



THE FORWARD OBSERVER

THE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF AMERICAN VETERANS FOR EQUAL RIGHTS, INC.
VOLUME 5 ISSUE 1 JANUARY 2011



AVER President Danny Ingram congratulates President Obama after signing the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010.



Rev Phillip Gaines, US Rep John Lewis (GA), & Danny Ingram



AVER Chicago holds 17th annual Allen Schindler Memorial Service



AVER Bataan (NM) members march in the 2010 Veterans Day Parade



AVER-NY members march in the 2010 Veterans Day Parade

Save the date - 6-9 October 2011 - AVER National Convention - Albuquerque, NM

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CHAPTER DIRECTORY

CALIFORNIA

AVER Palm Springs

President - Mel Tips
P.O. Box 5012
Palm Springs, CA 92263-5012
760.329.6560

Sacramento Valley Veterans

President - Ty Redhouse
916.436.7676
www.sacglbtveterans.org

AVER San Diego

President - Ben M. Gomez
4076 Oregon Street, Unit #2
San Diego, CA 92104
619.459.1019
www.orgsites.com/ca/aver_sandiego

FLORIDA

AVER - Florida Gold Coast

President - Marshall Belmaine
P.O. Box 11247
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33339
www.aver-fgc.us

GEORGIA

AVER Georgia (Atlanta)

President - Alejandro (Alex) Lopez
P.O. Box 2115
Decatur, GA 30031
404.429.1316
www.avergeorgia.org

HAWAII

AVER Hawaii

President - Sean Smith
2092 Kuhio Avenue #1705
Honolulu, HI 96815
808.497.0650
www.averhawaii.com

ILLINOIS

Gay Veterans Chicago

President - James C. Darby
P.O. Box 29317
Chicago, IL 60629
773.752.0058
www.averchicago.org

INDIANA

AVER Indianapolis

Contact - Scott Spychala
317.890.8834
scottmspy@aol.com

NEW MEXICO

Bataan Chapter

President - Steve Loomis
6027 Black Ridge Dr, NE
Albuquerque, NM 87120-2181
505.301.1737
www.orgsites.com/nm/bataan-glbva

NEW YORK

AVERNY (New York)

President - Denny Meyer
P.O. Box 150160
Kew Gardens, NY 11415
718.849.5665
www.averny.tripod.com

NORTH CAROLINA

AVER of North Carolina

President - Cecilio Orta
3812 Dry Brook Road, Unit J
Charlotte, NC 28269
704.900.2905
www.avernc.org

OHIO

NEOAVER (Clev/Ak/Can)

Contact - Marie Ann Bohusch
www.neoaver.org

TENNESSEE

AVER West Tennessee

President - Tim Smith
avertn@yahoo.com

TEXAS

Houston AVER

President - Barbara Howard
713.973.1986

AVER-SA

President - Robert Weeks
9915 Powhatan Dr, #6H
San Antonio, Texas 78212
210.722.0873
www.aversanantonio.com

The *Forward Observer* is the official quarterly newsletter of *American Veterans for Equal Rights, Inc.* 501(c)(3)
P. O. Box 94376
Atlanta, GA 30377-0376

★★★★★

Forward Observer Committee:

General Contact

editor@aver.us

Managing Editor

James Darby
jamesdarby@aol.com

Layout

James Apedaile
secretary@aver.us

Assistant Editors

Julz Carey
vp@aver.us

Denny Meyer
publicaffairs@aver.us

★★★★★

AVER Executive Board

President Danny Ingram
president@aver.us

Vice President Julz Carey
vp@aver.us

Secretary James Apedaile
secretary@aver.us

Treasurer Mark LaFontaine
treasurer@aver.us

Past-President James Dovovan
jimdave@adams.net

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Due to the unprecedented events of the last few months, we are only including several of President Danny Ingram's Press Releases.



DADT REPEALED! - Saturday, 18 December 2010

The United States Senate this afternoon at 3 PM voted by a vote of 65 to 31 to end discrimination against gay, lesbian, and bisexual military service members by repealing the 1993 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law, setting up the end of the US military policy of discrimination against LGB American soldiers, sailors, Marines, and Air Force and Coast Guard personnel. American Veterans for Equal Rights applauds President Barack Obama for his dedicated leadership and his principled stand against discrimination.

