



Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN)

RAIN exists to help Washington State create safe and inclusive workplaces where every LGBTQ+ employee can bring their full authentic selves to work, enabling them to do their best work every day for the people of Washington. It is a business resource group that advises state agencies on how to create inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ employees and customers.

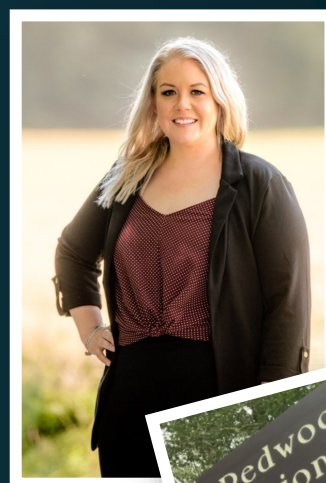
RAIN welcomes NEW ELECTED LEADERSHIP

In the lead-up to another, national election, the results of RAIN's most recent election were announced at our October General Membership meeting. Each year, active RAIN members elect two Co-Chairs and two Administrative Liaisons to serve in leadership roles.

The Co-Chairs develop and facilitate RAIN meetings, ensure the timely completion of deliverables and elevate necessary matters to State HR, and act as the face of the BRG to the Executive Sponsor, the office of the Governor, state agency leadership, and others.

Your 2021 Co-Chairs are:

- Elizabeth Fontanilla (she/her), Department of Enterprise Services
- Ryan Douglas (he/him), Department of Financial Institutions



The Administrative Liaisons maintain meeting minutes and documentation, coordinate and facilitate meetings, coordinate charter amendment proposals, schedule meetings, distribute information related to the business resource group, and maintain our membership rolls and attendance rosters.

Your 2021 Administrative Liaisons are:

- Kristen Jenkins (she/her), Washington Student Achievement Council
- Chase Bayne (they/him), Department of Corrections



Our incoming elected will serve a 15-month term, from October 2020 through December 2021, which allows them to work with the outgoing leadership for knowledge transfer and support getting comfortable in the role. Thank you to everyone who voted, our outgoing leadership for all of their knowledge and service to the BRG, and especially to outgoing Administrative Liaison Allison Spector (she/her) for coordinating this year's election.

Thank You to RAIN's Outgoing Elected Leaders:

ARIEL, ALLISON, & SAUNDRA

by Elizabeth Fontanilla (she/her), DES

THANK YOU

Fall is a time of transition for RAIN, when we welcome new elected leaders and recognize those whose roles are coming to an end. At the October General Membership meeting, Ariel Kay thanked our outgoing Administrative Liaisons, Allison Spector and Sandra Schaefer...

"I have learned that leadership comes in many different forms. Often the most vital players are the ones who aren't in front, but behind the scenes. While I'm certain you all have seen Elizabeth and I quite a bit the last year, RAIN simply couldn't exist without the incredible efforts by the Administrative Liaisons. Every meeting, every function was made possible and better by the leadership of Allison and Sandra this year.

I had the honor to get to know them both this year and feel deep gratitude for both their leadership and grace. This year hasn't been easy, and many in marginalized communities are feeling the pressure. Sandra and Allison met the moment, ensuring we could continue to meet and connect as a community via Zoom and showed up as human beings for every member of this group. Our stories matter, the parts of your stories you both have shared have changed me.

Sandra has brought a quiet strength to our leadership. The attention to detail, follow-through, and genuinely delightful nerdy energy has been amazing. Sandra is always growing, and we are also so grateful to be part of this. I'm certain you will continue to grow into your power.

Allison really does it all. I don't think there is a BRG she isn't a part of, and she makes it look effortless. I'm so glad we have gotten to be part of her journey. Allison, your light shines so brightly."

I also had the chance to thank Ariel Kay for her service to RAIN. The words she shared about Sandra and Allison are indicative of her leadership. Ariel's strength lies in her ability to recognize the contributions of others, and her passion for amplifying diverse voices shone through her allyship work with all the BRGs. I leaned on Ariel's commitment to follow-through as we moved the work of RAIN forward together.

