



# NEA: A VOICE FOR GLBT EDUCATORS, A FORCE FOR FULL EQUALITY

**A**fter litigating the very first case on behalf of a gay K-12 educator four decades ago, NEA has led the fight for the rights of the nation's GLBT students and educators. GLBT advocacy within NEA is about equity in education: we believe that every student and school employee—regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity—is entitled to a great public school.

No student should have to live in fear, enduring harassment and isolation. No school employee should have to choose between identity and livelihood. Students and educators all perform at their best within a safe, supportive environment, in our schools and our communities.

The NEA GLBT timeline documents GLBT advocacy within NEA, an organization whose action has always enlivened its words. Since 1970, with the emergence of thriving gay and lesbian communities throughout the country and maturation of a GLBT political movement focused on passage of nondiscrimination and family-recognition policies, NEA has become an important forum for advancing legislation and public policy promoting equality for millions of GLBT Americans.



Like the movement to bring full civil rights to GLBT citizens, this timeline is not finished. Its continued progress towards achieving justice and honoring diversity depends on our joined efforts, in the profession and in the public sphere.

*“We call on all schools and education employees to take some step to help our nation’s GLBT students and to address GLBT issues, a topic that is inextricably linked to the broader themes of inclusion, respect, equal opportunity, health, safety, and student success.”*

—NEA’s Report on the Status of GLBT People in Education

## RESOURCES

For further information go to: [www.nea.org/hcr](http://www.nea.org/hcr)

- *Strengthening the Learning Environment: A School Employee's Guide to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues* published in 1999.
- *Know Your Rights: Legal Protection for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Education Employees* booklet published in 2002.
- *The Status of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People in Education: Stepping Out of the Closet, Into the Light* report issued after National Summit on GLBT Issues in Education in Chicago, Illinois 2008.
- Training Program on Safety, Bias and GLBT Issues; a 4-module training curriculum, 2005.



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# NEA GLBT TIMELINE

**Early 1970s** Gay and lesbian members attending the NEA convention gather offsite as a social group under the name "Ichabod Crane Debating Society."

**1979** NEA files an amicus brief challenging an Oklahoma law that empowers school districts to fire or refuse to hire any teacher who publically "advocates," "encourages," or "promotes" homosexuality.

**1988** Caucus sponsors New Business Item 22 at the Representative Assembly (RA): calling for there to be someone identified in every high school that will be supportive to GLBT students.

**1993** NEA provides first Local Leader training to local presidents incorporating issues and concerns of gay, lesbian and bisexual employees.

**1999** First publication of "Strengthening the Learning Environment: A School Employee's Guide to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues."

**2002** The NEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification (SOGI) Standing Committee is formed.

**2005** NEA Human and Civil Rights forms the national Training Program on Safety, Bias and GLBT Issues and develops a 4-module training curriculum.

**2009** The 2009 Representative Assembly adopts New Business Item (2009) Same-Sex Couples: "NEA will take action as may be appropriate to support efforts to (a) repeal any federal legislation and/or regulations that discriminate against same-sex couples, and (b) enact federal legislation and/or regulations that treat same-sex couples and similarly situated heterosexual couples equally."

1970 1972 1979 1987 1988 1991 1993 1995 1999 2001 2002 2005 2008 2009 2010

**1972** NEA funds a federal lawsuit against the Montgomery County (Maryland) Board of Education on behalf of an openly gay teacher. It is the first case ever litigated on behalf of a gay K-12 teacher.

**1987** Gay and Lesbian Educators Caucus (GLEC) becomes an official NEA Caucus when transformed from a social entity to an internal NEA political entity.

**1991** NEA holds first member training on "Affording Equal Opportunity to Gay and Lesbian Students through Teaching and Counseling."

**1995** The NEA Representative Assembly passes Resolutions B-6 and B-9, which put NEA on record supporting efforts to raise the awareness and increase the sensitivity of staff, students, parents, and the community to sexual orientation in our society.

**2001** President Bob Chase appoints a Task Force to examine the needs of and the problems confronting, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students and education employees.

**2008** NEA hosts a national summit on GLBT issues in education in Chicago, Illinois, bringing together leading researchers, scholars, and practitioners to assess the status of GLBT students and to make recommendations on improving the learning conditions and academic achievement of GLBT youth.

**2010** A national awakening to the problems of anti-GLBT bullying occurs following several high-profile suicides of teens and pre-teens throughout the country. NEA's leadership in reducing ignorance and promoting both respect for diversity and anti-bullying awareness and intervention by educators gains national recognition.