AVER further congratulates the courageous and patriotic members of both parties in Congress who voted to end discrimination by the United States military. Never again will any member of the US military die on the battlefield because the medic or corpsmen who could have saved their lives was kicked out of the military for loving the wrong person. Americans have shown once again that they are not willing to abandon the dream of one great, united society composed of many diverse populations.

On behalf of all veterans and service members, AVER sincerely thanks all the many individuals and organizations, most of which may never be known, who have worked tirelessly and sacrificed greatly through nearly a century to make the guardians of our nation's freedom the representatives of the liberty entrusted to them. The forward march of liberty's promise has not this day been halted.



Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell - Wednesday, 29 December 2010

American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER), the nation's only all-volunteer LGBT Veterans Service Organization, applauds the passage of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010. AVER acknowledges the courage, commitment, and determined leadership of President Barack H. Obama in fulfilling his promise to repeal the DADT law that harmed the United States military, endangered its mission, and jeopardized the lives of American service members by removing critical battlefield skills from the global war on terror.

AVER further acknowledges the leadership of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and the members of both parties in recognizing the ban against gay and lesbian personnel as a civil rights issue that undermined the mission of the United States military and dishonored the service of all armed forces personnel by requiring dishonesty as a prerequisite for service by America's fighting men and women. AVER especially wishes to acknowledge the thoughtful leadership of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, whose courageous and honest statements from the heart were crucial in restoring the integrity and honor of our nation's military forces by exposing a law which so clearly stood as an affront to the Constitution of the United States of America, to which he and every member of the armed forces have sworn an oath to defend.



On the Eve of the New Year and a New Era - Friday, 31 December 2010

On the eve of 2011, all AVER members should keep in mind that repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell does not insure equality for LGBT service members. In fact, we're far from it, and the work of American Veterans for Equal Rights will continue. AVER will not abandon our transgender veterans and service members. Until there is full equality for all service members, the work of AVER will continue. We will leave no one behind. We've come this far together, and we will continue forward together.

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual military personnel are currently in limbo, albeit a welcome limbo, until the President issues new directives on how the military will treat our people. We will need a full non-discrimination policy and many new policies. The military has been working on these policies, but we must remain vigilant through the approaching storm of political change to insure each of those new policies are implemented fully, without compromise. Our service members need their marriages and relationships to be federally recognized. They need fair housing protection. Their spouses and partners need employment protection, and so much more. Our veterans need VA medical care free from discrimination, and the ability to apply for joint VA-backed mortgages. The list goes on and on, and AVER will continue to be there reminding our lawmakers and military leaders that equality means "equal", and nothing less.

On the eve of a new era for the LGBT defenders of our nation's liberty, please commit to standing with them. Our message to them is simple: "We will have your back". Please consider making a year-end gift to AVER as we guard those who guard our freedom. We won't put our people out there on the front lines without adequate cover. We will be there for them.

As an all-volunteer organization we depend on the generosity of our members to keep our ship afloat. She has sailed with grace and courage into the heat of battle, and she has emerged with victory pennants proudly flying. But we need your help to keep her sailing strong into the new era, a new era already facing a coming storm. You have remained faithfully at your battle stations throughout her long voyage. Please hang in there with us as we complete our mission. Please consider making a year end donation today.

All hands on deck! Batten down the hatches! Full speed ahead! :: One Time Pledge link: <http://aver.us/sponsor/gift2008.php>

Danny Ingram, National President and Chief Fund Raiser
American Veterans for Equal Rights



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Greetings,

It's been over a month, and I am still numb. After eighteen years I still can't believe that it actually happened "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is not completely over, but there is no turning back now. It's just a matter of time. We are not having our celebration yet, but we are making our plains

There are so many people and so many organizations that banded together over the years to make this happen that everyone deserves praise and congratulations

But because gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender veterans bore the brunt of this battle I feel that they were the fiercest warriors in this battle. They were the ones whose lives were most personally affected by this discriminatory policy. Nearly 14,000 patriotic Americans lost their jobs, suffered humiliating experiences by their own government, and were sent home in disgrace. Let us not forget them during these exhilarating times.

