



Log Cabin Republicans

by Stephanie R. Olson

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Log Cabin Republicans (LCR), a gay and lesbian Republican organization, has as its mission to "work within the Republican Party for the equal rights of all Americans, including gay men and women." They have over 11,000 members, with 50 chapters in 22 states, and a national office in Washington, D.C.

Log Cabin Republicans' federal political action committee raises in excess of \$100,000 for Republican candidates per election cycle. Some state chapters, such as New York, have state political action committees. Local chapters work at the grassroots level with such activities as educating local GOP candidates and officials, endorsing and raising money for GOP candidates, lobbying Republican politicians, and voter outreach.

LCR was founded in 1978 in response to California's Proposition 6, the nation's first state-wide anti-gay ballot measure. Proposition 6 would have made it legal to dismiss gay or lesbian public school teachers based solely on their sexual orientations.

With an active national Board of Directors and National Advisory Board with prominent straight and gay elected officials, LCR works to create a more inclusive Republican Party. The founders of LCR chose the name "Log Cabin" in reference to Abraham Lincoln and the heritage of the Republican Party.

The Liberty Education Forum is a sister organization to LCR. The Forum was originally founded in 1995 as the Log Cabin Education Fund (LCEF) in order to provide a non-partisan education and research component to LCR. In 2001, LCEF officially became the Liberty Education Forum, a centrist think-tank with the mission of providing "new ideas and new directions for the gay community."

The Liberty Education Forum, along with LCR, filed an amicus brief in the landmark *Lawrence v. Texas* case, urging the United States Supreme Court to declare sodomy laws unconstitutional.

LCR share traditional Republican views on fiscal policy, limited government, crime, and foreign policy. While the Republican Party does not have a good history of supporting glbtq rights, LCR believes that equal treatment under the law for gay men and women is consistent with the principles and values of the Republican Party. LCR is committed to fighting the far right for control of the Republican Party's future.

Three-term member of the Massachusetts legislature and former Mayor of Melrose, Massachusetts, Patrick Guerriero became executive director of LCR in 2003. Guerriero says that "the mere existence of Log Cabin recognizes that the Republican Party still has a long way to go," but believes that it is important to work for change within the party, "to change an institution that can't be changed from the outside."

In 2010, a former veteran of the George W. Bush administration, R. Clarke Cooper, became Executive Director of the LCR.

The Republican Party has been slow to recognize the importance of gay and lesbian voters. According to the

Voter News Service, 25% of self-identified gays, lesbians, and bisexuals voted for Republican George W. Bush for president in 2000. One-third of gay voters around the country are Republican. However, during the 1996 presidential campaign, Republican Candidate Robert Dole returned a \$1000 contribution from the group.

In 1998 and again in 2000 the Log Cabin Republicans organization was barred from setting up a booth at the Texas Republican Party convention. President Bush flip-flopped many times over the possibility of meeting with Log Cabin Republicans before finally meeting with "Republicans who happen to be gay" in April 2000.

Meanwhile, LCR endorsed, campaigned, and raised money for over 30 Republican congressional candidates in 2000 and supported New York Mayor Rudolf Giuliani and California Congressman Tom Campbell for the United States Senate.

In 2003, LCR launched a lobbying campaign targeted at Republican elected officials, urging them to oppose an attempt to amend the United States Constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage.

Although the organization enthusiastically supported the candidacy of President George W. Bush, who campaigned as a "uniter not a divider," in 2000, his proposal of the Federal Marriage Amendment as the centerpiece of his 2004 re-election campaign led the LCR to withdraw their endorsement of him.

The LCR gained a new visibility in glbtq political circles in 2010, when their 2004 suit challenging the constitutionality of the 1993 Don't Ask, Don't Tell Act, which prohibits openly gay and lesbian soldiers from serving in the U.S. military, was finally heard. On September 9, 2010, Federal District Judge Virginia Phillips of Riverside, California issued a far-reaching decision that declared the Act unconstitutional.

In response to the decision in *Log Cabin Republicans v. U.S.*, LCR Executive Director Cooper issued a statement celebrating the ruling as a victory for all American servicemembers.

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About the Author

Stephanie R. Olson is a Ph.D. candidate at Rutgers University. Her research interests include race, gender, and social justice issues. Her dissertation examines the political implications of women's self-defense. She is a co-founder of the Empower Program, a violence prevention non-profit organization in Washington, D. C. Olson is currently living in Belgrade, Serbia with her husband, a Foreign Service Officer, and their son Nicolas.