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Activists say the White House's annual Easter egg roll is a celebration for all families.

NATIONAL Gay Families to Take Part in White House Easter Egg Roll

National queer family groups are encouraging same-sex couples and their families to attend the White House's annual Easter egg roll April 17, raising concerns among some conservatives. But Family Pride, on its Web site, says the event is "a celebration of our families," not a protest.

Sharpton Asks Churches to Help End "Poisoned Atmosphere"

Churches should do their part to encourage society's acceptance of gay men and lesbians, the Rev. Al Sharpton said Jan. 21 while attending a summit organized by the National Black Justice Coalition. "You cannot talk about civil rights and limit who's included," he said.



The Rev. Al Sharpton encourages acceptance of gays and lesbians in African-American churches.

Conference to Feature Sessions on Queer Older Adults

The Joint Conference of the American Society on Aging and the National Council on the Aging—taking place March 16 to 19 at the Anaheim Marriott Hotel in Anaheim, Calif.—will include an array of sessions addressing the concerns of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people ages 50-plus and of the agencies and professionals serving them. In addition, a number of events are planned for the Lesbian and Gay Aging Issues Network, one of ASA's eight constituent groups.

More than 20 conference presentations will deal with queer aging, with a focus on topics such as housing options; advocacy, law and public policy; health and mental health concerns; elder abuse and neglect; spirituality; and cultural competence for service providers. Among the special networking events for conference participants is a reception March 16 at the Center Orange County, the queer community center in Garden Grove, Calif.

The American Society on Aging has been a leader in continuing education for professionals in aging since 1954; the association's Lesbian and Gay

Aging Issues Network, founded in 1994, is the only professional group of its kind. The National Council on the Aging has been helping community organizations for more than 50 years through advocacy, research, demonstration programs and innovative education and service initiatives.

The conference is expected to draw nearly 4,000 participants from throughout North America to attend some 1,000 sessions on all aspects of aging. A complete schedule and registration materials are available at www.agingconference.org. For more information call 800-537-9728, ext. 9675.

VIRGINIA Virginia Marriage Amendment Moves Forward

The Virginia Senate voted 28-11 on Jan. 26 to approve a sweeping anti-gay marriage amendment to the state constitution that critics say will have unintended consequences. The question will now appear on a November statewide ballot. Newly elected Gov. Tim Kaine had hoped for a more streamlined amendment, but it remains unclear whether he can or will attempt to modify or veto the measure.

MARYLAND Maryland Politics Shaken Up by Marriage Ruling

A Maryland circuit court ruled Jan. 18 that it is a violation of the state constitution to deny same-sex couples the numerous protections provided to married couples.

Baltimore City Circuit Court Judge Brooke Murdock issued a decision finding that denying same-sex couples the ability to marry violates the state constitution's Equal Rights Amendment, which protects against discrimination based on sex. She also found that there is not even a rational basis for denying same-sex couples the ability to marry.

The American Civil Liberties Union and Equality Maryland hailed the decision as a historic step toward the ability of same-sex couples to legally marry in the state.

"This is such an exciting moment," said Lisa Polyak, who with her partner, Gita Deane, is one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit filed by the ACLU. "Our participation in this lawsuit has always been about family protections for our children. Tonight, we will rest a little easier knowing that those protections are within reach."

Republicans could benefit in statewide elections