

PROCLAMATION



City and County of Denver

Proclamation No. CP16-0420

In Celebration of Denver's 25 Year History of Non-Discrimination and Equal Rights for LGBTQ People

WHEREAS, in 1973 Denver officially repealed ordinances used to criminalize homosexuality, and in the 1980's and 1990's society was beginning to see gay and lesbian individuals more visibly, but understanding was still limited and bias was still legally sanctioned and persistent, and many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people were still afraid to live openly for fear of violence, discrimination, or other forms of non-acceptance; and

WHEREAS, despite the antagonistic climate, Denver was a home, and a regional destination, for many LGBTQ persons, with community institutions like The Center providing support and advocacy, and a number of accepting businesses serving the community; and

WHEREAS, local community leaders began appealing to the Denver City Council for legal protection from discrimination, resulting in the Denver City Council adopting Ordinance 623 of 1990, a comprehensive civil rights ordinance that prohibited discrimination in employment, housing, education, health, welfare, public accommodations, or commercial space on the basis of sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS, 25 years ago this month, opponents of LGBTQ equality responded with a ballot measure to repeal the protections for sexual orientation, galvanizing the LGBTQ community and allies to campaign to defeat the measure, resulting in 54.7% of Denver voters in May of 1991 *rejecting* the backlash, affirming the legal right of their gay and lesbian family members, neighbors, friends, and co-workers to live free of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation within Denver; and

WHEREAS, opponents of LGBTQ equality who lost Denver's municipal vote took their fight to the voters of the State of Colorado in a high-profile loss for LGBTQ equality, Amendment 2, which would have prohibited cities like Denver and Boulder from including "sexual orientation" in their non-discrimination ordinances; and

WHEREAS, once again, 20 years ago this month, justice prevailed, in a Supreme Court decision striking down Colorado's Amendment 2, *Romer v. Evans*, which was also cited by the Supreme Court in striking down state bans on same-sex marriage in 2015's *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision, therefore paving the way for both non-discrimination and relationship protections for LGBTQ couples; and

WHEREAS, the City and County of Denver and our elected officials have routinely served as national leaders in the advancement of LGBTQ equality, including the creation of the first Mayor's LGBT Advisory Committee, a zoning code amendment to ensure unmarried couples could legally live in single family-zoned areas, and the creation of a registry for couples to document their committed relationships; and

WHEREAS, the City and County of Denver, as an employer, has also long-provided LGBTQ equality for our employees, by defining "family" to include intimate partners of the same gender for purposes of using employee benefits like sick leave and health insurance coverage; and

WHEREAS, legal protection from discrimination and equal access to benefits has freed many LGBTQ persons to more fully participate in Denver's community and economy, enriching the lives of not only LGBTQ individuals and their families, but all of Denver; and

WHEREAS, the recognition and celebration of these historic civil rights milestones is especially important given the recent backlashes in states like North Carolina and Mississippi, which have sought to sanction and re-institutionalize discrimination against LGBTQ people, and given the work we still have to do here in Denver and Colorado, including overcoming lingering disparities in LGBTQ health, the struggles of youth who are coming out, and the barriers to full acceptance and economic opportunity for transgender and gender non-conforming residents; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER:

Section 1. We honor our predecessors serving on the Denver City Council and in the Office of the Mayor in 1990 for their courageous leadership in adopting civil right protections for the gay and lesbian community, and celebrates the voters of Denver upon the 25th Anniversary of our rejection of hate in our great city.

Section 2. We honor all the LGBTQ persons who came out from the margins to tell their stories and to be visible in ways that helped make these advancements possible, and we thank all the leaders, activists, and allies who led these movements for justice.

Section 3. We celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the United States Supreme Court's favorable decision in *Romer v. Evans* to uphold Denver's place on the right side of history, and for all the advancements and progress that have taken place since that decision.

Section 4. We denounce the proliferation of efforts to prevent or rollback progress for LGBTQ dignity or equal access to employment across this Country, we applaud the Department of Justice for its strong stance in opposition to these measures, and we stand in solidarity with those withholding travel and economic investment in states who have adopted anti-equality measures.

Section 5 That the Clerk of the City and County of Denver shall attest and affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and that a copy be transmitted to Tina Scardina, The Center, and to the Elected Officials present who played a role in this historic progress.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL May 31, 2016

_____ PRESIDENT