Argentina's new president is an amazing drag queen](#)

Myles [told NBC News](#), "It's a crazy day in Washington! I'm flipping my wig over the high-energy proceedings today. Tensions are high, and the bar for who's allowed in the Longworth House is very, very low."

Myles' husband and business partner, David Ayllon, said that recruiters from Happs approached Myles to cover the hearings after the performer's Saturday night appearance at New York City's Barracuda gay bar. Happs reportedly wanted a

comedian who could improvise news delivery in a fun, engaging way.

Myles is getting her share of love from Twitter users, including from Honey Davenport, a drag performer from Season 11 of *RuPaul's Drag Race*.

Who wore it better?

Who wore it better? The drag queen currently waiting in line to see the impeachment hearing, or Rudy Giuliani?



Lil Nas X just Became the First Gay Person in History to Take Home a Country Music Award

The CMA ceremony was held last night in Nashville, where Lil Nas X and Billy Ray Cyrus took home the award for [Musical Event of the Year](#) for “Old Town Road.”

“LETS GOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!” Nas tweeted when he was announced as the winner in the category. Winners were announced before the awards show itself.

The “Musical Event of the Year” category at the CMAs honors the best collaborations of the year in country music. Nas and Cyrus were up against collaborations between Garth Brooks and Blake Shelton, Maren Morris and the Brothers Osborne, Brooks & Dunn and Luke Combs, and Brantley Gilbert and Lindsay Ell.

“Old Town Road” set the record earlier this year for the song that held the top position of Billboard’s “Hot 100” list for the most weeks when it spent 19 weeks at number one.

The song also pushed the limits of what people consider country music. “Old Town Road” reached #19 on Billboard’s “Hot Country Songs” list before being removed for not being sufficiently country.

Country music star Chely Wright, who is gay, was nominated for three CMAs before she came out. She did not win.

