

Letter from APA President-Elect Carol Goodheart to APA's Council of Representatives on September 26, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to update you on developments surrounding the Manchester Grand Hyatt and APA's 2010 Convention planning. I have heard from many of you over the past few weeks and I want to thank you for your input and ideas.

Since my last note, much has been accomplished: Nancy Moore, Executive Director for Governance Affairs, and I traveled to San Diego and talked with hotel staff; the work group has had a second call; we've reached out to key stakeholders, including two phone calls with leaders in Division 44, the LGBT Caucus, and the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns; we've sought advice from knowledgeable members of the LGBT community; and we've learned about the actions and experiences of other associations whose conventions were also booked at the Manchester. In addition, the Board of Directors has met and discussed the issue, and voiced their support for the developing plans.

Why San Diego 2010 Is A Great Opportunity

With the upcoming convention in San Diego, APA has an unprecedented opportunity to bring the weight of scientific research to the public debate about same-sex marriage. As you know, APA has supported legal benefits for same sex couples since 1997 and civil marriage for same-sex couples since 2004. Most notably, we have adopted policy statements, lobbied Congress in opposition to the Defense of Marriage Act and the Federal Marriage Amendment, and filed amicus briefs supporting same-sex marriage in legal cases in Oregon, Washington, New Jersey, New York (three times), Maryland, Connecticut, Iowa, and California. In California, the APA brief was cited by the state Supreme Court when it ruled that same-sex marriage was legal in May 2008. The California Psychological Association (CPA) joined APA in its brief.

I have appointed a governance and staff work group to assist me in developing a positive approach to the opportunity presented by the Convention. The work group has developed the following plans, which have been approved by the Board of Directors:

- A press conference with speakers and briefing papers focusing on the latest, best science around sexual orientation and the mental health benefits of marriage;
- A plenary program focused on same-sex marriage and the diverse public debate going on in our nation about it;
- A presidential citation to a leader in the movement for same-sex marriage;
- Informational packets for attendees and the public;
- Buttons that can be worn by all convention attendees who wish to demonstrate visible support

The Manchester Grand Hyatt Controversy

The Manchester Grand Hyatt is the largest of the headquarter hotels for the 2010 convention, and the location where the Board and Council will meet. A move to have all organizations and individuals boycott the hotel originally grew out of efforts by Unite Here, a labor organizing group, to unionize the Manchester Grand Hyatt. They were joined by Californians Against Hate, who have targeted the hotel's owner, Douglas Manchester, who made a \$125,000 personal contribution in January 2008 that helped to collect the signatures needed to get Proposition 8 on the ballot.

The APA Board of Directors decided in February, when it was informed by Unite Here of the boycott efforts, that APA would have to honor its contract with the Manchester Grand Hyatt signed in 2004 for

two reasons: The Board policy is to not cancel hotel contracts unless there is imminent danger to attendees or staff; and in a time of serious financial crisis, cancellation of the contract would deplete APA's limited resources by over a million dollars. At the same time, Board members were sensitive to the impact of this issue on LGBT and other members, and many of our members expressed concern about the Manchester Grand Hyatt being a headquarters hotel. The work group I established grew out of those concerns and has discussed a number of options. The strategy that we are focusing on uses the controversy as an opportunity to educate the public about the scientific research that has informed APA's position on same-sex marriage.

Initially, some groups within APA moved to support a boycott of the hotel to protest Mr. Manchester's support of Proposition 8. The work group believes that in the end, a boycott, although a strong symbolic gesture, would not achieve the desired results; the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel would receive the same revenue - whether the rooms are used by our members or not - because of major contractual penalties of up to \$500,000 that APA would have to bear. Furthermore, if too many groups asked to move out of the Hyatt, there would not be enough space to house them in our other hotels, creating a scramble to find other space. Such space, if available, would likely be a significant distance from the Convention Center, require payment for meeting rooms and create significant logistical problems for attendees.

