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City of Los Angeles Says to Federal Gov't: End Discrimination in Social Security Benefits

Sen. Boxer to Speak at *Rock for Equality*—April 11 Rally and March to Demand Equal Benefits for Same-Sex Couples

LOS ANGELES, April 1, 2010—The city council of Los Angeles has unanimously passed a resolution calling on the federal government to end Social Security policies that deny equal benefits to same-sex couples. The resolution was introduced by **Councilmembers Paul Koretz** and **Bill Rosendahl** in advance of an April 11 rally, march and rocking chair “rock-in” to demand equal benefits for same-sex couples. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is expected to sign the resolution soon, making Los Angeles the first city to support an end to Social Security discrimination.

“LGBT workers pay into the system like everyone else,” said Councilmember Koretz, “so the federal government has no business denying same-sex couples equal benefits. It’s unfair, it’s un-American and it must change.” Councilmember Rosendahl said: “With the energy of our youth and the wisdom of our seniors, we’ll get our rights.”

On April 11, just days before Americans must file their tax returns, Councilmember Koretz will join **Senator Barbara Boxer** and many others at *Rock for Equality*, a rally, march and ‘rock-in’ to demand equal benefits for LGBT tax payers. Hundreds of people will meet in front of the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center’s McDonald/Wright building, followed by a march to the Hollywood Social Security office where they will stage a rally and rocking chair ‘rock-in.’

Senator Boxer, who just pledged her support for *Rock for Equality*, said: “I look forward to being at *Rock for Equality* on April 11, and applaud the organizers and participants of this event for their efforts to achieve equality in Social Security benefits.”

Senator Boxer is not alone among Washington, D.C. leaders who agree that Social Security discrimination must end. **President Barack Obama** said at a recent town hall meeting in Florida: “The notion that someone who’s working really hard for 30 years can’t take their death benefits and transfer them to the person they love the most in the world, and who has supported them all their lives... that just doesn’t seem fair... it doesn’t seem right...”

Current law denies same-sex couples key Social Security benefits that make up a crucial part of the safety net Americans rely on for their economic well-being in their latter years, or upon becoming disabled. In tough economic times, like those gripping the country today, these benefits are all the more critical.

“We see first-hand the devastating results of Social Security discrimination and its impact on the lives of the LGBT seniors we serve every day,” said **Lorri L. Jean, CEO of the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center**, which is co-sponsoring Rock for Equality. “It’s nothing short of outrageous that, having paid into the system fairly and equally—often throughout decades of hard work—LGBT people are denied the same benefits.”

Los Angeles City Council President Eric Garcetti who seconded the motion, along with **Councilmember Paul Krekorian**, said: “It’s simply unfair and wrong that certain Social Security benefits are denied to some groups of people when the program was created to provide financial security for all Americans in their golden years.”

Support Grows by the Thousands

More than 6,500 people have signed the Declaration at www.rockforequality.org, calling for an end to Social Security discrimination, and videos at www.rockforequality.org that illustrate the discrimination, including testimonials from gay and lesbian seniors, have been viewed more than 25,000 times.

Rock for Equality is presented by the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, in coalition with the AIDS Community Action Fund, and produced by MZA Events.

About the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center: Since 1971 the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center has been building the health, advocating for the rights and enriching the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Our wide array of services and programs includes: free HIV/AIDS care and medications for those most in need; housing, food, clothing and support for homeless LGBT youth; low-cost counseling and addiction-recovery services; essential services for LGBT-parented families and seniors; legal services; health education and HIV prevention programs; transgender services; cultural arts and much more. Visit us at: www.lagaycenter.org.

About the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force: The mission of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is to build the grassroots power of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. We do this by training activists, equipping state and local organizations with the skills needed to organize broad-based campaigns to defeat anti-LGBT referenda and advance pro-LGBT legislation, and building the organizational capacity of our movement. Our Policy Institute, the movement’s premier think tank, provides research and policy analysis to support the struggle for complete equality and to counter right-wing lies. As part of a broader social justice movement, we work to create a nation that respects the diversity of human expression and identity and creates opportunity for all. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., we also have offices in New York City, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis and Cambridge. Visit us at: www.thetaskforce.org.

About AIDS Community Action Foundation: Founded in 2004, AIDS Community Action Foundation (ACAF) is dedicated to reinvigorating the response of government, media, the private sector, non-profit organizations, and the public at large to the Human Immune-deficiency Virus (HIV) epidemic in the United States. ACAF is committed to engaging in and/or supporting at the community level organizing, advocacy, fundraising, and education efforts designed to create greater public pressure toward alleviating the human suffering caused by HIV/AIDS. Visit us at www.aidscaf.com.

About MZA Events: Rock for Equality was created and is being produced by MZA Events. MZA was founded in 1984 by Craig R. Miller and his organization of activists. Miller is the originator of the AIDS Walk movement and has produced hundreds of events throughout the United States, generating more than \$400 million for major AIDS organizations and other charities confronting public health and social justice issues. Visit us at: www.mzaevents.com.