I will miss working so closely with Ariel, Allison, and Sandra, but also know that their commitment to making WA State a more inclusive workplace will not end. These three leaders continue to inspire me and pave the way for all of us to be our authentic selves.



Celebrating the 2020

OUTSTANDING AGENCY AWARD WINNERS

by Ryan Douglas (he/him), DFI



While things might have looked a little different than last year, the Best Practices subcommittee presented RAIN's second annual Outstanding Agency Awards at our October General Membership meeting. And while most of us missed seeing each other in person (and, of course, the award ceremony snacks), the jubilant and heartwarming ceremony showed that we can still come together and celebrate while remaining socially distant.

The ceremony began with remarks from Marisa Sanchez-Reed, one of the co-chairs of the Best Practices subcommittee, who gave background of the circumstances that led to Governor Inslee's executive order in 2016, which created RAIN, in the aftermath of the Pulse Nightclub massacre in Orlando. While the LGBTQ+ community continues to face many challenges, Marisa then noted examples of progress that have been made in Washington State. J. Manny Santiago, RAIN's executive sponsor and the Executive Director of the Washington State LGBTQ Commission, also shared words thanking our award winners for their support and the work they have done to support our community and make Washington a great place to work, live, play, and thrive.

Three agencies were specifically honored and presented with the 2020 Outstanding Agency Award:

Department of Financial Institutions

DFI was honored for inclusive policies and a strong tone at the top that supports not only the LGBTQ+ community, but other historically marginalized populations. From raising the Pride flag and creating communications to publicize the raising and explain the importance and symbolism, to implementation of bathroom guidance and signage, "if a policy will make the agency more inclusive and welcoming, it is a foregone conclusion that the policy will be implemented," wrote one nominator.

Director Charlie Clark accepted the award on behalf of the agency. In his remarks, Director Clark thanked RAIN for our efforts to promote inclusion in Washington State.





Transforming lives

2020



In addition to also being at the forefront of inclusive restroom policies and signage, DSHS requires that all analysis of pending legislation of proposed bills be viewed through an equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) lens. The agency has an LGBTQ+ expert who analyzes legislation through that lens. DSHS has also hosted a statewide EDI conference for staff since 2017. Attendance at this conference has increased from 36 in 2019 to 200 in 2020 at a two-day event.

A nominator noted, "When I thanked my Assistant Secretary for offering me the opportunity to work for [the Economic Services Administration], he responded by saying, 'You got this position because you brought your authentic self here.'" The award was accepted by Secretary Cheryl Strange. She noted that providing safe environments is part of the culture at DSHS, which is built around delivering care and resources to all Washingtonians. She also called out the fact that RAIN is a true resource that champions best practices.

Office of the Insurance Commissioner



2020



The OIC was honored for encouraging employees to be their authentic self from day one, with a half-day of diversity training incorporated into the new employee orientation that covers LGBTQ+ issues among other topics. The Human Resources Department maintains a diversity page that includes a standing invitation to join RAIN, a description of our group and who to contact to learn more, as well as our newsletter. The agency also released guidance on how to add pronouns to email signature blocks, what they are and why they're important.

The culture at OIC made the nominator "feel like I don't have to hold back any part of myself and that's important." Commissioner Mike Kreidler accepted the award, and noted that in addition to protecting LGBTQ+ employees, the OIC also protects LGBTQ+ consumers from discrimination perpetrated by insurance companies and also implemented a reproductive rights law to ensure reproductive benefits are not restricted on the basis of gender.

Best Practices also honored other agencies who were nominated for their great work, including the departments of Children, Youth and Families; Corrections; Enterprise Services; Licensing; and Revenue as well as Washington's Lottery.

As Marisa mentioned in her remarks, it is one thing to want to tout support for diversity and inclusion efforts, but the agencies honored with these awards have demonstrated that commitment with staff time, funding, and a willingness to confront the uncomfortable. Given the enthusiasm shown by these agencies when accepting this award, we might go further to say these agencies don't just do the work to create safe and inclusive spaces. *They celebrate it!*

KEEPING YOUR SOUL JOLLY THIS WINTER

by Allison Fine (she/her), DSHS

We know the deck is stacked against us.