I am remembering the many members of GLBVA/AVER who helped in this struggle and who are no longer with us to savor this special moment: Frank Moon, CA, Cale Lehman, NY, Karl Clark, FL, George Buse, IL, Rusty Pounds, CA, James Merrill, IL, Mark Repass, VA, Bud Robbins, CA, Ruth Marr, IL, John Siebert, CA,, Bill Schneider, IL, James Smith, OH, Cliff Anchor, CA, Herb King, CA, Johnnie Phelps, CA, Copy Berg, NY, Alan Rogue, OH, Bill Lake, CA, Todd Shinkle, OH, Joe Nolan, IL, and so many others. I am sure that many of you can add more names.

All of their names are on our cloth Wall of Fame which has traveled the country from New York to California and everywhere in between. It is now 70 feet long and growing.

Our struggles are not over, but let us savor this sweet moment. I want to personally thank all of you for your perseverance, dedication and support over the years. We all celebrate this victory together.

Jim Darby
Editor, *The Forward Observer*



news from AVER's National Officers

Membership Chair

Lifetime AVER Membership for Senior Veterans

To commemorate the end of the United States military's nearly ninety year policy of discrimination against gay, lesbian, and bisexual military service members, and to honor senior LGBT veterans for their many contributions to our great nation and our community, American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER) will institute free Lifetime Membership to all veterans age 80 and over. AVER wishes to grant this privilege to our LGBT seniors, a group which has often been undervalued by our community despite their struggles and sacrifices to forge the freedom that gay people experience today. Any certified veteran (DD214 or other proof of service required) who supports the mission and goals of AVER and reaches his or her 80th birthday will be eligible for AVER Lifetime Membership. The AVER National Board celebrates those courageous and dedicated men and women who built against great opposition the foundation of the freedoms that we enjoy today, including, most recently, the right to serve in our nation's armed forces with integrity, pride, and honor. Eligible veterans may apply to AVER's national president or be nominated by their chapter president to receive this honor.

Resident Agent

Greetings from the Green Mountains of Vermont and your resident agent: CONGRATULATIONS ON FINALLY OBTAINING EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER THE LAW WITH THE END OF DADT

I salute all of you for the hard work of finally gaining justice in the congress, no less. For the first time in many years I am proud of the votes of our lone congressman and our two senators who did indeed support the end of DADT. I say that as a life long Republican and recent convert to Libertarian in the last election cycle.

It has been a pleasure to serve you since the mid 1990's, taking the name change to AVER through the hoops that a Democrat Secretary of State put in the way. I won that one for you and hoped for this day when you won the big battle. Mine was a mere skirmish.

My health is failing and I am trying to locate a replacement for me in Vermont. Alas, I failed to get a chapter started here, despite several efforts at the law school. I will find someone before it is too late and will let AVER know about the person. My next effort will be at the University of Vermont where the community is very strong.

God Bless all of you and keep you safe in whatever your next cause may be. I am presuming that you will remain active and have another cause that merits your considerable talents.

Karen Kerin, BSCE, PE, MSEL, JD, LLM, your resident agent.

(Karen Kerin has graciously filed the GLBVA/ AVER Articles of Incorporation in the State of Vermont every year since our inception in 1990. Thank you for your years of service to us and to your country. Jim Darby)

Public Affairs Officer

During December, as DADT repeal was voted on in Congress, and following the ultimate repeal vote, AVER Public Affairs, along with AVER President Danny Ingram, participated in nearly 100 interviews with American and foreign media, including a translated panel discussion on a Spanish language satellite network broadcast live to 5 million viewers throughout South America, a press conference, live debates at universities, radio news interviews in Australia, and print media interviews published in Basque and Italian, among others. publicaffairs@aver.us

Vice President Veterans Affairs

AVER Veterans Affairs continues to receive hundreds of inquiries per quarter from our veterans and active duty service members. If you would like to join the team mentoring active duty LGBT officers and enlisted personnel, please contact Denny Meyer at VetsAffairs@aver.us

