

The Gay Right's National Lobby: America's Forgotten Gay Rights Vanguard

By Tanner Luther

Despite the integral role it played in the fight for LGBT+ rights and its later absorption into the Human Rights Campaign (one of the United States' foremost LGBT+ rights organizations), few scholars have explored the history of the Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL). This organization was in fact one of the most active gay interest groups in Washington D.C. during the 1970s and 1980s. Today, the GRNL's Wikipedia page is barely more than 220 words, and easy access to online secondary sources detailing its import are scant. Yet the organization had a long and lasting impact. During a time when the Reagan administration was busting unions¹ and largely ignoring the AIDS crisis that disproportionately affected the gay community,² the GRNL was instrumental in forming an alliance between major American political organizations and the gay community. In doing so, they were able to secure public endorsements in favor of gay rights at a time when it was neither politically nor socially expedient to do so.

This paper explores the GRNL's objectives, internal structure, and successes via its newsletter, *Capitol Hill*, analyzing all issues across the five years of the publication, and searching for the methods utilized by the GRNL in order to ascertain its goals of promoting LGBT+ rights, such as the Bill of Gay Rights they lobbied to Congress for ratification. It also

¹Tope, Daniel, and David Jacobs. "The Politics of Union Decline: The Contingent Determinants of Union Recognition Elections and Victories." *American Sociological Review* 74, no. 5 (October 2009): 842-64. doi:10.1177/000312240907400508; Sockell, Donna, and John Thomas Delany. "Union organizing and the Reagan NLRB." *Contemporary Economic Policy* 5, no. 4 (1987): 28-45; Beaumont, Phillip B. "The Thatcher/Reagan Administration Approaches in Labor Relations." In *Forty-First Annual Meeting*, p. 342. 1988.

²Elwood, William N. 1999. *Power in the Blood: A Handbook on Aids, Politics, and Communication*. Lea's Communication Series. Mahwah, N.J.; Shilts, Randy. *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*. Souvenir Press, 2011; Lee, Philip R., and Peter S. Arno. "The federal response to the AIDS epidemic." *Health Policy* 6, no. 3 (1986): 259-267.

draws on secondary literature, such as Miriam Frank's important work *Out in the Union*,³ in order to contextualize the GRNL's place within the history of the LGBT+ rights movement. In combining both primary and secondary sources, this paper explores the time period in which the GRNL arose and its lasting impacts. Though short-lived, this organization laid important groundwork for the expansion of LGBT+ organizing in the 1980s.

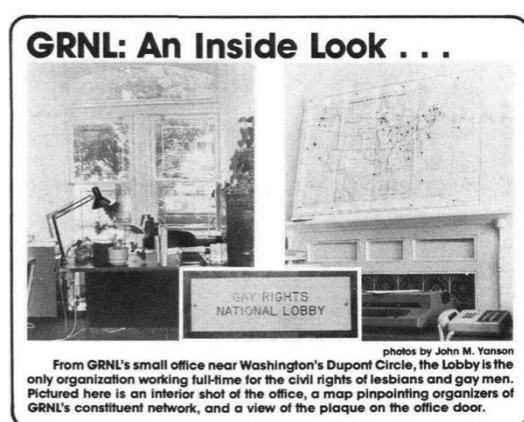
The GRNL was the first professional lobby solely focused on the expansion of gay rights in Washington, D.C., though it was not the first gay rights lobby, as that title goes to an effort put forth by the Metropolitan Community Church from 1971-1973.⁴ was highly dependent on grassroots activism from members of the gay community for both financial and organizational support. It established a grassroots constituent network to mail and lobby members of Congress and pressure them to support pro-gay legislation. Central to the GRNL's lobbying efforts was the push to have a federal gay civil rights bill ratified into law, the fight for legislation that supported gay rights and against any that posed a threat to its advancement, and the deliberate expansion of its reach beyond the gay community by building coalitions with other gay and non-gay organizations, even reaching across party lines. While it expressed willingness to work with Republicans, it painted itself as antithetical to the rise of the New Right, a burgeoning conservative Christian political and cultural movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Ultimately, the GRNL was an effort headed by its founder and Executive Director, Steve Endean, to give political clout to the gay rights movement in Congress and build an effective and expansive gay rights lobby.

³ Frank, Miriam. *Out in the union: A labor history of Queer America*. Temple University Press, 2014.

⁴ Hirshman, Linda R. "Chapter 5: The Good Gays Fight the Four Horseman: Crazy, Sinful, Criminal, and Subversive." *Victory: The Triumphant Gay Revolution*. 1st ed. New York: Harper, 2012.

1976: Beginnings

Limited resources are available regarding the GRNL prior to 1978. What the GRNL did within that time could perhaps be the subject of another study by a researcher with a greater access to resources than myself. The majority of my primary sources come from the Gale Primary Sources Archives of Sexuality and Gender online. My primary hypothesis for the GRNL's relative inactivity until 1978 is that the organization was unable to lobby simply because it did not have a lobbyist.



From *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 1 Issue 5, page 4.

According to the autobiography of the GRNL's former Executive Director Steve Endean, a man named David Goodstein, the owner of the LGBT news magazine *The Advocate*, called together a closed-door meeting with Endean and other gay activists to establish the GRNL in spring of 1976. It would seem from Endean's autobiography that although the organization was founded in 1976, it was not in full operation until 1978, although that is not entirely clear.⁵ An article in the *Chicago Gay Life* periodical reveals the organization's existence was first

⁵ Endean, S. (2006). *Bringing Lesbian and Gay Rights into the Mainstream: Twenty Years of Progress* (V. L. Eaklor, Ed.). Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 313.

announced at a gay rights conference sponsored by *The Advocate* that same year in 1976. In August of that same year, the organization was formally active in Washington, D.C.⁶

