## **Emphasizing diversity**

NGLTF to counter GOP majority with liberal alliances

by Richard Shumate

he National Gay and Lesbian Task Force plans to deal with the United States' swing to the right by emphasizing grass-roots organizing and by strengthening coalitions with other groups adversely affected by the GOP agenda.

That vision for the NGLTF, as outlined by its new executive director, Melinda Paras, was endorsed by the group's board of directors at a meeting in Atlanta on Jan. 28. It was the board's first meeting since Paras' controversial appointment was made in December.

"I think it's important to say that the Republican majority is not good for the gay and lesbian community," says Paras. "That doesn't mean that we're saying that all Republicans are anti-gay."

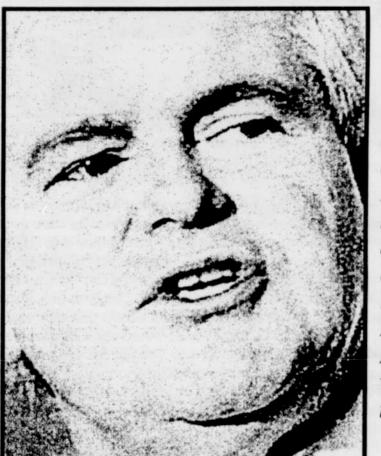
Calling the GOP's "Contract with America" a "Contract on America," Paras says the task force will try to link issues seemingly ancillary to lesbian and gay rights, such as immigration and welfare reform, to the lesbian and gay community's

The approach of NGLTF in the new Republican era contrasts with the approach taken by the other large national lesbian and gay rights group, the Human Rights Campaign Fund.

Since the election, HRCF has been running newspaper ads pointing out its view that gay and lesbian rights are a nonpartisan issue. Lobbyists for the group have also been approaching the members of Congress and its new leaders, including House Speaker Newt Gingrich, with the same message.

But, given the influence of the religious right with members of the new GOP majority, Paras says she doesn't believe lobbying members of Congress is the most effective approach.

"I don't think the Republican majority is very interested in the gay vote. They owe much more to the religious right than they do to the Log Cabin Republicans," she says. Instead, NGLTF will emphasize strengthening grass-roots gay and lesbian groups in the districts of members of Con-



Since the election,
HRCF has been running
newspaper ads pointing
out its view that gay
and lesbian rights are
a nonpartisan issue.
Lobbyists for the group
have also been
approaching the members
of Congress and its new
leaders, including
House Speaker
Newt Gingrich,
with the same
message.

agenda by emphasizing the community's diversity—that gay men and lesbians are also members of these groups under attack. And, Paras told the board, making alliances with these other groups is consistent with the task force's traditional philosophy of progressive grass-roots organizing.

"Part of our challenge is to strive for what kind of world we want to build," says Paras. "Lesbian and gay rights will not get won in an atmosphere where other people are being deprived of their rights."

With a show of hands, the members of the board endorsed Paras' vision for the NGLTF's political agenda, including alliances with other liberal political groups.

"We need to show up at the door and say, 'How can we help and what can we do,' " says Deborah Johnson-Rolon, one of the board's two co-chairs.

But even Paras admits that it may be hard to rally the entire community to get involved in issues and fights that would seem to be outside the struggle for gay and lesbian rights.

"Our community is not always cognizant of who it is. There are portions of the gay and lesbian community that will say, 'That's not an attack on me,' " says Paras. gress so that these groups can put pressure on their elected officials.

The NGLTF board's latest meeting, held at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change in Atlanta, comes as the nation's oldest lesbian and gay rights organization tries to counter an avalanche of bad publicity—and an image of a group in disarray.

Paras, 41, is the fourth executive director in as many years, and her appointment was assailed by some critics because of her past ties to Marxist groups in the Philippines and Cuba and also because of financial irregularities during her tenure as deputy director of the Shanti Project in San Francisco.

The budget of the 32,000-member NGLTF had to be slashed twice last year—by nearly \$2 million—because of shortfalls, and several staff members have left since Paras' appointment, including legislative director Tanya Domi and former executive director Peri Jude Radecic.

The board's weekend meeting in Atlanta, including discussion of strategic, personnel and budget issues, was closed to the press except for the session outlining the group's future political strategy. The board also held a town hall meeting with local residents.

1 to Robertson, as re and 12 n embres of contracti-

## The Crimson Phoenix

A Sexuality Bookstore for Lovers



Featuring Portland's largest selection of condoms.

We have lotions, potions, herbs, cards and gifts.

We sell woman-friendly products.

Over 300 book titles to choose from.

Astrologer and psychic available by appointment.

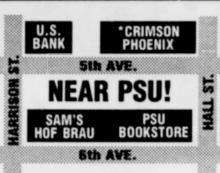
Watch for class schedule.

honor diversit

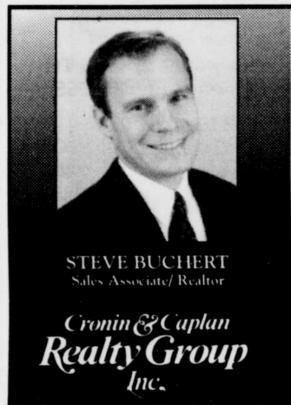
1876 SW 5th Ave. Portland, OR 97201 503-228-0129

Gift certificates available.

Visa and Mastercard accepted



Mon.-Thur. 11 to 7 pm Fri. & Sat. 11 to 11 pm Closed Sunday



## LET ME EARN YOUR BUSINESS

I work to combine professionalism with personal attention in all phases of real estate. Whether you're buying or selling, I provide extensive knowledge of neighborhoods and complete commitment to serving each of my client's individual needs.

SPECIALIZING IN ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOODS

For personal, professional service and a free consultation call:

(503) 220-1144 • Mobile: 970-3801

## A SPARKLING "NEW" POOL FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Plunge into our completely renovated pool

join now for only

Enjoy
- State-of-the-art
exercise equipment
- Free weights
- Aerobics
- Saunas/steam/whirlpools
- Expert physical
assessment
- Health cafe



PRINCETON ATHLETIC CLUB

614 SW Eleventh

Parking

222-2639