We are receiving more and more calls from active duty LGBT service members seeking advice and simply conversation with those who've served in silence, along with transgender vets experiencing discrimination from the VA, and others

AVER is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender active duty, reserve and veteran service members, dedicated to the fair and equal treatment of all veterans and service members, and to honoring the sacrifices of all who served past and present. Membership in AVER is open to all who support the goals of the organization and does not suggest or imply sexual orientation of any of its members. All membership information is strictly confidential, as directed by the AVER National Constitution, within the limits of applicable laws. Officer and chapter contact information listed in the Forward Observer and on www.aver.us is collected either from chapter-controlled newsletters / web sites or by explicit permission.

with just general questions about benefits such as military honors and partner benefits.

vetsaffairs@aver.us

718-849-5665

Region I VP

We have received a number of inquiries from veterans in the Great Lakes region and Northern NY state. If you would like to participate in the formation of a chapter in this region, please contact Denny Meyer at dennymeyer@aver.us

Region IV VP

In October, AVER National President, Danny Ingram announced the selection of Steve Loomis as the new Vice President of AVER for Region IV, which includes the southwest states of New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Arizona, Louisiana and Kansas. LTC Loomis succeeds James Apedaile as the regional VP. LTC Loomis is currently the President of the Bataan Chapter in New Mexico of AVER and will continue as the chapter President. He is retired from the U.S. Army as an Engineer officer and served as a Infantry officer in Vietnam in 1969-70 where he earned two Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart, an Air Medal and the Combat Infantry Badge. He was discharged from the Army for homosexuality in 1997 just five days before he was eligible for twenty year retirement. He and won his retirement back in Federal Court in 2005.



Chapter Reports

★AVER Region I



With openly Out NYC Councilman Danny Dromm leading our contingent, AVER NY marched proudly in the NYC Veteran=s Day Parade in November Our “Disabled Veterans’ Vehicle” volunteer parade driver this year was a transgender Vietnam veteran with her Mini Cooper car. We gratefully folded ourselves into the tiny cabin and bravely waived to the crowds, while taking turns at the “Gunner’s Position” thru the sunroof (just kidding).

In December, AVERNY Pres. Denny Meyer debated DADT repeal opponents during a panel discussion at Lehman College in Bronx, NY, as an auditorium full of students whooped when he countered arguments that “DADT is for our own good to protect us from discrimination” (similar to 1950s arguments favoring segregation, he noted), and “the presence of gay soldiers endangers troops in combat zones because the locals don’t like us” (Oh right, ok, lets exclude everyone from serving in combat zones who is ‘different in color, religion, and gender’ from the locals; we certainly wouldn’t want to demonstrate what freedom and equality are all about” he said sarcastically).

Ever the optimist, Denny declared that if DADT was repealed in 2010, he’d eat his combat boots. Recipes for boot leather are requested.

Join AVERNY at the NYC GLBT Expo at Javits Convention Center March 12 13th.

AVER New York, serving LGBT veterans, service members and reservists in the Metropolitan tri state region of NYC, Long Island, Hudson Valley, Northern NJ, and CT:

www.averny.tripod.com



In December, along with Major General Dennis Laich (USA Ret), veterans Brian Tupaz (USMC), Mark Szabo (USN/USA), Robert Tackett (OHNG), and Marie Ann Bohusch (USA) were invited to speak during a press conference in the Cleveland City Hall rotunda, organized by HRC and hosted by Cleveland City Councilman Joe Cimperman, aimed at Senator George Voinovich concerning the DADT Repeal Act of 2010 (S.4023). Each veteran was given several minutes to relate their service story. On 18 December 2010, Senator Voinovich voted both for cloture and to approve the repeal, one of only six Republicans to vote Aye on both counts.

Marie Ann Bohusch

www.neoaver.org

Advertising in The Forward Observer not only gets the word out to our members about your business or organization, it also helps to offset printing costs and support AVERs missions. To advertise in the Forward Observer, please email editor@aver.us to receive the media kit. The Forward Observer is published four times per year. Back issues are maintained at www.aver.us.

★AVER Region II



In October FGC AVER held their election of new officers at the Blue Moon Saloon.

