



Legislation Text

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Honoring, recognizing and memorializing Barbara Gittings, the “Mother of the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transsexual Civil Rights Movement.”

WHEREAS, Barbara Gittings, a seminal gay activist, died on Sunday, February 18th and is survived by her partner of 46 years, Kay Tobin Lahusen; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Gittings began her activist career in 1958 by founding the New York chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), the first lesbian organization. She edited DOB’s national magazine, “The Ladder,” from 1963 to 1966. Describing those years, Gittings once said “There were scarcely 200 of us in the whole United States. It was like a club; we all knew each other;” and

WHEREAS, In 1965, Ms. Gittings marched in the first gay picket lines at the White House and other federal sites in Washington, DC to protest discrimination by the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Every year, from 1965 to 1969, Barbara Gittings pioneered annual demonstrations for gay and lesbian civil rights held each July 4th at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. These seminal yearly protests laid the groundwork for the Stonewall rebellion in 1969 and the first New York gay pride parade in 1970; and

WHEREAS, In the 1970s, Barbara Gittings campaigned to remove homosexuality from the American Psychiatric Association’s list of mental disorders. She recruited “Dr. H. Anonymous,” a gay psychiatrist who appeared, masked, on a panel at the 1972 APA conference to tell his colleagues why he couldn’t be open in his own profession; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Gittings also crusaded to make gay literature available in libraries. Though not a librarian, Gittings found a home in the Gay Task Force of the American Library Association, the first gay caucus in a professional organization. She edited its Gay Bibliography and wrote a history of the group, Gays in Library Land. Her campaign to promote gay materials and eliminate discrimination in libraries was recognized in 2003 by an honorary lifetime membership conferred by the American Library Association; and

WHEREAS, For her lifetime of activist work, Gittings was selected as one of 31 leaders for GLBT History Month in October 2006; now therefore

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors, recognizes and memorializes Barbara Gittings, the “Mother of the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transsexual Civil Rights Movement.”

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Kay Tobin Lahusen as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this body.