2020 has been one of the wildest rides in modern history. Between the dual pandemic of racism and COVID-19 (including but not limited to: job changes/loss, home schooling the kiddos, health scares, the deaths of loved ones, financial burdens, isolation and more), the smoke from wildfires, inefficiencies from leadership at the Federal Government level, extreme weather due to climate change, political warfare, the potential to roll back some of our human rights and murder hornets – YES, MURDER HORNETS – it's not hard to see why EVERYONE has a valid concern for their mental health.

Typically the LGBTQ+ community has a higher depression and suicide rate without all of the 2020 challenges. With COVID-19 increasing isolation, the numbers now are through the roof.

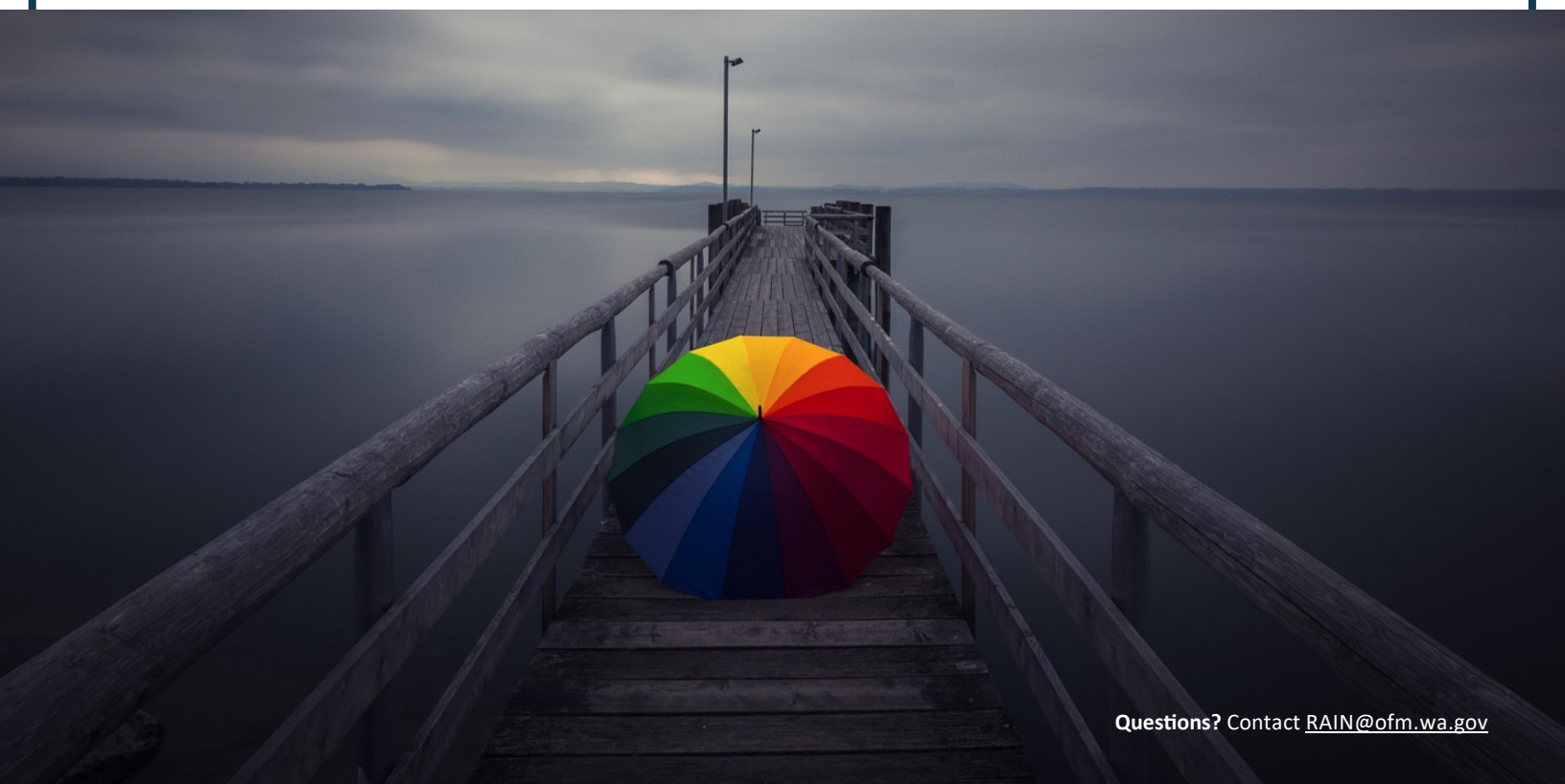
In a [2018 article](#), Alexander Kacala reports, "Research suggests that when compared to people that identify as heterosexual or cisgender, LGBTQ individuals are [three times more likely](#) to experience a mental health condition."