In 1978, the GRNL brought on Steve Endean as its executive director and first full-time lobbyist.⁷ Endean attended high school in Bloomington, a suburb of Minneapolis, and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in political science.⁸ At age 21, he realized he was gay. He did his best to repress his sexuality and began his foray into politics working on the gubernatorial campaign for Wendell Anderson soon after graduating. Eventually, he embraced his sexuality and attempted to contact the local chapter of the Mattachine Society, but learned Minneapolis did not have a chapter. His search led him to the Gay House, one of the first drop-in centers for LGBT+ people in the nation. Involving himself in the center's day-to-day operations, he soon found himself the Board Chair of the Gay House. From this vantage point, Endean quickly rose through the ranks of Minneapolis' gay community and founded the Gay Legislative Rights Committee, the first gay and lesbian⁹ political group in Minnesota, marking the beginnings of his entry into the world of gay politics. Endean would go on from here to lobby in the Minnesota State Legislature on behalf of gay rights, lead the fight against the repeal of a St. Paul city ordinance that made discrimination against gay its citizens illegal, and serve on the board of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF).¹⁰ Unfortunately, Endean lost the battle to save the ordinance, whose opposition included notable contemporary anti-gay activist Anita Bryant.¹¹

⁶ "Gay Rights Lobby Forming in DC." *Chicago Gay Life* 2, no. 4 (1976): 2. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed November 11, 2019).

⁷ "Gay Rights National Lobby Appoints Executive Director." *Lambda News* 3, no. 11 (1978): 4. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed November 11, 2019).

⁸ Endean, 313.

⁹ The term "gay and lesbian" is used in this paper because that is term used by the GRNL and Endean before the advent of the LGBT+ acronym. Endean stated that he preferred the term over the lone word "gay" as he felt it to be sexist (Endean, 12).

¹⁰ Endean, 9-13, 311-313.

¹¹ Endean, 21.

But Endean was ready to take what he had learned from his prior successes and failures and start the first gay lobbying organization in the United States.

Endean's arrival to the GRNL also marked the advent of *Capitol Hill*, the organization's quarterly newsletter. Much like LGBT+ organizations today use email and social media to keep their supporters informed, *Capitol Hill* was the GRNL's lifeline to its members across the country. It was how the GRNL articulated its political philosophy, how it justified its actions to its supporters to dissidents, and, most importantly, integral to how the GRNL funded and sustained itself.

In December of 1978, the GRNL put out its first Executive Director's Report, written by Steve Endean. The letter to the GRNL's constituency celebrated the gay community's victories over the past, most notably the defeat of anti-gay legislation in California and Seattle. Endean mourned the death of Harvey Milk, the famed gay politician, elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1978 before his assassination later that year.¹² Endean revealed that a major contribution to the organization had been delayed, and pleaded with the members to renew their memberships or gift a contribution to the organization. This would be the first of many such pleas.¹³

Capitol Hill's first issue has not been digitized. However, in its second issue, which covered the organization's work from December 1978 to January 1979, it is clear that the GRNL was ready to hit the ground running, touching on contemporary political issues and encouraging grassroots organizing among members. The newsletter urged its members and others in the gay

¹² Newton-Matza, Mitchell. *Disasters and Tragic Events: An Encyclopedia of Catastrophes in American History*, 507-512. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2014. Accessed June 28, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹³ Documents. January 24, 1978-1982; n.d. MS Box 54, Folder 2, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin: 8: Organizations, Committees, Coalitions, 1964- [1997]. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed December 12, 2019).

community to write their legislators in favor of gay rights in a directed effort to form a “constituent network.” The GRNL was also transparent about its own funding issues and those faced by gay political organizations at large. This is a recurring lament throughout the issues of *Capitol Hill*.¹⁴ As the organization’s financial records were not accessible, it is uncertain whether this was genuinely the truth or merely a fundraising strategy, but it would not be surprising if the organization was struggling financially, given the relative dearth of openly-gay people in American society at large (especially when comparing the number of LGBT+ at the time of GRNL’s founding compared with the number of LGBT+ people in the modern era), and the fact that LGBT+ people are generally poorer than their heterosexual cisgender counterparts.¹⁵ However, Endean notes in his autobiography that the GRNL raised \$20,000 in their first year, with the budget seeming to virtually double every year for the next five years.¹⁶

The second issue of *Capitol Hill* further stressed that recent elections had gone well for the gay community, and that all but one of the co-sponsors of their Gay Civil Rights Bill was reelected to the United States Congress. The bill was perhaps the highest goal of the GRNL during the years it was active - updates are given on its status nearly every issue, and tools were developed to lobby the bill to legislators and rationalize their support for it to their constituents. Several newly-elected gay-friendly members joined Congress as well, although some congresspersons who had voted against the anti-gay McDonald Amendment were lost. This issue also covered the infamous California proposition 6, also known as the “Briggs Initiative.” Inspired by similar initiatives led by Anita Bryant and made into law in Arkansas, Florida, and

¹⁴ "Capitol Hill December 1978-January 1979 Vol. 1 Issue. 2." *Capitol Hill*, December 1978-January 1979. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed Dec 12, 2019), 1, 3.

¹⁵ Badgett, M.V. Lee, Laura E Durso, and Alyssa Schneebaum. *New Patterns of Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community*. EScholarship, University of California, 2013.

¹⁶ Endean, 80.

Oklahoma, a Republican state senator from California by the name of Johnathan Briggs put forth a proposition intended to ban gay and lesbian teachers from teaching in classrooms.¹⁷ *Capitol Hill* celebrated the propositions' defeat as a victory for the gay community, losing by over a million votes, and notably opposed by both President Jimmy Carter and then-governor of California Ronald Regan.¹⁸ Regan did not favor the initiative because he believed that it could be harmful. "What if an overwrought youngster," said Regan in a press release, "disappointed by bad grades, imagined it was the teacher's fault and struck out by accusing the teacher of advocating homosexuality? Innocent lives could be ruined."¹⁹

Notable to the GRNL's success and survival during its years was its willingness and to work with other organizations and its calculated effort to secure the support of high-profile non-gay organizations. The GRNL stated in its second issue of *Capitol Hill* that its intent in doing so was to build a broad coalition of actors in and out of the gay community that support pro-gay legislation. At this point, the GRNL had met with high-caliber public interest groups like Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Here, GRNL Executive Director and lobbyist Steve Endean acknowledged that the political slant of these groups was predominantly liberal, but that the GRNL would nevertheless be "seeking the support of those conservatives who believe in less government intrusion in the private lives of individuals."²⁰ It is notable here that the GRNL did not view itself as a strictly partisan organization; while support for gay rights has been construed as being a generally liberal view (especially at this point in time), the lobby recognized that

¹⁷ Liechtenstein, Grace. 1977. "California Homosexuals Prepare for Schools Battle." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, August 8, 35; "Our History." Accessed July 8, 2020. <http://www.logcabin.org/about-us/our-history/>.

