

Vice President Al Gore had a simple message to bring to the Human Rights Campaign dinner held in the nation's capital on Sept. 19: "Equal opportunity for all, special privileges for none."

HRC, headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a national gay and lesbian political organization.

During the event, Gore boasted that the Clinton administration has appointed record numbers of openly gay and lesbian people to positions within the administration.

Before Clinton and company, Gore claimed, "Gays and lesbians were effectively barred from holding jobs in their own federal government."

He noted, "We've come a long way."

Not surprisingly there was no mention that the federal government, with its "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" military policy, remains the United States' largest employer that discriminates against gay men and lesbians.

"We are determined to stand for justice and the American dream being available to all of the people in this great nation of ours," Gore said. "The United States Senate should join us in that crusade and confirm Jim Hormel as the next ambassador to Luxembourg. Let's give him the up or down vote that he deserves."

Senate Republican leaders have blocked a vote on confirming Hormel, in part to protest

## GORE AND GAY FOLKS

The vice president pushed the right buttons and glossed over some troublesome facts in his speech at an HRC event by Bob Roehr



From left: Elizabeth Birch passes an award to Al Gore while Tipper Gore looks on

what some have called Hormel's promotion of a "gay lifestyle."

At the dinner, Gore endorsed the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which seeks to bar employment discrimination on the

basis of sexual orientation. ENDA is the crown jewel of HRC's legislative agenda. He also used the opportunity to tout the administration's support for increases in AIDS-related funding.

"We will not stop until all people have access

to the treatment that they need. We will not rest until we have a vaccine, and until we have a cure for AIDS," he pledged.

Gore failed to note, however, that Congress has consistently appropriated more money to bolster AIDS programs than the White House has requested.

"We haven't always agreed on everything and I can't promise that we always will," Gore told the audience. "But I can promise an open door, an open mind, and an open heart, a frank and open dialogue that can help us learn from one another and move forward together."

Earlier in the evening, Elizabeth Birch, HRC's executive director, praised the Clinton administration.

"Let us be a nation where people can seek forgiveness. And let us not become a nation of hunters and the hunted, a condition that our community knows all too well," she urged.

Birch called the current political climate one "marked by confusion, and anger, and demagoguery, and hypocrisy." She attacked the Christian Coalition, meeting just a few blocks down the street, as having "more in common with the Inquisition."

She then blasted the recent anti-gay advertising campaign as an effort to "shame you, to quash you, and to take from you your hard-earned self-esteem and courage."

She concluded, "They will fail."

## NGLTF OFFERS SKETCH OF GAY VOTER

Research results reveal an increase in queer voter turnout and a significant faction of Republicans by Bob Roehr

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has released *Out and Voting: The Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Vote in Congressional House Elections, 1990-1996*, a report dubbed an "in-depth profile of the gay, lesbian and bisexual voting block and the first-ever analysis of the impact of this emerging constituency on national congressional elections."

Robert Bailey, a professor of political science at Rutgers University, conducted the study, which was released at a Sept. 16 news conference in Washington, D.C.

Based on the findings, Bailey concludes gay, lesbian and bisexual voters comprised 5 percent of voters who cast ballots during the 1996 congressional election. It was a larger subgroup than Asian American (1.1 percent), Jewish (3.4 percent), or Latino (4.5 percent) voters, and half the size of the African American (10.1 percent) voting block.

"Marshaling an identifiable voting block is important in a democracy," says Rich Tafel, executive director of Log Cabin Republicans. "The radical right has argued that we make up only 1 percent or less of the population, a blatant untruth that Robert Bailey's thorough, objective numbers effectively debunk."

Bailey analyzed exit-poll data gathered by the Voter News Service for a consortium of major media clients. Gay, lesbian and bisexual voters were those who self-identified as such on those surveys. The percentage grew from 1.3 percent in 1990 to 5 percent in 1996.

Bailey attributes the increase in part to changes in attitudes that make the community

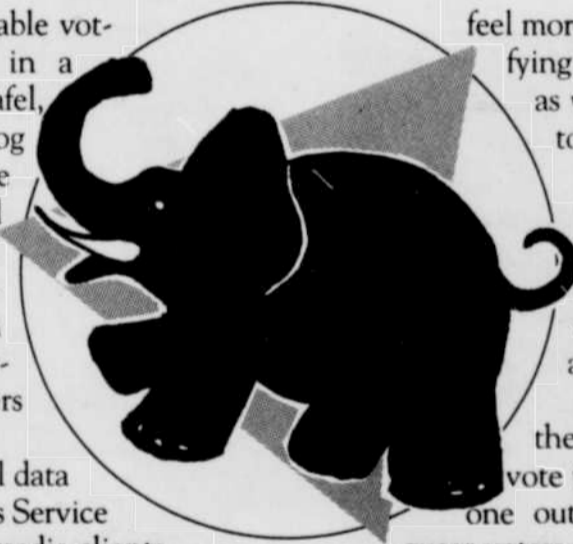
feel more comfortable in self-identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual, as well as efforts by gay groups to get out the vote.

He found the self-identified sexual minority voter tends to be slightly younger, better educated and less affluent than the average voter.

*Out and Voting* also shows the gay, lesbian and bisexual vote to be bipartisan. More than one out of four (28 percent) of queer voters went with the GOP in the 1996 congressional elections.

Tafel maintains Bailey's work documents the philosophical diversity of the community.

There is a group of gay U.S. citizens "who believe in less government and freedom, individual rights, who would like to vote Republi-



can," he says, adding, "[Democrats] cannot take the gay vote for granted, it is not in their back pocket. That is a good thing."

Daniel McGlinchey, interim director of the National Stonewall Democratic Federation, says, "We should start from the premise that the gay vote is up for grabs."

Urvashi Vaid, director of the NGLTF Policy Institute, agrees: "Such...fluid loyalty should send a signal to Democrats that they should not take the [gay, lesbian and bisexual] vote for granted and to Republicans in swing districts that they dismiss this vote at their own peril."

Kerry Lobel, NGLTF's executive director, adds, "Our vote can make a difference. The voting booth is not the closet it once was."

■ *OUT AND VOTING* is available from NGLTF for \$10 by calling (202) 332-6483, ext. 3327, or it can be downloaded for free with Adobe Acrobat at [www.nglftf.org/downloads/outvoting.pdf](http://www.nglftf.org/downloads/outvoting.pdf).

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