They are [two and a half times more likely](#) to experience depression, anxiety and substance misuse." This means our community needs to be more vigilant about keeping ourselves healthy to ensure we do not fall into crisis.

Here we are adding to all that, facing the normal "winter blues" and the holiday ups and downs. Many of us at this time usually have family-dynamic stressors, shopping, cooking, decorating, trying to get a month's worth of work done with 2-3 less days, etc. Now we get to add in whatever parameters we are living by to be safe from COVID-19. It just seems so daunting to so many. It might be extreme depression from isolation, but it could also be the anxiety and stress of trying to make "all the things happen" like so many of us do.

What matters the most is that you check your "emotional temperature," do self-care as needed, and make sure you're mental health is a priority.

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The State offers the [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP), which has various resources for mental health and support. The EAP offers a small amount of free counseling and you can even do this during your work time as needed. Check the “Can I use state time to visit EAP” section for more info.

Your insurance likely offers some form of counseling and therapy, even virtual visits that might be worth looking into. Consider looking into these benefits now, before the blues kick in, so you have an established relationship with one of the licensed therapists your insurance is contracted with.

Other ways to beat the blues?

- Going to the gym (if safe), taking a walk or run in your community, or maybe in a nearby community to get a change of scenery.
- Making sure you’re eating healthy. As yummy as holiday food is, it can often be heavy and leave you feeling bloated and yucky afterwards.
- Massage and chiropractic care – again, often offered through your insurance – can help keep your body feeling healthy and relaxed.
- If you’re sticking to a more isolated lifestyle because of COVID-19, then maybe decluttering your house, completing that project you’ve been thinking about doing over the Thanksgiving break or redecorating a room might be a good plan. All of these will improve your in-house scenery, and likely your mood, as you get things accomplished.
- Setting up phone calls and FaceTime’s/Zoom calls - spend time with your friends and supportive family virtually. Even themed calls can be super fun and help you stay connected to those you care about the most.

Whatever you decide to do, make it something that brings you joy and increases your dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphins – all the brain chemicals that make you feel good! Enjoy the winter wonders of nature, spend time with the people that make you feel good and give yourself space to not be ok as well. Find the balance that’s right for you, and remember that springtime is right around the corner.

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RECOGNIZING THE TWO-SPIRIT WITHIN ME

by Cres Perez (he/him), DSHS



I've always known I was not like others. As a skinny some of the time and "husky" more of the time, little brown boy with effeminate mannerisms, childhood was rough. Specifically school where other children knew (or assumed) who I was, before I fully understood and they pointed it out by way of constant bullying and harassment. I sometimes wonder what or who I would be if all of me had been embraced and celebrated, instead of made to feel like something was wrong with me. Would I not still carry unresolved trauma? Would I be more confident in my abilities and purpose? My story is not unique.

According to Diné (Navajo) tradition – the *nadleeh*, or 'Two-Spirit', is someone who possesses a balance of masculine and feminine traits, characteristics and essence. These individuals can cross social gender roles, gender expression and sexual orientation. Being Two-Spirit was considered a special gift. Traditionally, Two-Spirit people were healers, negotiators, peacekeepers and caretakers.

While 'Two-Spirit' is a contemporary umbrella term used to generalize and unify various gender identity and expressions amongst Native American, First Nations and Indigenous individuals, the concept had existed for many generations. This changed with colonization.