¹⁸ *Capitol Hill*, December 1978-January 1979, 1-2.

¹⁹ "Regan Says Prop. 6 Could Be Harmful," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 23, 1978, 7.

²⁰ *Capitol Hill*, December 1978-January 1979, 2.

every ally it made ensured its continued progress and longevity. That is not to say there were no conservative Republicans at this point in time; the Log Cabin Republicans, a LGBT Republican political organization, were founded in 1977 in California in response to the aforementioned Briggs initiative.²¹ However, at this point in time, it was even difficult to court liberals, as the majority of Americans in a 1970 poll - over 73.5 percent - believed that homosexuals should not be around children because they were pedophilic by nature. In a 1977 poll, it was found that Americans believed simultaneously that homosexuals were the most discriminated against, but that they should not receive legal protections to shield them from said discrimination.²²

The GRNL asked for documented evidence of discrimination against its gay readers, be it in the hiring process, becoming a homeowner, etc. They also urged their readers to submit any documents that demonstrated that members of Congress were not ousted solely for their support of gay rights alone. These documents would form the basis for future materials that the GRNL would use to lobby congresspersons. The GRNL also launched its monthly pledge club in this issue.²³

Volume 1, Issue 3 came with a letter from executive director Steve Endean attached, the second Executive Director's Report, which further stressed the issue of fundraising. The letter opened on a high note, with Endean addressing GRNL members on all of the positive gains the organization was seeing, including new co-sponsors for their gay civil rights bill, a satisfying number of GRNL members renewing their memberships, and the GRNL's effort to pressure the

²¹ "Our History." Accessed July 8, 2020. <http://www.logcabin.org/about-us/our-history/>.

²² De Boer, Connie. "The Polls: Attitudes Toward Homosexuality." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1978): 265-76. Accessed June 29, 2020; see also: Loftus, Jeni. "America's Liberalization in Attitudes toward Homosexuality, 1973 to 1998." *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 5 (2001): 762-82. Accessed July 11, 2020; Yang, Alan S. "Trends: Attitudes Toward Homosexuality." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (1997): 477-507. Accessed July 11, 2020.

²³ *Capitol Hill*, December 1978-January 1979, 3-4.

Democratic Party to include gay rights in their party platform.²⁴ Endean apologized for this issue being delayed, stating that the reasons for its postponement included that they were waiting for the re-introduction of their gay civil rights bill into the House of Representatives, and the fact that the GRNL only had one staff member at the time, which was presumably Endean himself. Endean stresses the need to increase funding in order for the organization to hire more personnel and have a greater capacity to fulfill not only lobbying but outreach functions, asking for members to refer friends and family for membership, and speaking of his dream of a “large, well-funded, and increasingly professional lobbying effort for gay civil rights.” He noted, however, that he recognized that for readers “it [was] depressing to constantly hear about the financial plight of the organization.”²⁵ While the GRNL may have never come to fruition as the powerful pro-gay lobbying organization that Endean envisioned, the Human Rights Campaign Fund, which Endean would later head, arguably fulfilled Endean’s dream.

Capitol Hill’s third issue opened by profiling the new federal gay civil rights bill reintroduced by progressive Representatives Henry Waxman (D–CA) and Theodore S. Weiss (D–NY). The issue notes that in the past it had been difficult to secure even one sponsor for the civil rights bill, but that they now had multiple freshman co-sponsors. The GRNL cited these new co-sponsors and voters’ opposition to California’s Proposition 6 as evidence that the political tide was turning in their favor. When reintroducing it, the representatives changed the language in one section of the bill from “affectional or sexual preference” to “affectional or sexual orientation.” Gay rights groups had lobbied for this change because they believed that the

²⁴ Documents. January 24, 1978-1982; n.d. MS Box 54, Folder 2, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin: 8: Organizations, Committees, Coalitions, 1964- [1997]. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*. Accessed May 15, 2020.

²⁵ Ibid.

earlier wording had implied that sexuality was a choice.²⁶ From the advent of the Mattachine Society in the 1950s to the birth of the Gay Liberation movement in 1969, gay activists at the gay community at large had spent the past two decades fighting for the recognition of homosexuality as a distinct marginalized identity rather than simply an action or behavior one performed.²⁷ The bill, House Resolution 2074, “[p]rohibit[ed] the discrimination on the basis of an individual's affectional or sexual orientation in Federally assisted programs, employment, or housing.”²⁸ It would have essentially prevented public institutions and services from discriminating against someone on the basis of sexuality.

This issue also includes a profile of the “anti-gay” lobby Christian Voice. *Capitol Hill* describes Christian Voice as the “first active lobby against gay rights at the federal level.”²⁹ Christian Voice was working with the anti-gay organization Protect America’s Children, led by high-profile anti-gay activist Anita Bryant from Edmond, Oklahoma.³⁰ Despite acknowledging that explicitly anti-gay groups were growing in number, the GRNL asserted that polls demonstrated that support for gay rights was growing, however, it did not cite specific polls. The GRNL mentioned that it would be using the documents it asked for in the previous issue to construct a study of electoral outcomes to prove that congresspersons supporting gay rights was not “political suicide.”³¹ They stress that they desire to see support for gay rights in both party

²⁶ *Capitol Hill*, April 1979 Vol. 1 Issue 3, 1-2.

²⁷ Meeker, Martin. "Behind the mask of respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and male homophile practice, 1950s and 1960s." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 1 (2001): 78-116; Jay, Karla, and Allen Young, eds. *Out of the closets: Voices of gay liberation*. NYU Press, 1992; Valocchi, Stephen. "Collective action frames in the gay liberation movement, 1969–1973." *Frames of protest: Social movements and the framing perspective* (2005): 53-67.

