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Contacts: Jim Key
L. A. Gay & Lesbian Center
323-993-7623

TO END DISCRIMINATION IN SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS,
L.A. GAY & LESBIAN CENTER AND NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE
LAUNCH **ROCK FOR EQUALITY**

FIRST-EVER **RALLY & ROCK-IN** WILL DEMAND
FAIR AND EQUAL BENEFITS FOR AMERICA'S SAME-SEX COUPLES

LOS ANGELES, February 3, 2010 — The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center (the Center) and National Gay & Lesbian Task Force (the Task Force) announced today the launch of **Rock for Equality**, a **rally & rock-in** to call attention to and end the severe economic discrimination that is embedded in Social Security Administration policies and to secure equal recognition of same-sex relationships.

The national event, to be held in Los Angeles on April 11, 2010 and in Washington, D.C. on April 18, 2010, will graphically and powerfully highlight to the public this often devastating, but under-recognized form of federal discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and their families.

“What better time to stage this event than the Sunday preceding and following tax day?” said **L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center Chief Executive Officer Lorri L. Jean**. “We see first-hand the devastating results of Social Security discrimination and its impact on the lives of the of the LGBT seniors we serve every day. 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 that all others receive.”

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 are committed to protecting LGBT people and their families by ending social security discrimination as quickly as possible and by securing equal recognition of same-sex relationships,” said **Rea Carey, Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**. “This is an issue we have been working on for many years. We have done the research; the harm experienced by our partners and families has been well documented; we have been telling the stories of hardship; now the government must act.”

In response to a question at a town hall meeting in Tampa last week, **President Obama** stated his opposition to Social Security discrimination against same-sex couples. He repeated what he said on the campaign trail about the U.S. constitution: “...if you’re obeying the law...if you’re following the rules, you should be treated the same, regardless of who you are...that principal applies to gay and lesbian couples.”

The *Rock for Equality* campaign will highlight that when it comes to Social Security, our government is doing *exactly the opposite*.

The President went on to specifically state: “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...”

“Supportive words from the President are good, but they don’t pay the bills of America’s LGBT seniors,” said Jean, “nor alleviate the sting of federally sanctioned economic discrimination being felt by LGBT people, young and old, who *are* obeying the laws and who *are* playing by the rules. We have no choice but to pay into the Social Security system, but we are not treated fairly when it matters most.”

The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law has determined that, on average, the lack of eligibility for Social Security Survivors Benefits alone has cost the surviving partners of same-sex couples \$5,700 per year. LGBT Americans are denied other benefits as well. With more than one million Americans living in same-sex couples, and an aging generation of Baby Boomers, hundreds of thousands of tax-payers are cheated by this unfair system every day. This discrimination is estimated to have cost the LGBT community more than \$2 billion in the last decade alone.

Rock for Equality is being billed as a new kind of protest for one of the most critical civil rights issues of the 21st Century: equal rights, equal recognition and economic fairness for LGBT Americans. In April, in Los Angeles and Washington D.C., participants will demonstrate outside local Social Security offices and stage a new kind of civil rights event. In each city they will fill the streets with the first-ever ***Rally & Rock-In***. Some will sit in rocking chairs. Thousands more will rally behind them.

Presented by the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, in coalition with the AIDS Community Action Fund, the event aims to raise awareness and funds for the fight to change the law. "Sometime the best way to stand up is to sit down" said Craig R. Miller of MZA Events, producer of *Rock for Equality*.

At www.RockForEquality.org visitors can register for the events, watch video testimonials from Center clients (and others) about the impact of social security discrimination, and calculate how much they may lose in social security benefits if the law isn't changed.

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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.