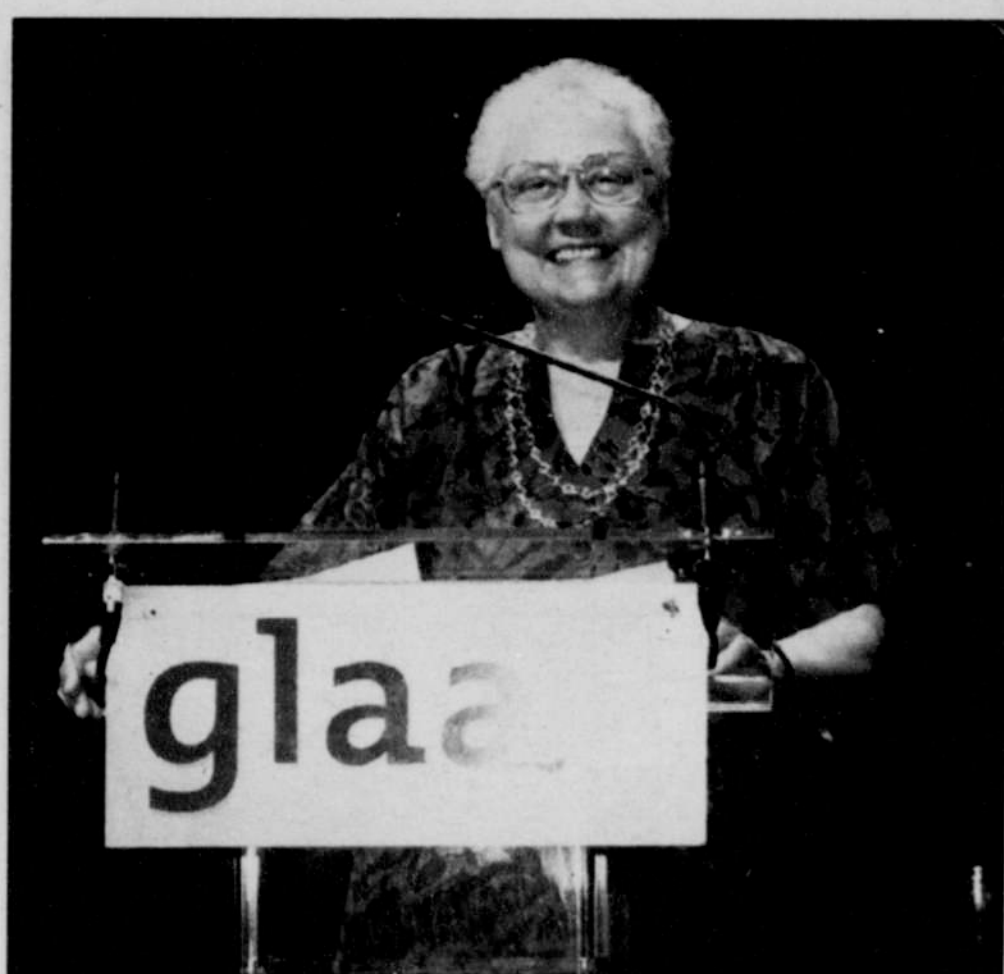




Gay rights pioneer Barbara Gittings lost her long battle with breast cancer.

Gay couples married in Massachusetts, Canada, the Netherlands, South Africa and Spain will be recognized as civil union partners, as will couples who have entered into civil unions in Vermont and Connecticut. Domestic partnerships in California will be considered civil unions.

Victims of Bullying Protected

The New Jersey Supreme Court announced Feb. 21 that anti-discrimination protections should extend to schoolchildren subject to bias-based bullying and harassment.

"Bullying can be enormously destructive to students emotionally and psychologically," said Deborah Jacobs, American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey executive director. "This decision requires schools to take necessary steps to ensure that students are protected from bias-based harassment and makes clear that schools must address the entire school environment instead of merely viewing specific incidents of bullying as isolated events."

The ACLU of New Jersey and several other child advocacy organizations filed a joint friend-of-the-court brief supporting a student's claim under the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination and describing the negative impact that peer harassment and bullying have on students and the school environment. The New Jersey Supreme Court sided with the student—who remains anonymous and is known only as "L.W."—and firmly stated that schools may be liable under the Law Against Discrimination for permitting student-on-student biased-based harassment.

"Students in the classroom are entitled to no less protection from unlawful discrimination and harassment than their adult counterparts in the workplace," wrote Chief Justice James R. Zazzali in a unanimous opinion. "Reasonable measures are required to protect our youth, a duty that schools are more than capable of performing. We require school districts to implement effective preventive and remedial measures to curb severe or pervasive discriminatory mistreatment. Appropriate and reasonable measures will reinforce the basic principle that student-on-student sexual harassment is unacceptable."

As described in the decision, L.W., a student in Toms River, was subjected to anti-gay peer harassment and bullying based on his perceived sexual orientation. As he progressed through school, the

harassment increased in frequency and severity and, consequently, he transferred to another school district. In July 2004, the director of the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights issued an order stating that the Law Against Discrimination protected L.W. from harassment, using the same standard that applies to employment discrimination. The Toms River school board appealed the decision to the appellate court, which decided in L.W.'s favor. It then

appealed that decision to the New Jersey Supreme Court.

PHILADELPHIA

Gay Rights Pioneer Dies

Barbara Gittings died at the age of 75 from a lengthy and brave battle with breast cancer, Philadelphia Gay News publisher and friend Mark Segal announced Feb. 19. She first came to the public spotlight in 1965 when she and a handful of gay men and lesbians held demonstrations outside the White House and Independence Hall seeking equal rights for gays.

These were the first such demonstrations in U.S. history and began an era of gays coming out of the closet. Gittings' involvement in the gay rights movement started in the late 1950s when she helped organize the New York City chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis. It was there she met her partner of 46 years, Kay Lahusen.

Gittings' other accomplishments include heading the American Library Association's Gay Task Force. In 2003, the American Library Association presented her with its highest honor, a lifetime membership. She was an active cornerstone in the campaign that led to the American Psychiatric Association dropping its categorization of homosexuality as a mental illness in 1973.

Gittings was an early community journalist. She edited the Daughters of Bilitis publication *The Ladder* from 1963 to 1966 and worked with Lahusen on her 1973 book *The Gay Crusaders*.

On July 2, 2005, Gittings and Lahusen attended the unveiling of the first official historic marker in the nation recognizing the gay rights struggle. The marker, placed by the Pennsylvania Historic Commission, is located directly across the street from Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

Gittings continued to make appearances, even accepting an award from the American Psychiatric Association this past fall, but ill health finally led her and Lahusen to an assisted living facility, where she went into a coma Feb. 18 and died with Lahusen at her side.

She is also survived by her sister, Eleanor Gittings Taylor of San Diego.

Lahusen asks that remembrances be made to Lambda Legal Defense Fund. 10

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