

last month with civil rights organizations seeking assurances that relief assistance would include the partners and children of gay and lesbian victims.

The policy clearly states that same-sex survivors are eligible, that the Red Cross will incorporate the guidelines into its training protocols for Family Services staff and that it appointed a liaison to oversee the quality and consistency of service to the gay and lesbian community. With these guidelines, it becomes the first national relief agency to provide detailed policies and procedures on how to respect same-sex relationships when determining eligibility for disaster-related assistance.

"These guidelines will bring much-needed clarity to the process of applying for emergency assistance," said Clarence Patton of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project. "Red Cross staff have been struggling to do the right thing with gay and lesbian survivors but haven't always done so, primarily due to a lack of institutional direction. Hopefully, this will put an end to the inconsistent treatment same-sex survivors have been receiving."

Bob Bender, CEO of the American Red Cross in Greater New York, met with activists in November to discuss the inequitable and inconsistent treatment being given to gay men and lesbians applying for relief assistance. He was urged to move beyond a general statement of inclusiveness and put in place policies and procedures clearly stating that same-sex partners are considered "immediate family" for the purposes of disaster-related assistance.

This meeting was a follow-up to related action taken by the Red Cross in October when John A.



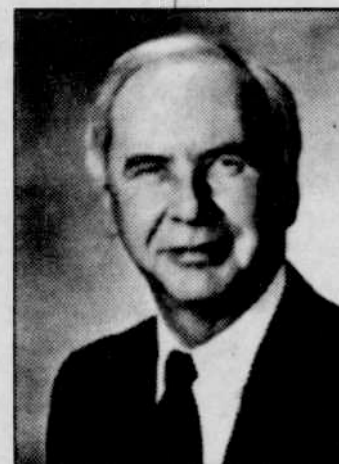
The Justice Department is being urged to allow surviving lesbian and gay partners access to the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund

Clizbe, disaster services vice president, released a statement promising to use a broad definition of family to determine eligibility for assistance. Despite the positive nature of his letter, activists knew from their direct advocacy work on behalf of gay and lesbian survivors that implementation by staff members was inconsistent.

The guidelines clearly state up front: "The American Red Cross recognizes that families come in many different forms. Rather than adhering to a strict definition of family composition, we are using a broad and inclusive definition of family. In doing so, we recognize traditional married families as well as the committed relationships and

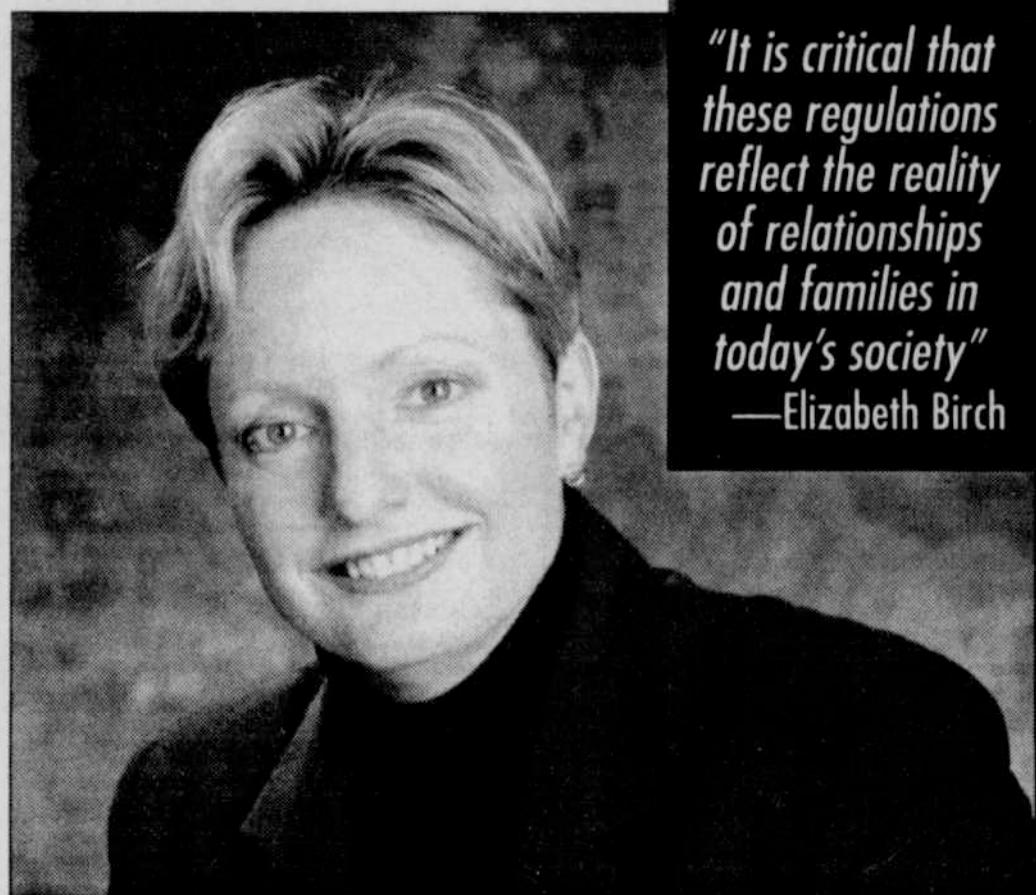
domestic partnerships of many couples, including same-gender couples, who have been living together or who can demonstrate financial interdependence."

Although activists have raised about \$150,000 to help gay men and lesbians affected by Sept. 11, any kind of substantial disaster-related assistance only can come from large national agencies such as the Red Cross. This action helps ensure all survivors, regardless of sexual orientation, will be given consideration for assistance. [E]



John A. Clizbe

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