



MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR AND COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kathie Brooks, City Manager

FROM: Michael Góngora, Commissioner

DATE: November 30, 2012

SUBJECT: Referral Item for December Commission Meeting

Please place on the December Commission meeting consent agenda a referral to the Finance Committee to discuss benefits for city employees. Please find article attached. If you have any questions please feel free to contact my aide Diana Fontani at ext 6087.

MG/df

Agenda Item C4F
Date 12-12-12

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HALLANDALE BEACH

Hallandale Beach passes 'historic' gay rights resolution

Hallandale Beach passes a resolution to offer a tax reimbursement to employees in a domestic partnership.

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BY CARLJ TEPROFF
CTEPROFF@MIAMIHERALD.COM

It's been a good couple of days for the gay rights movement.

In Maine, Maryland and Washington, voters approved gay marriage.

Wisconsin elected the nation's first openly gay U.S. senator, Tammy Baldwin.

And on Wednesday, the Hallandale Beach commission approved a measure that gay rights activists believe makes it the first city in the nation to offer a tax reimbursement to employees in a domestic partnership.

"There is movement toward equality," said Stratton Pollitzer, the deputy director of Equality Florida, the state's largest gay rights group. "I think Hallandale Beach is going to set the standard.

The tax reimbursement would offset federal taxes the employee pays on benefits for a partner.

As it stands now, any employee whose domestic partner is covered by the employee's insurance pays taxes on that benefit, said City Manager Renee Crighton. But a person who is married is exempt from paying those same taxes.

With the resolution, the city will now reimburse the employee in a domestic partnership anywhere between \$500 and \$900, said Commissioner Alexander Lewy, who sponsored the legislation.

Although it would only affect a handful of the city's more than 400 employees — costing the city about \$2,500 — leaders in the gay community say it will be a stepping stone for other cities to follow.

"We are hoping other cities will take Hallandale's lead and pass similar laws," said Tim Ross, president of The Dolphin Democrats, a gay oriented club chartered by Florida's Democratic Party.

Ross called Wednesday's resolution "historic."

In addition to the tax equity, the Hallandale Beach Commission also approved a resolution in support of marriage equality Wednesday.

Mayor Joy Cooper, who has been a proponent of equal rights, said even though the city is small — with a population of about 37,000 people — it can be the example for larger cities in South Florida and around the nation.

"It's about standing up and doing what's right," said Cooper, who was reelected mayor Tuesday.

Gay rights activist Michael Rajner said Wednesday that it takes a small city to start a larger movement.

"That's how these things work," he said. "Others will follow suit."

Pollitzer, who is often involved in equality efforts across the state, said the only other city currently considering the tax equality resolution is Miami Beach. He believes that Hallandale Beach could be the first in the nation to pass such a bill, though private corporations have offered tax breaks.

Lewy said he brought the resolution up after learning of the inequity. The city has offered benefits for

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domestic partners since 2006, but it's part of the Federal Tax Code that makes the benefit taxable.
He said while he can't change the federal tax law, he can make it better for Hallandale Beach employees.
"Why should one group have to pay taxes and another doesn't," he said "It's just not fair."
The Miami Herald staff writer Steve Rothaus contributed to this report.

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