President - Marshall Belmaine

Vice-President - Charles Egan

Treasurer - Richard Crouner

Secretary - Angel Acevedo

A brief statement of thanks was offered to the outgoing officers and the party started. On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month members of the Florida Gold Chapter of AVER along with the Dolphin Democrats and the Log Cabin Republicans all gathered in Hagen Park in the heart of the gay community to remember all those who have served and those who are serving today. The Mayor, the Commissioners of Staff and many others worked very hard to arrange this special Day of Remembrance.

Andy Eddy said he was deeply moved by the camaraderie that was expressed by the Vice-mayor and the Oakland Park American Legion Post. He said that "the hospitality of the Post's Commander demonstrated the appreciation, inclusion and the warmth that only a compassionate and inclusive community family offers when they acknowledge that the blood of all those who serve runs red."

FGC meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Community Center - Pride Campus, 2040 N. Dixie Highway, Wilton Manors. Call 954.537.3582 or:

President - Marshall Belmaine

www.aver-fgc.us



"My Duty, My Honor, My Right"

AVER Chapter President Alejandro Lopes served in the United States Army from 1984 to 1989. He was a Personnel Administration Specialist (75B). Alex attended Airborne School and graduated as a parachutist. All of his military service was stateside which included Ft. Jackson, SC, Ft. Benjamin Harris, IN, Fort Benning, GA and finally assigned to a permanent duty station at Ft. Bragg, NC.

AVER Georgia once again staffed a booth at the Atlanta Gay Pride Festival on October 9 and 10. AVER Georgia also served as the Military Honor Guard for the Gay Pride Parade. They also provided a jeep for the parade for their WWII and Korean War veterans.

"I fight for your freedom and I am gay."

President Alex Lopez

www.avergeorgia.org

★AVER Region III



So much activity surrounding the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy battle that Chicago members were overwhelmed by TV and newspaper interviews. Some, but not all of the interviews were recorded for posterity in the AVER archives. We know this has also been happening with other chapters around the country, and we hope that they will share them with us.

Denny Meyer's Boots

Sometime last year, in a moment of madness, Denny Meyer said "The repeal of DADT will never come this year. I'll eat my boots if it does." Well, guess what folks. The recipes are coming in - "down here in the south we boil everything with salt and fatback until it reaches the consistency of mush" and "marinated boot leather and shoestring appetizers." Sounds scrumptious! Perhaps there will be an hors d'oeuvres table set up at the Convention.

In October several Chicago members drove to Notre Dame in Indiana to applaud LTC Victor Fehrenbach as he received the Tom Dooley Award from the Notre Dame GALA Association. Although LTC Fehrenbach is an alumni of Notre Dame the ceremony had to be held off campus because GALA is not recognized by Notre Dame.

In November, for the 17th year members of AVER held a Remembrance Ceremony at the grave of Allen Schindler. In November we also participated in a number of Veterans Day events - the Mayor's Veterans Day ceremonies, a special AVER presentation at the Harold Washington Library, and our 18th Annual Veterans Day Dinner. This year our two stellar speakers were Capt Ann Bidwell, USN and RD2 Lee Reinhart, USN & USCG.

In December Chicago members visited our newly elected Senator Mark Kirk's office to encourage him to vote for the

repeal of DADT. We were not optimistic about his vote, but were overjoyed when he did vote for repeal. Our other Senator, Dick Durbin had come aboard a long time ago.

The Chicago Chapter meets the first Thursday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Center on Halsted.

Jim Darby, President
www.averchicago.org

AVER Indianapolis

Scott Spychala has been working hard to establish the first Indianapolis Chapter of AVER. Several vets have signed on, and Scott is working with HRC and several other local groups.

On Thursday, November 11 Scott participated in a Patriots Pride Repeal DADT Rally at the Indiana Statehouse East steps.

On Saturday, Scott was part of a panel of veterans organized by the Notre Dame Gay Alumni Association. Other members of the panel included Notre Dame alumni Lt. Col. Victor Fehrenbach, Dr. Martina Sternbrg of W. Lafayette, a great advocate of Indiana efforts to repeal DADT. The event was held off campus at Mishawaka. Later that evening there was a dinner honoring the speakers with the Tom Dooley Award.