When the Europeans encountered Native Americans who didn't conform to rigid gender roles, Two-Spirit people were treated harshly, and many were killed. Due to the intimidation and violence from the churches and government, many leaders were reluctant to defend their Two-Spirit people. Out of love and respect, they were asked to go into hiding for their protection. The forced assimilation through education in Indian boarding schools and increased interaction with white society further eroded the status of Two-Spirits and changed Native American perceptions of gender and sexuality. This led to many years of trauma and as such, Two-Spirit people were relatively non-existent to the world until 1990, when the term was established.

Although my childhood pales in comparison to the atrocities many people experienced during those times, I can't help but notice some similarities. History has a funny way of repeating itself, doesn't it?

Thankfully, I did have a safe place away from the bullying and harassment – my Navajo grandmother. She embraced my creativity and supported my interests. When I think about it, she allowed me to occupy spaces with a balance of femininity and masculinity, without question or judgement. She treated me as her special gift. As she passed away last year, I'll never know for sure, but it brings me peace to think that she may have recognized the Two-Spirit within me.

"Two-Spirit people balance society, the world, and the cosmos." – Carrie House, filmmaker

On the importance of **FINDING AND MAKING COMMUNITY**

by Ryan Douglas (he/him), DFI

This year, I have heard and used the word “community” more often than any time in recent memory. Between the pandemic, ongoing protests against racism and violence, as well as attempts to roll back protections for LGBTQ+ people and other marginalized groups, there are few who would argue that it hasn’t been a trying year. Despite virus fears, stay-at-home orders, and other pandemic fallout that would keep us apart, people are seeking community for mutual support, to organize, and to simply vent and cope. Community can be nebulous, it can be intersectional, and it can be a much needed source of strength and support.

RAIN has always been about supporting and strengthening the LGBTQ+ community. Our general membership meetings offer an opportunity for like-minded state employees to gather, learn, discuss, and work on strategies to make Washington State a more inclusive and equitable employer. Guest speakers inform our members of resources and events of interest to the RAIN community. Our Advisory Committee and subcommittee breakout meetings have offered the opportunity to do important work while also checking in on ourselves and others.

The other Washington state business resource groups have likewise focused on building and strengthening their respective communities. Recently, through events such as the Joint BRG-ICSEW (Interagency Committee of State Employed Women) Allyship event, we have all worked to strengthen the ties between our very intersectional communities and worked to find new ways for employees across state service to bring their whole, authentic selves to work. Recognizing our shared goals and our memberships’ intersectionality enriches our efforts and highlights inclusion. Together we have celebrated the fact that our members are Black and Trans, Latinx and a veteran, an immigrant and with a disability.

When we create and celebrate community, it does not just benefit us, but also serves as a symbol to others and helps people find where they belong. I was recently speaking with Erikka, a coworker from when I worked at a previous agency, who shared with me about her seventh grader, Ayden, who identifies as nonbinary. Ayden’s middle school has a club that would have marched in the Capitol City Pride parade if it were not cancelled due to the pandemic. But last year, they watched the parade in Olympia and also

happened to be in Seattle to see *Wicked* the same day as the Seattle Pride parade. “It was amazing to see so many people that Ayden can identify with and feel comfortable around!” Erikka explained. “It made my mommy heart very happy.”

As we move into 2021, I hope you’ll join RAIN as we continue to build our community and the bonds we share. In creating a space for LGBTQ+ state employees to safely and earnestly make improvements to working conditions, we can also serve as a visible beacon to others looking to create, find, or join a community of their own.



LGBTQ+ MILITARY RIGHTS

by Tracey Carlos (she/her), LNI

With Veterans Day being this month, we should take a look at the evolving LGBTQ+ civil rights movement throughout our military's history. From Inspector General Baron von Steuben in the American Revolution, credited for creating America's professional army, to First Lieutenant Dan Choi, who fought against "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" as a veteran in 2011 and beyond, there have always been LGBTQ+ people in the military.

