



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Poll Shows Support on Key Gay Rights Issues**

(ATLANTA, April 25, 2007) – A new poll conducted for Georgia Equality shows that eight in 10 Georgia voters support gay men and lesbians being protected from anti-gay workplace discrimination and that there is strong support for gay Georgians to have the right to visit a hospitalized partner and make decisions for them.

A majority of voters also support granting civil unions to gay men and lesbians, delivering to gay couples many of the same legal protections as a married couple.

The results of the poll come as the Georgia General Assembly ends its 2007 session, during which Georgia Equality, the statewide gay advocacy group, recorded several key accomplishments.

“Despite a hostile legislative environment, this poll shows that Georgians – across political lines – support granting gay men and lesbians some of the same basic rights enjoyed by their straight neighbors,” said Kyle Williams, chair of the Georgia Equality Foundation Board.

The poll of 450 registered voters across the state was conducted for Georgia Equality by The Schapiro Group from Feb. 13-16. Voters were asked about three critical issues for gay men and lesbians – protection from workplace discrimination, visitation and decision-making powers for hospitalized partners and civil unions. Key findings include:

- 80 percent said gay men and lesbians should be protected from anti-gay workplace discrimination, including Democrats (82 percent), Republicans (72 percent) and Independents (85 percent). Only 15 percent said gay men and lesbians should not be legally protected, while 5 percent said they don't know or refused to answer.
- 91 percent said gay men and lesbians should have the right to visit their partner in the hospital, including Democrats (89 percent), Republicans (90 percent) and Independents (94 percent). Some 7 percent said gay men and lesbians should not have the legal right to visit their partner, while 2 percent said they don't know or refused to answer.
- 70 percent said gay men and lesbians should have the right to make decisions for their hospitalized partner, including Democrats (74 percent), Republicans (60 percent) and Independents (76 percent). Some 22 percent said gay men and lesbians should not be able to make those decisions, while 8 percent said they don't know or refused to answer.

- 52 percent said gay men and lesbians should have the right to a civil union, including Democrats (66 percent), Republicans (25 percent) and Independents (62 percent). Some 43 percent disagreed and 5 percent said they don't know or refused to answer.

The results of the poll will assist Georgia Equality in mapping out the group's future legislative strategy, Williams said. During the legislative that ended last week, the group scored several accomplishments:

- Blocking an attempt to add anti-gay adoption language to a House bill. (HB 599)
- Adding language allowing hospital visitation and ambulance attendance on a comprehensive advance directive bill. (HB 24)
- Adding language requiring counseling and medical referral to pregnant women testing positive for HIV. (HB 429)
- Adding "gender identity" to a proposed hate crimes bill (SB 211) (The bill did not reach the floor for a vote.)
- Testifying against HIV test results being exempted from personal information that should be protected in a biometric privacy bill. (HB 276) (The bill did not reach the floor for a vote.)

Prior to the General Assembly session, Georgia Equality spend nearly a year preparing for any efforts to ban adoptions by gay men and lesbians in the state. With polling conducted through funding from the Human Rights Campaign and a coalition of adoption attorneys and child care advocates, Georgia Equality was prepared with expert testimony and volunteers to talk with lawmakers, according to Kathleen Womack, chair of the Georgia Equality Political Board. State Rep. Karla Drenner, the only openly gay member of the state legislature, was key in advising Georgia Equality's efforts and providing updates from the Gold Dome, Womack said.

"Georgia Equality was ready to act when some lawmakers considered adding anti-gay adoption ban to House Bill 599," Womack said. "Thanks to Karla's leadership, we were able to spring into action and be proactive in pushing back when an adoption ban was discussed."

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*Since its founding in 1995, Georgia Equality has earned a reputation across the state and nation as one of the most effective statewide political advocacy organizations for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. Georgia Equality seeks to educate the public, elected officials and policymakers; build coalitions and mobilize allies; increase the political participation of the LGBT and allied communities; and organize and empower the LGBT community in urban, suburban and rural communities across Georgia.*

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