



NEWS

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Montgomery County Celebrates Pride Month and Commemorates 50th Anniversary of Stonewall Riots

Norristown, PA (June 18, 2019) – Montgomery County officials celebrated Pride Month and commemorated the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, considered the tipping point for the Gay Liberation movement and the modern fight for LGBTQ rights in the United States, by raising an LGBTQ Pride flag at the Montgomery County Courthouse on June 18, 2019. The rainbow-colored Pride flag has become widely known as a symbol for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community and will fly beneath the County flag through June 30, 2019.

“Throughout the 1950s and 1960s LGBTQ Americans faced legally-sanctioned harassment. Local governments and law enforcement regularly raided the places where community members socialized to drive them out of their neighborhoods,” said Montgomery County Commissioner Chair Val Arkoosh. “Today, here in Montgomery County, we are leading the way to expand non-discrimination policies, embrace inclusiveness, and promote our message that all are valued and welcomed.”

Pennsylvania leads the nation with the largest number of LGBTQ-inclusive local non-discrimination ordinances, and 34 percent of Montgomery County municipalities have adopted ordinances that prohibit discrimination against sexual orientation and gender identity.

“Val and I strongly advocate for all of our employees and prohibit discrimination of any kind, and our Equal Employment Opportunity Statement and practices are a reflection of that,” said Montgomery County Commissioner Vice Chair Kenneth E. Lawrence Jr. “Our employee insurance covers domestic partners, and our paid parental leave policy – the first of any of any Philadelphia suburban government – covers employees regardless of their gender identity.”

Montgomery County Register of Wills D. Bruce Hanes was the first elected official to issue same-sex marriage licenses in Pennsylvania and successfully challenged the Commonwealth’s ban on same-sex marriage in 2014.

“Equality and equal protection are not negotiable,” said Hanes.

Pennsylvania is at the forefront of LGBTQ rights and inclusiveness in several ways, and that includes Gov. Tom

Wolf's appointment, and the state Senate's unanimous approval of, Dr. Rachel Levine, to Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health. Dr. Levine is one of the highest-ranking openly transgender government officials in the nation.

"It's essential that we work towards comprehensive non-discrimination legislation in Pennsylvania that would include sexual orientation and gender identification and expression," said Levine.

Pennsylvania is also the first to have a statewide appointed LGBTQ Affairs Commission to coordinate efforts to ensure residents are not discriminated against based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

"We must still put our hands to the plow and make sure all LGBTQ people are protected in Montco and across the state," said Pennsylvania Youth Congress Executive Director and Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs member Jason Landau Goodman.

Goodman worked to help pass the first nondiscrimination ordinance in Montgomery County in Lower Merion Township in 2009.

The Montgomery County LGBT Business Council is a leading local advocate for the interests and protection of LGBT owned and operated businesses, LGBT workers, and customers.

"The Pride flag is a reminder of both how far the LGBTQ community and the world surrounding it has come," said Montgomery County LGBT Business Council President Melissa Buckminster. "But, it's also a reminder of how far we have to go."

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