²⁸ Weiss, T. (1979, February 08). H.R.2074 - 96th Congress (1979-1980): Civil Rights Amendments Act of 1979. Retrieved June 28, 2020.

²⁹ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 1 Issue 3, 3.

³⁰ Johnson, Emily Suzanne S. "God, Country, and Anita Bryant: Women’s Leadership and the Politics of the New Christian Right." *Religion and American Culture* 28, no. 2 (2018): 238-68.

³¹ *Ibid.*

platforms. They also express the need for more volunteers and staff, but especially staff, closing by asking their readers “Isn’t it time [for a lobby]?”³²

Unlike the third issue, whose intro optimistically analyzed the new gay rights bill in the House, issue five opens with alarm, covering the threat of new anti-gay legislation. House Concurrent Resolution 166 was introduced by Representative Larry McDonald, a conservative Democrat from Georgia, stating that he drafted this legislation at the urging of Christian Voice. The resolution, which referred to homosexuality as “man’s own abomination against God,” was critical of the gay rights movement for attempting to normalize what was a sin, and called for “consensual sodomy and other homosexual acts” to be outlawed.³³ Laws forbidding sodomy were common in states across the United States until 2003, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Lawrence v. Texas* that such laws were unconstitutional.³⁴ The GRNL warned that this resolution was only the beginning of coordinated national opposition to HR 2074, their Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Bill. *Capitol Hill* enumerated a five-point plan to challenge this legislation, the first step being for readers to write their congresspersons a letter expressing their opposition to the new legislation. The second step was for members to recruit ten of their friends to do the same, and the third step was to then submit the contact information of those friends or others willing to support the cause to the GRNL. This sort of friend-to-friend recruitment system illustrates how integral grassroots organizing and community-based activism was to the GRNL’s larger strategy. Endean himself lamented in his autobiography over the gay community’s lack of grassroots activism, fearing that constituents would never be able to write their congresspersons and

³² Ibid, 4.

³³ "Capitol Hill: The Newsletter of the Gay Rights National Lobby 1979 Vol. 1 Issue. 5." *Capitol Hill*, 1979. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*, 3. Accessed May 20, 2020.

³⁴ *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).

advocate for gay rights with the same fervor that conservatives did.³⁵ The fourth and fifth steps involved contacting local gay rights advocacy organizations and “community leaders,” and asking those groups and organizations to write their congresspersons.³⁶ *Capitol Hill* put out these sorts of calls to grassroots, community-based action often during its four-year run. LGBT+ rights organizations still rely heavily on community-based activism to this day. The GRNL also encouraged participation in and endorsed the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which took place on October 14, 1979 and saw a turnout of between 75,000 and 125,000 attendees,³⁷ as a method of demonstrating opposition to McDonald’s anti-gay legislation. They further asked that attendees of the march stay in Washington D.C. and try to speak with their congresspersons afterwards to express their opposition.³⁸

However, this wide-scale demonstration for gay rights drew attention from conservatives. Reverend Jerry Falwell, a conservative televangelist and activist, formed his own lobby, the “Moral Majority,” which stood in staunch opposition to homosexuality. Anthropologist Susan Friend Harding characterizes Falwell as “an omnipresent spokesman and activist for the New Christian Right” who was “was also intent on cultural reform.”³⁹ Falwell was the architect of the evangelist and fundamentalist foray into the world of American politics, bringing the conservative movement that precipitated Ronald Reagan’s election into the mainstream, and the Moral Majority was his vehicle with which to do so.⁴⁰ Another minister, Pastor John Jimenez, formed a similar lobby called “One Nation Under God.” This lobby organized an anti-gay march

³⁵ Endean, S. (2006). *Bringing Lesbian and Gay Rights Into the Mainstream*, 1-2.

³⁶ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 1 Issue 5, 1.

³⁷ Ghaziani, Amin. 2008. *The Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work in Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington*. The University of Chicago Press.

³⁸ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 1 Issue 5, 3.

³⁹ Harding, Susan Friend. *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 10.

⁴⁰ Hendershot, Heather. 2004. *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

as a counter-protest to the March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights, to take place on April 29, 1980. Jimenez characterized the march as “an enormous moral awakening” and “tak[ing] the body of Christ to Washington.”⁴¹ The entry of Christian fundamentalism into mainstream American politics as a response to the growing visibility and (though still small) rising political clout of the gay and lesbian civil rights movement in America is a microcosm of the American culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. Film and television glorified the patriotism and machismo emblematic of the Reagan era, while popular culture among youth, exemplified by channels such as MTV, was deemed by conservatives to be antithetical to Christian values. Meanwhile, the advent of the AIDS crisis generated greater scrutiny from conservatives and moderates toward homosexuals, who associated the spread of the disease with the homosexual lifestyle.⁴²

The GRNL profiled the upcoming “Third World Lesbian/Gay Conference,” taking place in Washington D.C. and organized by the National Gay Task Force and the National Coalition of Black Gays. It is interesting to see that the GRNL’s activities and partners were not solely concerned with the rights and experiences of white gays and lesbians and seemed to be interested in working with coalitions of queer BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).⁴³ This concern for the experiences of nonwhite gays and lesbians is further evidenced by this issue’s coverage of Senator Alan Cranston of California’s efforts to help Zenaida Porte Rebutan, a

⁴¹ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 1 Issue 5, 5.

⁴² Hartman, A. (2015). *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

⁴³ BIPOC is a modern term used to help delineate the lived experiences of non-white peoples in the U.S. and other majority-white countries. It would not have been used during the lifespan of the GRNL. See also: Dei, G. J. S. "The intersections of race, class, and gender in the anti-racism discourse." *Rethinking society in the 21st century: Critical readings in sociology* (2008): 32-43; Reingold, Beth, and Adrienne R. Smith. "Welfare policymaking and intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender in US state legislatures." *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 1 (2012): 131-147; Tompkins, Kyla Wazana. "Intersections of race, gender, and sexuality: Queer of color critique." *Cambridge companion to gay and lesbian literature* (2015): 173-189.