For all of the above reasons, we have asked groups not to formally boycott the hotel. Groups that made a decision earlier in the process are asked to reconsider in light of these recent developments. Rather than boycotting, we are asking APA Divisions and other entities to focus on positive actions to highlight our policies and the science related to same-sex marriage. At the same time, we recognize there is no single point of view and understand that individual members may choose not to stay in the property. We respect that personal choice.

This stance is consistent with past APA actions surrounding our convention in which decisions were made at the organizational level while leaving individuals free to make their own personal choices (e.g., the SARS episode in Toronto; the post-Katrina convention in New Orleans). This difference in the case of San Diego is that we are taking steps at the organizational level to use the meeting to highlight the ways the science of psychology speaks directly to the issues at hand.

Labor Issues at the Grand Hyatt

Unite Here is a labor organization that represents hotel workers, but the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel is a non-union hotel. A local committee of the Unite Here union has taken the lead in promoting the boycott. It has also made claims about the labor practices of the hotel. It has further suggested that our members may be confronted by demonstrators, if we do not boycott. Unite Here may try to contact APA members about boycotting the hotel, because they have reportedly contacted members of other organizations who met there.

The Manchester Hyatt Hotel "warrants and represents that it has had no unfair labor practice charge or complaint pending or threatened against it. The hotel further warrants and represents that at no time during the past ten years has there been, nor is there now existing or threatened, any walkout, strike, picketing, work stoppage, or any other similar occurrence." The hotel has further stated in writing that the hotel has "never received any notification from the National Labor Relations Board about any group of associates within the hotel or within any department of the hotel, who have expressed an interest in organizing and there is not currently and has never been an organized labor election campaign underway."

When Nancy Moore and I were at the hotel a few weeks ago, we saw firsthand that there was no picket line because it is not a union hotel and there were no demonstrators. We also consulted with the National Education Association and they reported that there were no demonstrators during the NEA meeting in July 2009.

GLBT Issues Related to the Manchester's Hyatt

Although Mr. Manchester owns the property, it is managed by the Hyatt Global organization and all employees work for Hyatt, not Mr. Manchester. The hotel's management has stated that their workplace policies are consistent with those of other Hyatt Hotels, which include benefits for employees' domestic partners. Hyatt was included on the Human Rights Campaign's "2009 Best Places to Work" list of the top companies that support equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees. Other diversity citations are also noted on the Hyatt website.

Mr. Manchester has made some public statements subsequent to the boycott efforts, including a letter that the Hyatt staff provided us, which is attached. As you can see in his letter he has made offers of contributions, but we understand from contacts with LGBT organizations that those organizations have publicly refused to accept his offers. The same offer was extended to APA and we also declined the money.

The work group is still discussing whether we should locate our efforts to highlight and publicize the relevant psychological science on same-sex marriage at the Hyatt or elsewhere. We have received different recommendations on this issue in our consultations with APA's constituents and community informants, and we recognize the significant barriers that the hotel owner's action create for many of our members and for the LGBT community at large. Regardless of the location, we see this as an opportunity to make a strong affirmative response that will raise awareness of the benefits of marriage for all and of psychology's contributions to understanding and reducing discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Moving Forward

The work group, along with other key players, has worked hard to address difficult issues and find positive solutions. Over the coming months before the convention, we will be working to develop specific implementation details of the plan. We are asking APA Divisions and other APA groups to help us in this endeavor. In the meantime, we will continue our conversations with various stakeholders in order to make this Convention a positive experience for all members.

Thank you for your assistance in this process.

Carol and the Convention Work Group

Members of the Convention Work Group

Carol Goodheart, APA President-elect

Armand Cerbone and Jean Carter, Members of the Board of Directors

Norman Anderson, APA CEO

Terry Gock, Division 44

Sari Dworkin, incoming Chair, LGBT Caucus

Gwendolyn Keita, ED, Public Interest

Nancy Moore, ED, Governance Affairs

Kim Mills, Associate ED, Public & Member Communications

Clinton Anderson, Director, Office of LGBT Concerns.