There is still no name for the future chapter, but Scott can be contacted at:

Scott Spychala
scottmspy@aol.com



11 November 2010 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell - Healing the Damage" seminar at the University of New Mexico Law School. Facing: MAA3 Joseph Rocha, LTC Victor Fehrenbach, LTC Steve Loomis (Ret)

★AVER Region IV

AVER Bataan

The Albuquerque chapter began their fall season by staffing a booth with SLDN at the New Mexico State Fair. Ten members of AVER turned out for this event.

In October they continued with the "Traditional Gay Halloween Party." Members were encouraged to bring their own pumpkins carved with their favorite gay heroes or villains. Most choices were politicians. I wonder why. Steve always does a great job of assigning food items to members to guarantee a good meal for all.

In October President Steve Loomis was selected as the new VP of Region IV which includes the southwest states of New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi,

Arizona, Louisiana and Kansas. That's quite a large region. If you know any veterans in those states please have them contact Steve.

For the second year, the Bataan Chapter marched in the Annual Veterans Day Parade. Also, on Veterans Day, they participated in a "Repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell and Healing the Damage" seminar at the University of New Mexico Law School. The Seminar was organized by AVER. Invited guests included US Rep. Martin Heinrich, and speakers LTC Victor Fehrenbach, Major Patricia Baillie, Petty Officer 3d Class Joseph Roche and LTC Steve Loomis, speaking to a large audience about gays' service in our military and repealing the DADT policy. Their experiences were both frightening and inspiring. The seminar received news coverage from the Journal, Alibi, KUNM, Channel 4 and 7.

The New Mexico Bataan Chapter of AVER in Albuquerque meeting dates

vary, but they alternate between Board meetings and General meetings. Most meetings are held on weekends at Steve Loomis' home. More info is available from Steve at:

Steve Loomis, President
Bataan-AVER@swcp.com

★AVER Region V

AVER Palm Springs

The Palm Springs chapter continues rolling along under the great leadership of Mel Tips who founded the Chapter 18 years ago.

Monthly meetings are held at the new Golden Rainbow Center, 611 S. Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 201 on the second Friday of every month at 1:00 in the afternoon. Mr. Tips always provides a tasty luncheon for the troops. At the last meeting Mel read an excerpt from one of his famous works *Romance of a Veteran*.

In November PSGV marched in two parades. On November 7 they participated in the Gay Pride parade, followed by the Veterans Day Parade on November 11. Some members rode in Mel's camper, and some walked. They always have a great turnout, and received wild applause from the 30,000 spectators when they march down Palm Canyon Drive.

On November 30 Mel participated with Richard Noble and corporal Evelyn Thomas in the 56 mile march from Palm Springs to the 29 Palms Marine Base. At the gates of the Marine base they released some red, white and blue balloons in honor of gay vet-

erans. They also posted a sign which read "Welcome Home Gay Veterans." They received extensive TV coverage of the event.

Mel Tips
miltips@aol.com



Thanks to Ty Redhouse and Ray Allen, the Sacramento Valley Veterans Chapter is up and flourishing.

The newly elected Board of SVV is

President Ty Redhouse, USAF
Vice-President Tina Stidman, USA
Secretary Gene Silvestri, USA
Treasurer Charlie Peer, USN
Member-at-large - Larry Vasquez

Former President Ray Allen has taken a break to resume his education.

In September SVV held an All Hands meeting at Sacramento State University. In October the Sacramento Valley Veterans hosted a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Town Hall meeting at the Sacramento Gay and Lesbian Center. In November SVV held another DADT Town Hall meeting at the Center.

SVV meets on the 3rd Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the:
Lavender Library - 1414 21st St
Sacramento, CA 95811
Contact info:
Ty Redhouse
www.sacglbtveterans.org



TAPS

Gary Russell Smith AVER Bataan member

Gary R. Smith passed away at home on May 24, 2010 after a short struggle with cancer. He is survived by his life partner of 32 years, Ron Freeny. Born in Geneva, Illinois on July 26, 1956, he relocated to Albuquerque from Monterey, CA with his partner in 1981. He became a charter member of Metropolitan Community Church of Albuquerque (MCCA) in 1982. He was an artistic and creative individual who enjoyed sharing his many talents with individuals, groups, and organizations in the GLBT community. He was an active member of Prime Timers New Mexico (PTNM) and American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER) at the time of his passing. A memorial service will be held at 2 PM on July 24th at MCCA, 1103 Texas NE (87110). In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to MCCA.

