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**NATIONAL news**



Seth Kilbourn of the Human Rights Campaign says Juana Vega's murder clearly was motivated by hate

**WISCONSIN**  
Milwaukee activist Juana Vega died Nov. 11 after being physically assaulted and shot in the face and chest five times at point-blank range, according to law enforcement officials. Charges have been filed against Pablo Parrilla, the brother of her girlfriend, Melodia "Ria."

He reportedly objected to their lesbian relationship and often used derogatory epithets about the couple. Witnesses say he also threatened to kill Vega on numerous occasions for "turning his sister gay."

Local law enforcement officials have not yet classified the murder as a hate crime. In Wisconsin, this would not alter the mandatory life sentence already required by a first-degree intentional homicide conviction.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force pressed Milwaukee law enforcement officials Nov. 29 to investigate the murder fully. They were urged to "give full consideration to enhancing the homicide charge with a charge that the alleged killer committed a hate crime."

The Human Rights Campaign and the National Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Organization sent similar letters Nov. 30 to the city's mayor, county executive and the district attorney. The case would be the first in Milwaukee's history to apply Wisconsin's hate crimes law as it relates to sexual orientation.

"It seems clear that this brutal murder was motivated by anti-gay bias and hatred," said Seth Kilbourn, HRC national field director. "We are committed to working closely with LLEGÓ and Ms. Vega's friends and family to see that her murder is investigated and prosecuted appropriately."

"We urge the district attorney to prosecute this human tragedy as a hate crime to guarantee fairness and equality under the law. Not only will this ensure fairness for this particular case, it will send the message that hate violence is not tolerated in Wisconsin."

Martín Ornelas-Quintero, LLEGÓ executive director, added: "DA and police officials

must look into all variables associated with Vega's murder and act accordingly with Wisconsin state law. Legal authorities should also ensure Vega's family right to a fair and expeditious process."

Vega, 36, was an entrepreneur, the former owner of a bike messenger service and a self-employed painter and chef. She was also an active member of Las Americas Without Borders, a social organization for Latino sexual minorities in Milwaukee.

**MINNESOTA**

The Minnesota Supreme Court denied the right of trans citizens to appropriate restroom access Nov. 29.

The case, which has attracted national attention, was the first to interpret the trans-related language of the state's Human Rights Act, which the Legislature approved in 1993. Since then it has served as the basis for similar protections throughout the country.

"To some, the issue of restroom access may seem trivial, but those restrooms symbolize the traditional male-female categories which, as the Legislature realized many years ago, not all people neatly fit into anymore," said Ann DeGroot, OutFront Minnesota executive director. "Further, the issue implicitly raises the question of who is entitled to define a person's gender identity: individuals themselves or their employers."

The case involved a growing workplace controversy: Which restroom does a trans person use? Julianne Goins had transitioned from male to female even before beginning work at West Group yet had been denied access to the women's restroom upon transfer to its Minnesota facility.

She argued that restroom access should be based on one's consistently projected gender identity, not on an employer's speculation as to its employee's anatomy. "Common sense says we interpret other people's gender based on their clothing, grooming, name and so on, without ever knowing what their genitals look like," DeGroot observed.

Phil Duran, OutFront Minnesota legal program coordinator, wrote a friend-of-the-court brief arguing that the legislative history of the Human Rights Act's "sexual orientation" provisions supported this interpretation. He predicted trans Minnesotans now might face demands to describe their genitals in order to access restrooms in public accommodations, such as restaurants.

"We're very disappointed the court held that the law permits employers to ignore a person's everyday appearance and focuses instead on areas of the body employers have no business demanding to see," Duran said. "This decision makes a mockery of the Human Rights Act by effectively mandating that transgender employees describe their genitals in order simply to go to the bathroom. This is the same sexual harassment this very act prohibits."

**MARYLAND**

Gay men and lesbians in Maryland now have equal protection in housing, employment and public accommodations.

The Anti-Discrimination Act of 2001 was sup-

