

January 9, 2009

Hon. Ashanti Hamilton, Chair
Committee on Judiciary and Legislation
City Hall, Room 205
200 E. Wells St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202
E-mail ahamil@milwaukee.gov

Re: Appointment of Ray Vahey to the Equal Rights Commission

Chairman Hamilton and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of the nomination of Ray Vahey to the Equal Rights Commission. The Commission has played a very important role historically to ensure that the City affirmatively recognizes and enforces the civil rights of all Milwaukee residents. It is unfortunate that the Commission has not been empowered in recent years...and I strongly support the Mayor and the Council's decision to reactivate it.

Ray Vahey is an excellent choice to serve on the Commission. Ray has been a strong voice, and a strong leader, in Milwaukee's civil rights community. He is a longtime activist in the ACLU. More recently, he has emerged as a leader in fighting for equal rights for Milwaukee's LGBT community.

I was privileged to be in attendance at the State Legislature's hearing on banning gay marriage. Ray and his late partner Richard silenced the hearing room with their passionate reflection on 49 years of partnership. Ray was eloquent in his appeal for equal partnership rights for all of Wisconsin's citizens.

Now that the marriage ban has passed, Ray has engaged even more actively in making the case for equal rights. He has organized to expand the City's equal rights ordinance, and for domestic partnership benefits for employees of Milwaukee Public Schools.

Ray has been recognized by his peers for his strong leadership. He has been elected as Board Chair of Center Advocates, the organized voice of Milwaukee's LGBT community.

Ray is both thoughtful and passionate in his advocacy—a combination that is not easily found. He will be a great asset to the Commission...and to the City of Milwaukee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Goldstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Goldstein
920 E Pleasant St. #2
Milwaukee, WI 53202