About Taps:

This section is reserved for obituaries and articles for AVER members who have died since the last issue date, and as well as any prior deaths we have learned of too late for inclusion in previous issues.. We will do our best to include any deaths of which we are notified, but will **always** respect the privacy of any veteran who was not entirely "out" to family.

Please mail obituaries / articles to:
AVER, P.O. Box 94376, Atlanta, GA 30377-0376.
email: president@aver.us

Creating Change Conference - Minneapolis

In early February, President Danny Ingram braved the cold northern climate to attend the Creating Change Conference in Minneapolis, MN. Some excerpts from his report are included here.

"I presented a workshop which I titled Life After DADT: Military Service in the Post Ban Era. There were two other workshops about the military, one by SLDN, an one by Knights Out and OutServe. With 3 workshops centered around Repeal this was the most number of military-related workshops ever presented at a Creating Change Conference.

SLDN presentations included what must still happen before Repeal is fully implemented, repeal should be completed by the summer, and that GLB servicemembers should not come out at this time. It was noted that repeal does nothing for transgender service members.

Former West Point Cadet Katie Miller presented for Knights Out and OutServe. Katie plans to return to military life after the ban is repealed. Her presentation centered around how veterans issues can be used to bring about additional changes such as the end of DOMA. DOMA will affect how service-members because it prevents them from getting insurance and other benefits.

Dannys presentation included how AVER was able to work with the military as "soldier to soldier," and how we used our grass roots abilities to address concerns voiced by the military and rebut statements made by military commanders.

Some brief conclusions reached by everyone were:

1. Until repeal is finalized we will all be watching carefully and be prepared to act if anything goes wrong. We will continue close communication with each other.
2. Following repeal all organizations plan to act as "watch-dogs" to monitor the military to make sure that LGB service members are treated equally.
3. The mission will not be complete until transgender service members are allowed to serve in the military.
4. Eventually active duty service members must take the lead and set their own priorities. We will all assist until active duty LGBT organizations can be formed.
5. There must be better cooperation between all organizations that are interested in helping LGBT servicemembers.

Thanks, Danny, for representing all of us at this important event.



Save the date - AVER 2011 National Convention 6-9 October - Albuquerque, New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico has been selected as the site for the American Veterans for Equal Rights 2011 National convention, which will be held October 6 - 9 to coincide with Albuquerque's International Balloon Festival.

The AVER National Board reached the decision after carefully reviewing detailed proposals submitted by the Albuquerque and Chicago chapters. Both proposals were excellent and the decision was not an easy one.

More detailed information will be made available very soon. In the meantime:

October 6 - 9, 2011
Sandia Convention Hotel - Double : \$78.00
1.800.877.4852 - Ask for AVER rooms
Steve Loomis, 505.301.1737
sloomis@swcp.com
www.orgsites.com/nm/bataan-glbva



P.O. Box 94376
Atlanta, GA 30377-0376

January 28, 2011

Dear AVER Members,

When you first elected me to serve you as your National President of American Veterans for Equal Rights one of my first priorities was to establish regular communications with our members. Communication is the backbone of any relationship, and without regular communication no organization can be successful. We established a Yahoo email group and began to once again produce regular issues of the Forward Observer, AVER's quarterly member newsletter. Observer editor James Darby has been doing an excellent job of putting together the newsletter and getting it out to our members. I am very grateful to Jim, Bill Beaman, and all the members involved in producing the newsletter. Like everything else AVER does, the production of the Observer is an all-volunteer effort. No one gets paid to write the articles, produce the layout, or mail the newsletter. It is a huge undertaking, and I'm sure that each of you joins me in thanking Jim and his crew for a job well done.

