



Immediate Release
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Faith Leaders and Advocates Show Congress *Love* ***Campaign Asks Lawmakers to Harness It's Power to Stop Oppression***

WASHINGTON, DC – Dozens of Faith leaders, immigration and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) activists gathered on the U.S. Capitol grounds today to deliver a message to Congress – Americans Stand on the Side of Love.

“We are bringing words of compassion and love to Capitol Hill, not homophobic and racist slurs,” said Adam Gerhardstein, campaign manager for the Standing on the Side of Love (SSL) campaign, referring to the treatment that some members of congress faced on Capitol Hill prior to the district work period.

During that period, the SSL campaign gathered 10,000 signatures on a petition for full equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and an additional 5,000 signatures supporting immigration reform. Those signatures were delivered to Congress this morning, and the unique gathering held large blue signs stapled with the immigration postcards to spell out, “WE STAND ON THE SIDE OF LOVE.” With one letter per sheet, the message stretched 50 feet.

Photos available for press at: <http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/photoslovecapitol/>

“We are delivering petitions and postcards to lift up the importance of love for each other, not throwing bricks through windows.” Gerhardstein said. “We will not allow extreme voices and acts of violence to overshadow the needs of the Americans who are most vulnerable and urgently need the protection of the law.”

This event brought together two issues that are not clearly related, but often intersect: immigration and equality for GLBT people. The SSL campaign works on both issues and many others – standing with anyone who faces exclusion, oppression, or violence because of who they are and lifting them up with the power of love. There are unique challenges faced at the intersection of identities, but those challenges can be overcome by love and respect.

“Unlike straight married couples, John could not sponsor me for legal permanent residency because we happen to be gay,” said Erwin De Leon, the immigrant half of a local bi-national couple who spoke about his experience during the event. “I need Congress to stand on the side of love with my family by passing comprehensive immigration reform and provide equality under the law for GLBT people.”

The SSL campaign is working to ensure that people like Erwin and his husband are taken into account and their concerns are addressed by Members of Congress. John Crestwell, Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis and Campaign Spokesperson, summed up the sentiments of those gathered, “We stand on the side of love with our neighbors who are shut out, dehumanized, or attacked just because of who they are,” said Crestwell. “No one is ‘okay to hate.’ We are all God’s children and all have inherent worth and dignity.”

Standing on the Side of Love is a campaign sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association and promotes respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We believe that no person of any immigrant status, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation, ability level, or political view should be dehumanized through acts of exclusion, oppression, or violence.