

Joe Solmonese, chief executive officer of Emily's List, the nation's largest political action committee, was named president of the Human Rights Campaign on March 9 by the organization's board of directors and foundation board.

The 40-year-old announced that, upon taking the helm at HRC on April 11, he will tour the country, meeting with U.S. citizens, members of the sexual minorities community and leaders at town hall meetings and other events in the workplace, communities of color and communities of faith.

As a key political strategist, Solmonese oversaw one of the nation's most successful efforts to elect progressive candidates by appealing to heartland and mainstream voters. His work included broad outreach across the nation, speaking with large and small groups about important issues.

He has been at Emily's List for the past 12 years serving in several key capacities including deputy political director, chief of staff and the CEO position he's occupied for the past 2 1/2 years. Solmonese also has Oregon ties—he worked for Les AuCoin's Senate race in 1992.

"As a gay American, I am very honored to serve HRC and the GLBT community and to join the leadership of a movement that is working toward an America that keeps its promise to all its citizens," Solmonese said in a statement released upon his appointment. "We must tell the stories of our lives and the struggles we face to our straight friends, co-workers and family members. Increasing our presence and visibility across America will be a top priority of my tenure. HRC is not simply a GLBT organization; we're an organization of everyone who sup-

SOLMONESE NAMED HEAD OF HRC

Emily's List chief takes to the road for national tour April 11

by Sarah Dougher

ports GLBT equality. We'll ask every GLBT American to enlist three new allies—a straight co-worker, a friend and a family member—in our work for full equality."

A native of Massachusetts, Solmonese lives in Washington, D.C., and has been an HRC Federal Club member for more than 12 years. He graduated from Boston University in 1987



New Human Rights Campaign executive director Joe Solmonese emphasizes building relationships across both issue and partisan lines.

with a bachelor's degree in communications.

Just Out had an opportunity to ask Solmonese a few questions on the day of his appointment.

Sarah Dougher: What do you think about Howard Dean's recent election to head the Democratic Party?

Joe Solmonese: Dean is an exciting person and an outspoken voice on a whole range of issues. He stands with the Democratic National Committee platform in affirming the rights of GLBT citizens, and I believe Dean will stand his ground on this matter.

SD: Many GLBT activists in Oregon are concerned with the relationship between HRC and Sen. Gordon Smith, who takes the lead on a number of our issues but voted against marriage equality. What do you think about HRC's apparently conciliatory approach to the senator?

JS: What is important is that we continue to build relationships across partisan as well as issue spectrums. We need to work with people who disagree with us in order to foster a better understanding of our positions. I don't view those who disagree with us as monolithic. Each elected official has their own personal and other issues. We need to build across partisan lines.

SD: What do you see HRC doing to enfranchise younger people?

JS: As we speak out across America, we will speak with religious, corporate and civic leaders. We will also speak with youth leaders on issues of importance to them. HRC has a well-developed campus outreach and a sensitivity to college campuses. **JO**

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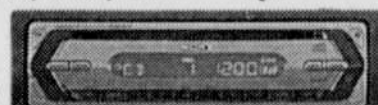
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