The rights of the LGBTQ+ community were never guaranteed. Washington might not have cared what you did in private, but other presidents certainly did. When Dwight Eisenhower learned there were many lesbians in the Women's Army Corps, he ordered Sgt. Johnnie Phelps to get him a list of all the lesbians in the battalion. She responded that when he got the list back her name would be first. Eisenhower's secretary corrected her and said it would be second after her own. Eisenhower realized just how many of his personnel he would lose if he discharged lesbians and told Phelps to forget that order.

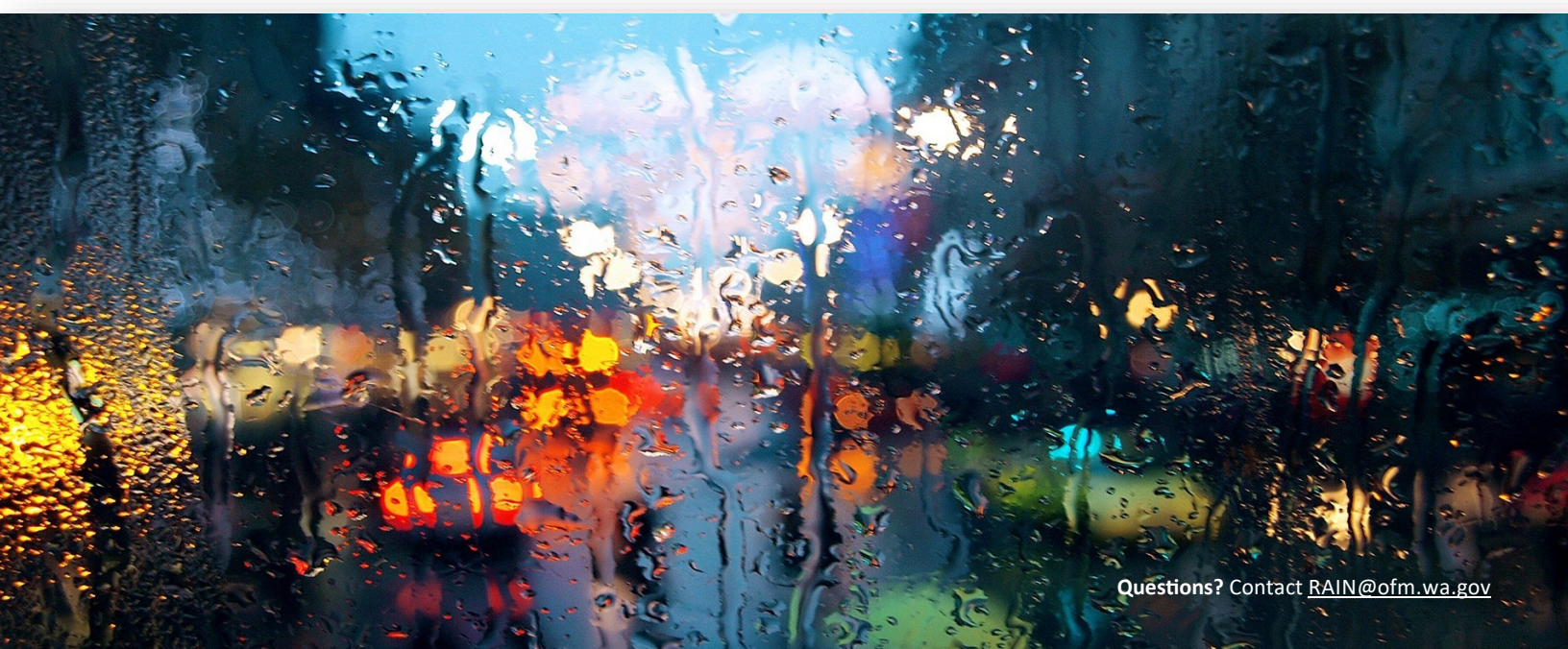
Under Ronald Reagan in 1982, the US Department of Defense released a policy stating, "homosexuality is incompatible with military service." An average of 1,500 military members were dismissed between then and 1993 when Bill Clinton signed the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. This policy was supposed to allow closeted military service members to serve without being

harassed, but still made it impossible for gays and lesbians to serve openly.