With that said, I need to tell you that the printing and postage for the Forward Observer is by far AVER's single largest budget expense. A single issue of the Observer can cost as much as \$800 to print and mail out to our members. There are many things that AVER could do with that money, including allowing our local chapters to keep a greater percentage of the annual dues collected from our members. While the production of the Forward Observer must remain an essential priority for AVER, computer technology can now be used to send out the newsletter electronically to our members who use email. Many organizations are now asking their members to employ this option, because sending out newsletters electronically is a huge savings, and cutting costs if vital, particularly for non-profits in difficult economic times. The purpose of this letter is to ask each of you as members to please consider the option of receiving the Forward Observer electronically. This option will also save the effort of printing address labels, affixing postage, and going to the Post Office. It is also an option that benefits the environment because less paper is needed and less waste is produced.

Many of our members are not able to receive the Forward Observer electronically because they do not use email. I DO NOT want to discourage our members who cannot receive the newsletter electronically from opting out of the Observer altogether. The Forward Observer is a benefit of membership in AVER. Your dues pay the cost of the newsletter and you have every right to receive it. As I said before, communication is essential and I want each of our members to receive the newsletter. Of course each member always has the option of printing out the Observer to read in your leisure, if you have access to a printer.

I ask that each of you who wishes to CONTINUE to receive a paper copy of the Forward Observer in the mail PLEASE FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING FORM and mail it to me at the address provided. If I DO NOT receive this form from you I will assume that you have decided to receive the Observer electronically. This is very important: If you have not been receiving regular electronic communications from me then I do not have your email address. My email address is averusa@yahoo.com, or president@aver.us. Please send me a message to make sure I have your correct email address.

Danny Ingram

Dear Danny, I wish to continue to receive the Forward Observer in the mail.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Mail to: AVER - P.O. Box 94376 - Atlanta, GA 30377-0376

Sgt Miriam Ben-Shalom, one of six founders of GLBVA/AVER arrested - again!

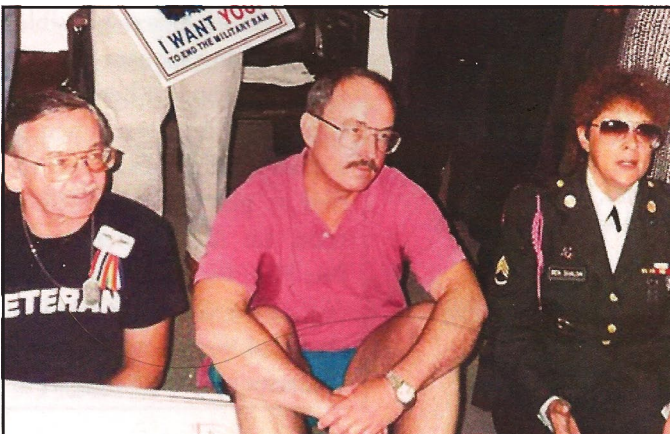


Thirteen DADT-Protesters arrested at White House on 14 November 2010 - left-to-right: Dan Fotou, Miriam Ben-Shalom, Michael Bedwell, Rob Smith, Autumn Sandeen, Father Geoff Farrow, Lt. Dan Choi, Evelyn Thomas, Justin Elzie, Mara Boyd, Scott Woledge, Ian Finkenbinder, and Robin McGehee (obscured)

Protesting the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy in 1993, Sgt. Miriam Ben-Shalom was arrested in Washington, DC, and thrown in jail with 33 other protesters. At that time, the fine was \$50.00. Don MacIver, NY, Jim Darby, Chicago, and Ben-Shalom, Milwaukee were the only three veterans who sat down in front of the White House, and were carried away by the police.

On 14 November 2010, Miriam joined twelve other protesters in front of the White House, demanding an end to the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy. All thirteen, including Miriam - again, were carted off to the Washington, DC jail.

We have always called Miriam “the grande dame” of the gay veterans movement because of her many years of activism for the cause. Space does not allow us to list her many accomplishments.



1993. l-r : Jim Darby, Don MacIver, Miriam Ben-Shalom



2010. l-r : Miriam Ben-Shalom, Rob Smith, Ian Finkenbinder, Evelyn Thomas, Autumn Sandeen, Lt. Dan Choi