Filipina lesbian who had been denied entry to the United States on the basis of her sexuality under a provision that listed homosexuality as a “psychopathic tendency” and a “mental defect.” This received a great deal of attention and criticism from gay rights and immigration activists and organizations.⁴⁴ The *Capitol Hill* article covering the case featured quotes from Endean in which he equated Rebutan’s legal battle with the worldwide struggles of homosexuals and institutionalized homophobia within political and legal systems.⁴⁵ It would seem that the GRNL’s operations were not quite as narrow or insular as one might assume given that its leadership was majority-white, and seems to perhaps have lacked BIPOC entirely among its upper echelons when examining available resources. Endean lamented in his autobiography over the gay rights movement’s lack of inclusivity, particularly in regards to “racial minorities, ... women, and the economically disadvantaged.”⁴⁶ Perhaps his observations of the movement’s shortcomings in these areas led him to build broader coalitions with women and BIPOC, not only domestically, but internationally.

It would seem that this issue was released around the time that memberships were expiring. It included a column stating that the membership renewal rate was satisfactory, but asked those who had not yet renewed to please do so, and asked those that had already renewed to pledge a monthly donation. Endean was quoted urging members to renew and donate, reminding readers of the imminent threat that Christian Voice and Anita Bryant posed. Beneath this column, a brief paragraph described the success of its membership referral request from previous issues. These referrals had resulted in a net increase in membership, and it asked that

⁴⁴ Turner, W. B. (1995). “Lesbian/Gay Rights and Immigration Policy: Lobbying to End the Medical Model.” *Journal of Policy History*, 7(02), 208–225. doi:10.1017/s0898030600004243

⁴⁵ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 1 Issue 5, 4.

⁴⁶ Endean, 2.

readers continue to send in the contact information of friends and family who they thought may be interested in becoming a new member.⁴⁷

Perhaps most notable in this issue is page 6, wherein the lobby first enumerates its organizational and political objectives within *Capitol Hill*. They stressed that lobbying was becoming increasingly more important in American politics, and reiterated that they were the only organization at the time lobbying full-time on behalf of gay and lesbian civil rights. This researcher was unable to find resources that directly refute this claim, but it is certainly possible that GRNL portrayed itself in this way as a fundraising tactic, and it should not necessarily be taken as the outright truth. There were many other American LGBT+ organizations in existence at this time, and it is difficult to believe that none of them would take an interest in lobbying.

Expounding on their operations, the GRNL articulated on this page not only the functions it performed at that time, but those that it hoped to carry out in the future. They clarified that they worked not only to promote pro-gay legislation, but fight anti-gay laws as they arose, killing them before they were enacted. The GRNL revealed it would conduct research into issues like instances of homophobic discrimination and how support for gay rights affects incumbency providing info to members of congress, using this research to develop lobbying literature and inform their discussions with members of Congress.

Beyond their lobbying operations, the GRNL committed to “[b]uilding coalitions with other public interest organizations,” like the ADA, NOW, and labor unions like the AFL-CIO and the SEIU.⁴⁸ This strategy was an integral factor in ensuring that the GRNL’s power and influence expanded beyond lobbying and the Beltway. The GRNL also expressed its desire to create a comprehensive grassroots organizing system of members, non-members, and other

⁴⁷ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 1 Issue 5, 5.

⁴⁸ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 1 Issue 5, 6; Frank, *Out in the Union*, 85.

groups and organizations, gay and straight alike. The GRNL further pledged to utilize *Capitol Hill*, the Executive Director's Report, and "Congressional Action Alerts"⁴⁹ to notify its members of the goings-on in Washington related to the fight for gay rights and against homophobia. This overview of the GRNL's objectives, method, and mission, which would reappear in later issues, closed with a call for readers to become members and donate to the GRNL so that it may fulfill the functions it listed.

Volume 2, Issue 3 of *Capitol Hill* built upon this overview, opening with Executive Director Steve Endean, briefing Congress on lesbian and gay rights.⁵⁰ *Capitol Hill* somewhat acerbically accused Christian Voice of being a "puppet of the New Right."⁵¹ An account of Endean's travels across the country to build support and raise funds for the GRNL can be found within this issue.⁵² Endean traveled for three weeks to 15 cities across the Atlantic Coast, Midwest, Texas, and the Pacific Coast. This issue also features a profile of a group that arose in opposition to the legislation sponsored by the GRNL, entitled "Americans Against HR 2074," a group that began a mailing campaign to challenge HR 2074, warning congresspersons that it would create a slippery slope leading mandatory gay weddings and gay teachers in schools. Endean expressed concern at this mail-in campaign, noting that it was part of a growing concerted effort of homophobic mail being sent to members of Congress. The GRNL stressed the importance of the upcoming 1980 elections and voiced its intentions to create a "defense kit" to help politicians navigate dealing with criticism regarding their support for gay rights in the

⁴⁹ Vol. 1 Issue 5, 6.

⁵⁰"Capitol Hill 1980 Vol. 2 Issue. 3." *Capitol Hill*, [May 1980]. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*. Accessed June 29, 2020.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 2.

⁵² *Ibid*, 3.

upcoming election season. The GRNL was also considering the formation of a political action committee, or PAC.

Volume 2, Issue 4 issue, pivots from anxieties regarding the upcoming election and opens on a victorious note, as the Democratic Party had finally adopted gay civil rights as a plank of its party platform. This plank had been conceived by the GRNL and subsequently increased their political clout. Upon reading the 1980 Democratic Party platform, it appears there is only one sentence that mentions sexual orientation: “All groups must be protected from discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, language, age, sex or sexual orientation.”⁵³ While the inclusion of sexual identity appears to perhaps be somewhat of an afterthought, it was nevertheless a victory in the eyes of the GRNL and many in the gay community to be mentioned at all. The gay liberation movement had only properly begun a little over a decade prior with the Stonewall Riots.⁵⁴ While gay liberationists were more concerned with fundamentally transforming societal institutions, such as gender, marriage, and the nuclear family, it would appear that Endean and the GRNL’s philosophy was more akin to the assimilationist policies that arose in the late 1990s.⁵⁵ The GRNL dove into more depth in this issue on its study of the electoral outcomes for politicians who supported gay rights, arguing that it did not negatively impact their chances of winning. The lobby elucidated how it utilized this research to attempt to persuade legislators to support gay and lesbian civil rights and throw their weight behind HR 2074. This included the creation of a “self-defense” booklet to instruct legislators on how to deal

⁵³ 1980 Democratic Party Platform. (1980, August 11). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/1980-democratic-party-platform>

⁵⁴ Duberman, Martin Bauml. *Stonewall: The Definitive Story of the LGBTQ Rights Uprising that Changed America*. Plume, 2019.

