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Press Release

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**GEORGIA EQUALITY CALLS FOR MAYOR FRANKLIN AND CHIEF PENNINGTON  
TO ANSWER MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT ATLANTA EAGLE RAID**

ATLANTA – Following Monday’s press conference by the Atlanta Police Department (“APD”) explaining that the recent raid at the Atlanta Eagle bar was the culmination of a nearly five-month-long investigation, Georgia Equality now calls on Mayor Shirley Franklin and Police Chief Richard Pennington to address additional questions and concerns about the developing situation.

“Members of Atlanta’s LGBT community have frequently given Mayor Franklin the benefit of the doubt for the last eight years, and now we expect some candor and honesty about the heavy-handed raid that occurred last week,” said Jeff Graham, executive director of Georgia Equality. “We call on the Mayor to come forward and explain how this raid makes the city any safer, and whether this was really a wise use of the city’s scarce resources during an economic downturn.”

Georgia Equality noted that while violent crimes have plagued area neighborhoods and tragically claimed the life of a Spelman College student in recent weeks, Chief Pennington announced Monday that the city’s police have been working since May, in part, to investigate men dancing in their underwear. “The APD needs to explain why it is that their leadership chose to focus on things such as Go-Go Boy dancing, while at the same time muggers were attacking Georgia Tech students, and drug deals and prostitution continued unabated outside City Hall East.”

Georgia Equality also noted with concern that Chief Pennington said Monday the initial complaints about activities at the Atlanta Eagle were funneled through the Mayor’s Office.

“Atlanta deserves to know exactly who in the Franklin Administration played a role in orchestrating this raid, and what evidence they purported to have,” Graham said.

Georgia Equality expressed its concern for the bar patrons and employees who lived through the raid on Sept. 10, noting that none of the 62 patrons present during the raid was found to be engaged in any sex acts, nor in possession of contraband.

“Civil rights and common decency should not be thrown out the window over men dancing in their underwear and alleged non-violent conduct, even if criminal issues are possibly afoot,” Graham said. “Atlanta, as a city, can do better than this, and should strive to be a leader in the area of public safety.”

Georgia Equality called upon Mayor Franklin and Chief Pennington to explain:

- What concrete steps (such as written policies) will the Police Chief take to ensure that the APD's LGBT Liaison Officer Dani Lee Harris is notified in advance and involved in the coordination and execution of future police actions affecting the LGBT community?
- How is the city any safer since the raid?
- What percentage of the officers on duty the night of September 10 participated in the raid?
- Why were so many officers needed to investigate non-violent dancing when violent crimes are occurring all over the city?
- How much did this raid cost taxpayers? What is the cost per charge/violation? How many work hours went into the investigation leading up to and the execution of the raid?
- What specific evidence led to the initiation of the raid? What documentation exists detailing that evidence? Why has the reasoning for the raid shifted over time?
- What actions were taken and what language was used by police during the raid and how were patrons treated?
- What training, if any, had the officers who participated in the raid received regarding LGBT community sensitivity and did they follow such training, written procedures, or policies?
- Why were individuals arrested and held in custody 19 hours for ordinance violations?
- What guarantees will the APD make to ensure that the LGBT press, such as Southern Voice and Project Q Atlanta, are kept up to date as the investigation goes forward?

"A full, unbiased, and objective investigation of this raid needs to occur quickly before the Mayor and Chief Pennington leave office in the coming months," Graham said. "Our public officials must be held accountable for their actions and decisions with regard to public safety, the civil rights of Atlanta citizens, and the allocation of precious city resources during an economic downturn. The raid raises questions and concerns in all three of these areas which have yet to be properly addressed."

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