

“Politicians Disclosing Their Sexuality before Campaigning Begins”

Democratic Rep. Mike Michaud, who is running to be the governor of Maine, just recently announced that he was gay, inspiring other political candidates to disclose their sexuality, too.

Michaud’s announcement came in response to the “whisper campaign” that many of his opponents were using as a way to weaken his campaign and attempting to sabotage his odds of becoming the next governor of Maine.

Not only in his statement did he announce he was gay, but also that he believed it should not matter. Michaud believes his sexual orientation should not be an issue for voters. Maine became one of the first three states to legalize gay marriage in the U.S. Michaud isn’t the only openly gay candidate running for governor next year, either. Democrat Heather Mizeur, an openly gay woman, is running for governor of Maryland.

Gina J. Noble, Stillwater, Okla. City Councilor Seat #2, agrees with Michaud’s beliefs that sexual orientation should not affect any campaign. Noble said: “A candidate's sexual orientation should not affect his / her campaign, but unfortunately, it still does in the U.S. The only thing that should affect the campaign is the candidate's experience and ability to make unbiased and informed decisions that serve the best interest of the people.”

Noble explains further that it is the candidate’s qualifications that should be the main concern for the voters. She said: “Sexual orientation should never be a factor when electing government officials. I am more concerned with how the candidate makes decisions, treats others and conducts his or her life. A candidate’s gender, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation or outward appearance does make up who he / she is, but these qualities do not affect his / her qualifications and/or decision-making skills.”

Currently, 538 non-straight men and women hold a political office in the U.S. government. One of these is a U.S. Senator and six more hold a position in the U.S. House. In

2004, New Jersey Governor, Jim McGreevey, became the first governor to announce that he was gay.

The gay-rights movement has had historic gains throughout 2013. Gay marriage is now legal in 15 states plus the District of Columbia with Hawaii becoming the most recent state to give same-sex couples the ability to marry. Illinois law-makers have approved same-sex marriage, but people are still waiting for Ill. Gov. Pat Quinn to sign the bill into law.

In June 2013, the Supreme Court overturned the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which was originally signed into law by President Bill Clinton on Sept. 21, 1996, banning federal recognition of same-sex marriage and defining marriage as a legal union between one man and woman as husband and wife. At the same time, the Supreme Court overturned California's ban on same-sex marriages.

Currently in Washington, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) has been approved by the Senate and is waiting on a House vote. If passed, it would no longer allow workplace discrimination based off of sexual orientation or transgender Americans.

At present, American law only prohibits discrimination based on race, sex or national origin. Gays, lesbians and transgender people are not protected and could be fired or refused to be hired. Several states have created their own laws to protect workplace discrimination, but there are still 28 states that guarantee no protections for the LGBT community.

Noble feels strongly about allowing gays to have the same rights and protections as any other American. Noble said: "The Declaration of Independence states 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...' I believe every person is equal and should experience the same rights under the law. I do not like or support discrimination in any form. Same-sex marriages should be afforded the same rights and benefits as traditional marriages. Same-sex marriage does not weaken the institution of marriage. It affords every person in the U.S the same benefits and protections. I believe committed partners in marriage,

regardless of their gender, should be able to experience joint ownership, make medical decisions for each other, raise children, sit by each other's side if one is dying in a hospital, etc.”

Many people do not realize the rights that marriage gives to two people. A marriage offers 1, 138 federal benefits to couples. Along with being able to share joint health, home and automobile insurances, it gives certain automatic rights to a person’s spouse regardless if there is a living will created.

Financially, it allows couples to file joint tax returns and permits couples to give unlimited amounts of gifts to one another without being taxed. When children are involved, if the marriage is recognized by federal law, it provides the children with legal protections.

There are about 9 million gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans. Fifty-three percent of Americans favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally according to a recent 2013 Gallop poll.