⁵⁵ Walter, A. (2018). *Come Together: The Years of Gay Liberation (1970-73)*. London: Verso.

with criticism and backlash from their constituents after coming out publicly in favor of gay rights,⁵⁶ which the lobby had expressed a desire to create in the previous issue.

The GRNL expressed surprise at what appeared to be statements in *The Washington Post* indicating a minor degree of support from the Reverend Jerry Falwell, leader of the anti-gay lobby the Moral Majority. In the article, Falwell stated that he believed that it was possible to support “the civil rights of homosexuals without condoning their lifestyle.”⁵⁷ Because of these comments, Endean claimed he personally reached out to Falwell, hoping to discuss the issue of supporting gay rights.⁵⁸ It does not appear that Falwell ever responded, but nevertheless, Endean’s attempt to reach out is evidence that the GRNL’s commitment to work across party lines was genuine, or at the very least it was politically expedient to the GRNL’s cause of protecting and expanding gay civil rights.

Later in the issue, the GRNL indicated they were looking to hire a west coast organizer. This expansion of the extent of their functioning would be very beneficial to the GRNL’s lobbying capacity, membership outreach, and growth.⁵⁹ But the most significant news in this issue was the announcement on the very last page that Endean had gone on to found the Human Rights Campaign Fund.⁶⁰ Now simply known as the Human Rights Campaign, the organization is the largest LGBT+ advocacy group and political lobby in the United States.⁶¹ Endean did not know it at the time, but he would eventually leave the GRNL to head the HRC, and, after years of funding troubles, the GRNL would be absorbed into the HRC.

⁵⁶"Capitol Hill: The Newsletter of the Gay Rights National Lobby 1980 Vol. 2 Issue. 4." *Capitol Hill*, [September 1980]. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed June 29, 2020), 1, 3.

⁵⁷ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 2 Issue 4, Ibid, 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Crowley, C. (2007). Democratic hopefuls pressed on gay issues at forum. Retrieved June 05, 2020, from <https://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/08/10/gay.forum/>

Compared to the previous entries, Volume 2, Issue 5 of *Capital Hill* opens with despair, coming shortly after Ronald Reagan's first presidential win and after an influx of new Republicans into Congress, and describing the results as "disappointing."⁶² Gay-friendly progressive senators had been ousted by conservative challengers, many of whom were freshmen backed by the Moral Majority and other "New Right" groups, who mixed political and religious messages to mobilize middle-class American Christians.⁶³ Barbara Ehrenreich characterized these groups as having "the traditional conservative themes: militarism, anticommunism, and the need to shrink the role of government to make way for truly 'free' enterprise."⁶⁴ The GRNL assuaged that circumstances were better in the House of Representatives, where only two of the 51 representatives who supported HR 2074 had been voted out. Endean is quoted toward the end of this article warning against panic and despair, but from the tone of this article, there must have been a general atmosphere of fear among the gay and lesbian community over these Republican gains. Anxieties over escalating Cold War tensions and the general loss of confidence in President Carter regarding the Iran hostage crisis marked a conservative shift in the realm of American politics.⁶⁵

However, this issue was not entirely laden with pessimism, as there was still lingering excitement over the fact that on October 10, 1980, in San Francisco, California, HR 2074, the GRNL-backed "gay rights bill," had its first Congressional hearing before the Employment Opportunities Subcommittee of the House Committee on Education and Labor.⁶⁶ At this hearing,

⁶² "Capitol Hill 1980 Vol. 2 Issue. 5." *Capitol Hill*, 1980. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*, 1. Accessed June 5, 2020.

⁶³ Elwood, *Power in the Blood*, 54.

⁶⁴ Ehrenreich, Barbara. 1990. *Fear of falling: The inner life of the middle class*. New York: Harper Perennial, 162.

⁶⁵ See: Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Cold War: a new history*. Penguin, 2006; Houghton, David Patrick, and Houghton David Patrick. *US foreign policy and the Iran hostage crisis*. Vol. 75. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁶⁶ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 2 Issue 5, 2.

Ray Hartman, a Co-Chair of the GRNL's Board, argued that support for gay rights was growing stronger, citing an NBC/Associated Press poll in which 49% of respondents were in favor of extended legal protections against housing and employment discrimination for gays and lesbians, whereas only 27% of those polled were openly opposed. A reverend, who had fired his organist for being homosexual and was subsequently met with a discrimination suit, testified against the bill, arguing that "it would discriminate against 'morality.'"⁶⁷ The GRNL noted that, while it took the very fact that there was a hearing as a success, it was worried about the reality that, even in a historically gay city, the majority of those from the public in attendance were there to express their opposition to the bill. Additional concerns included the complete and total mainstream media blackout of the event, with only regional gay and lesbian newsletters covering the hearing, and that the questions asked by the Minority Counsel seemed to be largely inflammatory in nature. Endean noted that he expected additional hearings would be held on the bill in legislative sessions in the near future.

Another victory for the GRNL at this time was its hiring of a West Coast Regional Field Director, the position advertised in the previous issue of *Capitol Hill*. Board Co-Chair Ray Hartman described the hiring as "an idea whose time had come."⁶⁸ The new hire, Kerry Woodward, was expected to be the first of eight such positions intended to bring the GRNL's national operations down to a more local organizing scale, engaged with grassroots constituents. Her position oversaw the lobby's operations in Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. Endean closed this hiring announcement by stating that future Regional Field Directors would be hired as the funds to support them arose, and asked that readers who valued the idea contribute money to a special fund for more directors.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 2 Issue 5, 3.

The next article in this issue covered television advertisements by Christians for Reagan, a subsidiary of Christian Voice, that warned of homosexuals in San Francisco and New York “flexing their political muscle”⁶⁹ by electing gay-friendly mayors. The advertisements attacked President Jimmy Carter for “cater[ing] to homosexual demands” via his support of gay civil rights, and presented Ronald Reagan as supporting “the traditional American family.”⁷⁰ The advertisements ran in conservative states in the five days prior to the 1980 election, and the Reagan campaign denied any involvement in their production or airing.

