

Lynch Lauded By National Gay Rights Advocates

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'Political OutGiving':

Invited to give luncheon address in response to passage of same-sex marriage law in New Hampshire.

Staff Report

CONCORD —Gov. JohnLynch's support for a same-sex marriage law in New Hampshire earned him a featured position at a recent private meeting of national leaders and donors in the gay community.

The Washington Blade has reported that Lynch was among four governors and several other elected officials who attended "a closed-door conference of wealthy LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) political donors" in mid-May in Chicago. The conference was known as "Political OutGiving," described by the Blade as "a highly confidential event for a network of more than 200 big-stakes LGBT contributors to political campaigns."

The Blade reported the network "is operated by" the Denver- based Gill Action Fund, which was founded in 2006 by "gay entrepreneur and multimillionaire" Tim Gill.

Lynch campaign manager and former deputy chief of staff Pamela Walsh told the Concord Monitor last week that Lynch was invited to deliver a luncheon address and that it was the first time Lynch had addressed the group. She said Lynch paid his own expenses.

Also at the event, according to the Blade, were Govs. Michael O'Malley of Maryland, Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania and Chet Culver of Iowa.

Lynch signed the same-sex marriage bill into law in New Hampshire in June 2009. He had previously opposed same sex marriage, but when he eventually changed his position and signed the bill, he said he was "standing up for the liberties of same-sex couples by making clear that they will receive the same rights, responsibilities and under New Hampshire law."

Hasn't played up support

Although the signing ceremony was a major event at the State House, as scores of supporters crowded into the Executive Council chamber to witness it, Lynch has not publicly played up his support for the issue since. His campaign website mentions that he signed into law an earlier civil unions bill, but there is no mention of same-sex marriage.

Walsh said the issue isn't mentioned because the campaign has not yet finished updating the site. But she pointed out that a separate Lynch website, called LynchLeads.com, says in a section on "civil rights" that Lynch "stood up for the liberty of same sex couples by signing a marriage equality law that ensures same sex couples will receive the same rights, responsibilities and respect under New Hampshire law. The law also protects religious organizations from participating in marriage-related activities that violate fundamental religious principles."

With Lynch running for a fourth term, several potential GOP opponents competing in a primary vow they would try to repeal the same-sex marriage law if elected.

The conservative National Organization for Marriage earlier this year spent about \$200,000 on television ads claiming that "Lynch lied" on several issues, including same-sex marriage, by signing the bill into law after saying in a 2006 gubernatorial debate that "I do not support gay marriage."

Lynch said in April he was "disgusted" with the ad and accused the out-of-state group of "meddling." The "LynchLeads" site and a related television ad were created in response.

NOM to be in Manchester

NOM will be in Manchester on Thursday as part of a "Summer for Marriage: One Man-One Woman Tour" rally at City Hall Plaza, presumably to continue to criticize Lynch.

According to a media advisory, "The tour covers many of the key battleground states in the ongoing fight to protect and preserve marriage as one man and one woman."

The New Hampshire-based self-described "pro-family" Cornerstone Action, the political arm of Cornerstone Policy Research, e-mailed supporters yesterday criticizing Lynch's attendance at the gay leaders meeting and asking for donations to "keep the liberals away."

It also asks supporters to call Lynch's office "and tell him how hypocritical it is for him to denounce the involvement of NOM in New Hampshire one month, only to fly out to Chicago one month later to meet with the nation's wealthiest gay donors!"

The Cornerstone group also filed a right-to-know request with the governor's office asking for "all correspondence, invitations and travel records between Lynch and his staff related to his meeting in Chicago with Tim Gill."

Group executive director Kevin Smith said Lynch "has officially sold out to the radical gay lobby" by attending the meeting "presumably to beg for money for his fledgling campaign."

Governor invited to speak

Walsh of the Lynch campaign said yesterday the governor attended the meeting because

“he was invited to speak after the National Organization for Marriage started its attack ads about his position on marriage equality. He talked about why he decided to sign the bill.”

Walsh said the event was not a fundraiser, “but certainly he is getting support from a large number of people because of his position on a variety of issues, including education, the economy and civil rights.”

She noted that all donations to Lynch will be publicly reported, and, “The same cannot be said for the National Organization for Marriage.”

Gill, other major gay donors and a gay activist group called the Human Rights Campaign have been active in New Hampshire legislative elections in the past.

Time Magazine wrote in 2008 that Gill and other members of a group called “the Cabinet” donated “tens of thousands of dollars in certain Iowa and New Hampshire races in 2006.”

Time wrote, “Those states’ Democratic majorities now ensure that, among other things, efforts to amend the Iowa and New Hampshire constitutions to ban same-sex marriage will fail.”

Human Rights Campaign

The Boston Globe reported in January 2007 that the Human Rights Campaign donated “a total of \$135,000 to Democratic state Senate candidates” during the 2006 elections. The Concord Monitor reported in August 2007 that the Human Rights Campaign spent nearly \$150,000 on New Hampshire state races the previous year.

According to FollowThe-Money.org, Jon L. Stryker, identified by National Public Radio as a Michigan-based gay billionaire, contributed \$10,000 to the New Hampshire Democratic Caucus in September 2006 and \$5,000 to the New Hampshire Democratic Party in October 2007. Stryker then gave \$5,000 to the state Democratic Party in July 2009, according to a party receipts and expenditures report on file with the Secretary of State’s office.

Also according to FollowThe-Money.org, the Human Rights Campaign contributed \$30,000 to the state Senate Democratic PAC in 2006. The HRC also gave \$13,000 to the state Democratic Party in June 2009, according to a party finance report on file with the Secretary of State’s Office.

In an August 2008 Human Rights Campaign receipts and expenditures report, Stryker and another wealthy gay activist, Bruce Bastian, contributed a total of \$20,000 to HRC. The funds were then contributed to the state Democratic Party.

Gill gave \$1,000 to the state Democratic Party on Nov. 19, according to a party finance report on file with the Secretary of State’s office.