

**“School Bullying: Is It Really a Problem?”
A Nebraska Democrats LGBT Caucus Issues Forum**

The 2003 California Healthy Kids Survey showed that 200,000 (7.5%) of California’s middle and high school students were targets of harassment and bullying based on actual or perceived sexual orientation. The results were consistent with the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network’s 2003 National School Climate Survey, documenting and analyzing the school experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgendered (LGBT) youth from 48 states and the District of Columbia. The studies indicated that students harassed for actual or perceived sexual orientation are three times more likely to miss school because they feel unsafe, more than twice as likely to be depressed, to consider suicide or to make a plan for suicide. Additionally, students have a difficult time connecting with peers, their community, teachers and other adults, making it difficult to develop “a social safety net.” The studies also reported that two out of every three LGBT students experienced harassment, and 47% experienced repeated harassment.

The teen years are difficult for anyone. Peer pressure is intense and often impacts the learning environment. Studies have indicated that taking reasonable intervention steps such as posting and enforcing anti-bullying school policies can do much to enhance the learning environment.

Without exception, members of the LGBT Caucus can report similar experiences negatively impacting their school experiences, their opportunities for a college education and sometimes their entire lives. To help the public, and particularly Democrats, understand these issues, the LGBT Caucus has invited school and college Gay Straight Alliance members to speak on a youth panel discussing their experiences with anti-gay harassment. The event will be moderated by Lin Quenzer, LGBT Caucus Chair, and Michael Gordon, Director of Citizens for Equal Protection. Amy Miller, attorney for ACLU Nebraska, Ruth Kupfer, Lincoln Public Schools Teacher Sponsor for GSAs, Barbara Baier, candidate for Lincoln School Board, and several others will speak. Information about LB627, anti-bullying legislation, now pending in the Unicameral will be shared.

“School Bullying: Is It Really a Problem?” is scheduled for Sunday, March 20th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Communication Workers of America Union Hall, 2448 N (generally 25th & N) in Lincoln. Plan to attend this informative event. For more information about the event and the Nebraska Democrat’s LGBT Caucus, see: www.lgbtdemocrats.org.