

Downtown Pride Parade includes call for statewide fairness law

BY SEAN ROSE • SROSE@COURIER-JOURNAL.COM • JUNE 18, 2010

Chris Hartman readied his 50 volunteers at the head of the annual Pride Parade, taking moments to call instructions through a megaphone.

Hartman, director of the Fairness Campaign, a Louisville group that promotes rights for gay and transgender people, and others marched in silent protest, calling for a statewide anti-discrimination law based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The volunteers wore costumes of white balloons and put duct tape over their mouths to symbolize their lost voice without such a law, as Hartman said has been done in similar displays across the country.



Ralph Coopersmith (left) Dennis Chaney, both with Volunteers of America, were in a VOA Jeep during the "NOHS in our State" March in the Kentuckiana Pride Parade on Friday evening in Louisville, Ky. Coopersmith was volunteer of the year for raising over \$2,000, Chaney said.

Before they began, he took a moment to reflect on those who volunteered to march, from bar representatives to roller girls to local church members.

"It's breathtaking," he said, noting twice the turnout of Fairness Campaign marchers from last year. "I think it speaks to the momentum building around the state to pass this fairness law." he parade, part of the Kentuckiana Pride Festival, started on East Market and South Preston streets and ended at the Belvedere, where the festival is held.

This was the first year the Fairness Campaign has marched in specific support of a fairness law, part of a nationwide movement called "NOH8" (no hate) started by celebrity photographer Adam Bouska. The movement began in response to California's passage of Proposition 8, which repealed that state's same-sex marriage law.

A Kentucky fairness law has been proposed for more than a decade and received a record number of co-sponsors this year in the General Assembly, but still has never been heard by a committee, Hartman said.

Louisville, Lexington and Covington are Kentucky cities with such a law, Hartman said. The Fairness Campaign was one of more than a dozen organizations that made up the parade. Others brought out rainbow flags, blared music and called chants to the hundreds lining the street. Before the parade began, others marching with the Fairness Campaign expressed their support for the festival and a fairness law.

"I do very much believe in the need for civil rights and human rights for everybody," said Michael Garton.

Aryn Hernandez agreed.

"We are supporting our fellow gay brothers and sisters," she said.

The Kentuckiana Pride Festival continues from noon to midnight Saturday at the Belvedere. Information on the Fairness Campaign is available at www.fairness.org.

Reporter Sean Rose can be reached at (502) 582-4199.