

May 2, 2000

Honoring Dr. Franklin Kameny and the GLAA

Eleanor Holmes Norton

This speech was given on the floor of the House of Representatives by Representative Norton, the delegate from the District of Columbia, and entered into the *Congressional Record* for May 2, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, today I recognize two Washington, D.C. institutions that have been in the forefront of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered civil rights movement, and that I have the distinct honor and pleasure of representing in this body: the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, D.C. (GLAA), the oldest continually active gay and lesbian rights organization in the United States and its charter member, Dr. Franklin E. Kameny.

Since its founding in April, 1971, GLAA has been a respected and persistent advocate in District politics tirelessly asserting equal rights and social equality for lesbians and gay men living in the city. In the last two years, its advocacy with the city government helped reestablish an independent Office of Human Rights and the Citizen Complaint Review Board; implementation of a unique identifier system for reporting cases of HIV/AIDS to help protect the privacy of people who test positive for HIV; and the establishment of an antiharassment policy by the District of Columbia Public Schools.

On April 27, GLAA held its 29th Anniversary Reception honoring the year 2000 recipients of its Distinguished Service Awards: Steve Block of the American Civil Liberties Union/National Capital Area; Jeffrey Berman of the Public Defender Service; local and international gay activist Barrett L. Brick; Food and Friends; Dr. Patricia Hawkins, Associate Director of the Whitman Walker Clinic; and Jessica Xavier, a local and national transgendered activist. GLAA also celebrated Frank Kameny's 75th birthday.

Dr. Kameny's resume reflects the history of the gay and lesbian movement in the District of Columbia. He remains an indefatigable and outspo-

ken gay activist. Dr. Kameny holds a BS in Physics from Queens College and an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Astronomy from Harvard University.

In 1957, Dr. Kameny began an 18-year struggle to end the civil service ban on the federal employment of gay men and lesbians that achieved success in 1975 and was recently formalized by President Clinton with Executive Order 13087. In 1961, Dr. Kameny founded the Mattachine Society of Washington, the first local gay and lesbian organization in the District. The following year, he initiated an the ongoing effort to lift the band on gay men and lesbians in the military.

By 1962, Dr. Kameny had become the nationally recognized authority on security clearances for lesbians and gay men. His efforts resulted in lifting of the absolute ban on gay and lesbian security clearances in 1980, which President Clinton made formal with Executive Order 12968. In 1965, Dr. Kameny organized the first lesbian and gay demonstration at the White House; and a year before the "Stonewall Rebellion" in New York City, in 1968, he coined the slogan "Gay Is Good."

In 1971, Dr. Kameny ran for Congress in the District of Columbia, the first openly gay person to seek such an office in the country. His campaign committee became the nucleus of the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, D.C. He subsequently helped draft the D.C. Human Rights Law, one of the strongest civil rights laws in the country, which codified gay and lesbian civil rights in the District.

Dr. Kameny's 10 year fight to have homosexuality removed from the American Psychiatric Association's classification as a mental illness succeeded in 1973. He was a founding member of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (1973), the Gay Rights National Lobby (1975), which ultimately became the Human Rights Campaign, and the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club (1976).

Dr. Kameny became D.C.'s first openly gay municipal appointee when Mayor Washington appointed him to the Human Rights Commission (1975). He drafted the legislation which repealed the D.C. Sodomy Law in 1993.

Dr. Kameny continues to be a revered and effective activist. He lectures, writes, and testifies on behalf of gay and lesbian issues. He has become the institutional memory of D.C.'s gay and lesbian rights movement.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating the Gay and Lesbian Activists and Dr. Franklin E. Kameny.