If this vocally anti-gay constituency was integral to Reagan’s victory against the incumbent president, it begs the question if Reagan’s desire to cater to this constituency could have factored into his administration’s poor response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The CDC discovered the first American cases of AIDS in the inaugural year of Reagan’s first term, 1981. Even as cases increased, the Reagan administration decreased spending on AIDS research, which had been given the derogatory moniker of “the gay plague” by homophobes due the frequency of its spread among gay men.⁷¹ Despite a rapidly growing number of cases over his eight years in office, Reagan did not give his first and only address on the matter until 1987. Earlier that year, Carter had voiced his support for the pro-gay plank in the Democratic Party’s 1980 platform, which had been introduced by the GRNL. Carter’s loss to Reagan could in part have been a referendum on this stance by anti-gay conservative nuclear family advocates. A spokesman for Christian Voice made a statement on the matter in *The Washington Post*, arguing that “there [would be] no issue which [would] cause evangelicals to defect from Carter more than this

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Fee, Elizabeth, and Daniel M. Fox. "The Contemporary Historiography of AIDS." *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 2 (1989): 303-14. Accessed July 8, 2020.

one.”⁷² Gay leaders argued that the Christians for Reagan ads deliberately misconstrued the homosexual lifestyle and the aims and objectives of the fight for gay rights.

The GRNL expressed general shock at the fact that the McDonald amendment had passed, and blamed this on the outcome of the recent election, which had favored conservatives. The lobby did qualify that this was a watered-down version of the original amendment, but nevertheless expressed concern over its passage, meeting with gay-friendly members of Congress and pleading with President Carter to veto the bill. The GRNL had expected that the amendment would be dropped in the conference committee, as had happened similarly in the past, but unexpectedly, a Republican representative fought to keep the amendment. The GRNL argued that the recent election played a role in bolstering the staying power of this amendment, stating that “the conservative sweep on November 4 was clearly on the minds of the conferees.” The initial amendment sought to deny legal services from those “promoting, protecting, and defending homosexuality.”⁷³ However, senators on the conference committee felt that such an extreme provision would cause the bill to be deemed unconstitutional in court, and as such called for a compromise and narrowed the scope of the amendment to only exclude those fighting for the “legalization of homosexuality.”⁷⁴ Endean closed the article by expressing dismay, as this was the first time any homophobic legislation had been passed in years, and stressed the need to “organize as we never have before.”⁷⁵

Volume 3, Issue 1 starts off the new volume of *Capitol Hill* (and the new legislative session) on a triumphant note, featuring the reintroduction of HR 2074 as HR 1453 with more sponsors than ever before. The GRNL asked members in this issue to begin local petition drives

⁷² *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 2 Issue 5, 3.

⁷³ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 2 Issue 5, 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

against anti-gay bills, such as the McDonald amendment, aiming to collect 250,000 signatures to illustrate the power of their constituency network to Congress.⁷⁶ The lobby also updated its study entitled “Does support for gay civil rights spell political suicide?” with new information to better inform congresspersons.⁷⁷

The next issue opened by covering a meeting of the GRNL’s board, which Board Co-Chair Ray Hartman asked Steve Endean to sit in on. The GRNL released a national action plan, urging members to form local GRNL groups. They also asked for any information on gay groups receiving federal funds to combat right-wing narratives, which warned of the horrors that would come from funding gay organizations and nonprofits. Progress had been made on the gay civil rights bill, which had been reintroduced as H.R. 1454, gaining more co-sponsors among freshmen members, and now supported by the National Coalition of Black Gays. The Moral Majority expressed outrage at the success of the bill. The lobby urged action from its constituent network to write letters and pressure their congresspersons to support H.R. 1454.⁷⁸

A significant article in this issue highlights GRNL’s and the gay community’s opposition to Charles Everett Koop appointment to Surgeon General under the Reagan administration based on homophobic remarks that Koop had made in the past.⁷⁹ Unbeknownst then to the GRNL, Koop would nevertheless be appointed and serve as Surgeon General during the AIDS crisis. His homophobic opinions may partially account for the Reagan administration’s poor handling of the AIDS epidemic among gay men.

⁷⁶"Capitol Hill: The Newsletter of the Gay Rights National Lobby 1981 Vol. 3 Issue. 1." *Capitol Hill*, [February 1981]. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed June 30, 2020), 1.

⁷⁷ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 3 Issue 1, 3.

⁷⁸"Capitol Hill 1981 Vol. 3 Issue. 2." *Capitol Hill*, [May 1981]. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed June 30, 2020), 1-3, 5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 4.

Volume 4, Issue 4 covers the 1982 congressional elections as a “tremendous” victory for gays and their allies, and a “striking defeat for moral majoritarians.”⁸⁰ Historians characterize the 1982 elections as aiding Republicans due to partisan gerrymandering, but ultimately seeing a decline in Republicans in Congress due to President Reagan’s unpopularity at the time.⁸¹ Even a candidate backed by the leader of the Moral Majority lobby, Rev. Jerry Falwell, lost in Falwell’s own hometown. All co-sponsors of the GRNL-backed gay civil rights bill were re-elected, and the GRNL argued that this further proved that pro-gay legislators were not committing “political suicide.”⁸² One hundred candidates had accepted money from the Human Rights Campaign Fund, who raised \$600,000 during the 1982 election cycle, and 81 of these candidates won.⁸³ The GRNL was excited over these results, characterizing them as a referendum on the 1980 elections, and viewing these wins as bringing in many potential new allies in Congress. They also gave themselves credit for what they felt had contributed to these electoral wins: the GRNL’s own organizing efforts, utilizing their network of grassroots activists to lobby their candidates on supporting gay rights with literature the GRNL had written. These wins raised the political stature of gay and lesbian activists nationwide, and gave the GRNL an optimistic outlook regarding the future. *Capitol Hill* also covered the founding of a new gay and lesbian think-tank in this issue. The Right to Privacy Foundation was the first such think-tank in existence, and was headed by Rick Davis, an openly-gay former lobbyist from Minnesota, much like Steve Endean. This thinktank focused its research of “skill-development training” for gays

⁸⁰“Capitol Hill: The Newsletter of the Gay Rights National Lobby 1982 Vol. 4 Issue. 4.” *Capitol Hill*, [November 1982]. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed June 30, 2020), 1.