Thanks to work from people like Dan Choi, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed by President Obama in 2011, allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly. In 2015, Secretary of Defense Carter issued a directive that no service member could be discharged due to their gender identity without approval from the Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. This seemed to be the beginnings of full equality in the military for the LGBTQ+ community.

This of course changed in 2019, when Donald Trump put the transgender military ban in place. Currently people with any history of gender dysphoria, who are taking hormones, or have already undergone a gender transition, are no longer allowed to enlist. Further, any troops already serving when the policy became effective in April 2019, who are subsequently diagnosed with gender dysphoria, have to continue serving in their sex assigned at birth and are barred from taking hormones or getting gender-affirming surgery.

The fight for LGBTQ+ rights continues today as organizations, such as Knights Out, OutServe SLDN, American Veterans for Equal Rights, Transgender American Veterans Association, and others work to end discrimination in the military.



Pride at Work

FIGHTING FOR THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

by Allison Fine (she/her), DSHS

The labor movement is the most progressive movement of modern times. Over 100 years ago, workers recognized that they were being treated poorly, so they decided to organize and use their common power to form Unions as a way to fight collectively for the rights of all. Our whole country has benefited from these efforts; the labor movement is the reason we have child labor laws, paid holidays, healthcare for workers, and fair wages for a fair days work.

As the movement has evolved, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFLCIO), has helped amplify marginalized voices by supporting constituency groups for Women, various ethnic groups and the LGBTQ community. You can read all about these groups in the Constituency Groups section [here](#).

Founded in 1994, Pride at Work is the AFLCIO Constituency group that has the overarching goal of supporting the LGBTQIA+ labor workforce. The mission statement speaks to the goals of making sure the marginalized voices of the LGBTQIA+ community are represented, honored and supported within the labor movement:

"We seek full equality without restrictions or barriers for LGBTQIA+ individuals in our workplaces, unions, and communities, creating a Labor Movement that cherishes diversity, promotes inclusion, encourages openness, and ensures safety & dignity. We do this through education, alliances, and building solidarity across our large and diverse communities.

Organizing in the spirit of "An Injury to One is An Injury to All", we oppose all forms of bias and discrimination on the job, in our unions, and in the public square based on sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, race, veteran status, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, age, disability, HIV status, marital status, religion, or political views.

We recognize that true justice and equality can only be achieved through an organized and empowered working class.

We seek to promote the ability of all working people to self-organize and act collectively to advance the power, needs, and interests of the working class in addition to the principles of justice, true democracy, and equality."

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Although everyone is currently working at home during the pandemic, the Pride at Work (P@W) Headquarters is housed inside of the AFLCIO building in Washington D.C. and is under the direction of Executive Director Jerame Davis. Co-Presidents Shellea Allen (Seattle) and Gabe Gonzalez (DC) oversee the Executive Board that Governs more than 22 Chapters Nationwide.

Washington State has not one but TWO chapters; King County P@W, which covers north to the Canadian Border and East to the Spokane area, and Pierce County P@W, which covers east to Tri-Cities and South to Vancouver.

P@W chapters are available for consultation and advocacy concerning issues in the workplace that LGBTQ people face, including discriminatory behavior, sexuality/gender-based maltreatment, workplace violence and beyond. As a Union Constituency group, they also support organizing unorganized workers and showing them the benefits of workers having a collective bargaining contract.

In Washington, the Pierce County Chapter has supported unorganized workers, worked with the City of Tacoma to create an ordinance banning single-stall, gender-specific bathrooms, expanded the awareness of the organization as a support for the LGBTQ worker, supported Pride Tacoma and more. They have regular meetings the 1st Thursday of the month at 6:30pm and currently those are all held on Zoom! Join us!

If you are interested in starting a new chapter or have questions, you can reach out to Pierce Co. P@W President - Allison Fine @ 206.379.1590 or pierceprideatwork@gmail.com. Local Chapters are on Facebook as 'Pierce County Pride at Work' and 'King County Pride at Work'. For information at the national level, you can visit [Pride at Work](#).

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