

Philadelphia Chapter Responds to Editorial Cheap Shot in News

*Philadelphia Chapter president Art Delaney went after an editorial in the Philadelphia **Daily** News ("Sinister Campaign to hurt schools") which attacked "the religious right" for getting involved in opposing an educational program which would promote gay and lesbian lifestyles. Art's response was published on June 3:*

We object to your recent editorial opinion which implies that it is "dangerous" when citizens to whom religion is important exercise their right to vote for representatives who share their views. The targets of your opinion were identified as "Christian fundamentalist organizations," but the underlying exclusionary premise is equally applicable to all of us. The right to vote and the right to free exercise of religion are rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution. It is wrong for a major public newspaper to suggest that the exercise of those rights is "sinister" and "dangerous."

Equally objectionable is the failure of your editorial board to recognize the basis for the widespread opposition to the School District's multiracial – multicultural – gender education – Policy 102. Parents of school age children have good reason to be concerned about a policy that will promote unacceptable activities and lifestyles. In deciding whether Policy 102 will promote lifestyles that are diametrically opposed to the traditional family structure or whether it would simply promote tolerance, the following considerations are relevant:

- The experience of similar policies in New York and in other cities show that unacceptable sexual activities and lifestyles

have been aggressively promoted.

- The organizations promoting the Philadelphia policy are the same or of similar makeup as the organizations that sponsored the New York programs. For example the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force and others of similar mind and intent.
- The difference between tolerance and teaching students that all types of behavior are equal, wholesome and acceptable.
- The stealth by which Policy 102 was established with a minimum of public notice or discussion until the issue was forced by its opponents indicates that its proponents do not want a full airing of the substantive content of the policy. A practice not very reflective of democratic processes .The failure to mention these considerations is especially disturbing in light of the fact that it was not the “fundamentalists” who raised the policy issue. The issue was raised by the proponents of Policy 102. In the first instance, the proponents o f the proposed public policy have the obligation to explain it and show how it will differ from similar policies imposed in other locations – particularly where those other policies have been rejected by the public. Moreover, the news media had an obligation to the public to assure that the full agenda of Policy 102 is disclosed.