⁸¹ Taylor, Humphrey. 1982. *Expectations for the 1982 mid-term U.S. congressional elections: An historical perspective*. New York: Louis Harris & Associates.

⁸² *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 4, Issue 4, 1.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 7.

and how to communicate the predicted effects of pro-gay legislation to the broader public, while also documenting instances of homophobic discrimination.⁸⁴

Of great historical import from this issue of *Capitol Hill* is the newsletter's profile of the contemporary state of the AIDS epidemic at the time of publication. At this point in time, 800 individuals had been diagnosed, 75% of whom were gay men, and 300 of these individuals had died. The GRNL had begun its AIDS Project the previous summer, utilizing their grassroots network to lobby members of congress and hiring a researcher to help develop lobbying literature over AIDS. This was somewhat successful and had brought several representatives and senators into the fight to fund medical research into AIDS. Because of the program's success, the GRNL wanted to increase and expand their grassroots constituency network, and as such asked those who were interested in joining to contact them for more information. In addition to lobbying legislators, the GRNL brought together various high-profile gay organizations and health organizations, including the American Public Health Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, National Association of Social Workers, and the National Hemophilia Foundation. The GRNL was somewhat worried, as they seemed to be the only lobbying organization prioritizing the AIDS epidemic. Endean urged for further medical research, calling on the government to help fund such research for what was a very serious "national health crisis."⁸⁵ The lobby stressed the need for more funding, they also noted that Congress had appropriated \$2 million in funding to the Center for Disease Control to further research AIDS, and characterized this appropriation as a win. While the GRNL may have been the only lobby fighting for research funding on behalf of the gay community in the capital, many other gay artists, activists, and activist groups were taking action in their own communities.

⁸⁴ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 4, Issue 4, 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 3.

Artist Keith Haring dealt with themes relating to the AIDS crisis in his works,⁸⁶ playwrights like Larry Kramer and Tony Kushner brought their experiences with the epidemic to life on the stage in *The Normal Heart* and *Angels in America*,⁸⁷ and avant garde activist groups like ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power, created art installations across the nation to draw attention to the epidemic.⁸⁸

The GRNL covered its own National Conference held in Washington, D.C. from November 12-14, 1982, which the Right to Privacy think-tank helped organize. This conference was held specifically to train Field Associates, which were volunteer grassroots activists, trained in lobbying and organizing and provided with lobbying kits by the GRNL. Because of the GRNL's constant funding struggles, they likely relied heavily on these volunteers to perform essential lobbying functions in their own communities. The GRNL only had 150 Field Associates at the time and expressed the need for more, asking those who were interested in joining to contact them. At this conference, the Field Associates worked with the GRNL further developing their organizing and lobbying skills. Representative Theodore Weiss (D-NY), a co-sponsor of the gay civil rights bill, gave a speech to open the conference.⁸⁹

This issue also featured a job posting for Midwest Regional Organizer. After Kerry Woodward, the former West Coast Regional Field Director left, Tanyan Corman became the new director of the new Western Field Office, which appears to be the West Coast office but expanded in scope. Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming were all states that were added to the west coast states in this new office. Corman apparently already

⁸⁶ Gruen, J., & Haring, K. (1992). *Keith Haring: The Authorized Biography*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

⁸⁷ Román, David. *Acts of Intervention: Performance, Gay Culture, and AIDS*. Unnatural Acts. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

⁸⁸ Stockdill, B. C. (2013). "ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power)." *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*. doi:10.1002/9780470674871.wbespm223

⁸⁹ *Capitol Hill*, Vol. 4, Issue 4, 4-5.

served as a Co-Chair for the HRCF, and operated as the Western Regional Field Director on a volunteer basis, which is impressive. The GRNL also began an intern program out of their Western office, and asked those interested to contact them for more information.⁹⁰

In another victory for the GRNL, they defeated a provision in a new immigration bill that would have made it more difficult for lesbians and gays to enter the United States. Like in the instance of Zenaida Rebutan's case, this provision would have made it easier to deny immigrants on the basis of their sexual orientation.⁹¹ However, while this was understandably a victory for the GRNL and queer immigrants, the bill also lost a pro-gay provision, which, while brought up in committee, was ultimately not voted on.⁹²

Conclusion

The Gay Rights National Lobby was an organization that was constantly trying to both inhabit and project the presence of an organization larger and more powerful than it was during its lifetime. Unlike its contemporary gay rights movement, the GRNL sought to utilize existing institutions, rather than reform or abolish them, to secure civil rights for gay and lesbian persons. The GRNL strived for and occasionally achieved its goals via its grassroots network. While it is unclear from examining the *Capitol Hill* newsletter how large this network actually was, the lobby nevertheless stressed the importance and need of community activism in order to fulfill its objectives. The GRNL continuously pushed for pro-gay legislation in Congress, particularly in the form of a gay civil rights bill, inspired by the civil rights movement for black Americans that had preceded it. The lobby challenged homophobic discrimination and language whenever it arose in Congress, and notified its members of any anti-gay legislation, pushing them to mail

⁹⁰ *Capitol Hill*, Vol 4 Issue 4, 5.

⁹¹ *Capitol Hill*, Vol 1 Issue 5, 4.

⁹² *Capitol Hill*, Vol 4 Issue 4, 6

their senators and representatives to challenge homophobic laws. Building coalitions with other activist groups, organizations, unions, and lobbies, the GRNL bridged the divide between queer politics and mainstream American politics. Even though they were vociferously critical of the New Right and the various conservative lobbies and organizations associated with it, they still expressed a genuine interest to work across party lines. Steve Endean was the visionary behind the GRNL; it was his dream to establish a successful and influential full-service gay lobby in Washington D.C. While he did not see this dream fully realized in the GRNL, he would when he left to lead the Human Rights Campaign Fund, which would eventually absorb the struggling GRNL.