



City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, FL 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS, Nannette Rodriguez
Tel: 305.673.7575, E-mail: nrodriguez@miamibeachfl.gov

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Miami Beach Scores a Perfect 100 on HRC's Municipal Equality Index *City Earns Top Honors for Pro-Equality Leadership*

Miami Beach, FL: The City of Miami Beach earned a perfect score of 100 points on the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index (MEI), making it the highest-ranking city in the State of Florida and the second in the country.

"I am very proud to represent a community that continues to make LGBT equality a priority," said Miami Beach Mayor Philip Levine. "I believe that our score and the steps that we have taken as a city can truly serve as a model for other communities."

The award will be presented at a ceremony on Thursday, April 3, 6 p.m. at the Miami Beach Botanical Gardens, 2000 Convention Center Drive. Mayor Levine will accept the award from HRC's State and Municipal Legislative Program Manager Whitney Lovell. Representatives from Equality Florida, SAVE Dade, and the Miami-Dade Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce will also be present.

The report on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) equality in America's cities by the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBT civil rights organization, rated 291 cities across the nation, including 15 cities in Florida. The 2013 index finds that cities across the country, including those in Florida, continued to prove that municipalities act to support equality for LGBT people, even where states and the federal government have failed to do so. The MEI was issued in partnership with the Equality Federation Institute.

The average score for Florida cities selected for rating by the MEI is 58 out of 100 points, which falls above the national average. In addition to Miami Beach's 100 point score, other Florida cities' scores ranged from 10 (Cape Coral) to 89 (Tampa).

"This score establishes that we are a model of progressive politics and can be held up as the standard for other cities around the state and the country. The city's score also lets gay, lesbian and transgendered people from all over the world know that Miami Beach is still the best place for them to live, work, and play," said Thomas Barker, chairperson, Miami Beach GLBT Business Enhancement Committee.

The Miami Beach GLBT Business Enhancement Committee advises the mayor and commission on policies and legislation to ensure equality; as such, enacted policies and legislation have secured Miami Beach a perfect 100 on the MEI. The city commission unanimously passed a human rights ordinance that protects gay, lesbian, transgender and intersex people from discrimination and establishes a domestic partner registry and

employee benefits; a Equal Benefits ordinance mandating nondiscrimination for City contactors; and a “Grossing Up Ordinance” that reimburses City employees who pay higher federal income taxes because the government does not recognize their relationships.

The Miami Beach Police Department also appointed a police liaison to the LGBT community; enacted one of the first policies in the country detailing proper police interaction with transgender people; and prioritized hate crimes prosecution.

“Miami Beach is a shining example of what cities can do for their LGBT residents,” said Cathryn Oakley, HRC legislative counsel for state and municipal advocacy and the author of the report. “City leaders went to great lengths to earn a 100 percent, something that is possible even in a state that doesn’t have the most LGBT-friendly laws.”

“Kudos to Miami Beach for garnering a 100 point rating,” said Nadine Smith, executive director of Equality Florida. “In Florida, a state that leads the South in the passage of local LGBT ordinances, the MEI has become the standard that cities strive to meet.”

“Change is possible everywhere, and the Municipal Equality Index showcases the monumental progress we’ve made. In cities and towns across America, advocates are telling their stories, organizing their friends, and changing the hearts and minds of our policymakers and neighbors,” said Rebecca Isaacs, executive director of Equality Federation. “We’re winning equality where it matters most -- in the communities we call home.”

The MEI rates cities based on 47 criteria falling under five broad categories:

- Non-discrimination laws;
- Relationship recognition;
- Municipality’s employment and contracting policies;
- Inclusiveness of city services;
- Municipal leadership on matters of equality.

The full report, including detailed scorecards for every city and a searchable database, is available online at www.hrc.org/mei.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation is the educational arm of the Human Rights Campaign, America’s largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC and the HRC Foundation strive to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

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Municipal Equality Index (MEI) OVERVIEW FACT SHEET

Key findings from the MEI create a snapshot of LGBT equality in 291 municipalities of varying sizes drawn from every state in the nation – these include the 50 state capitals, the 150 most populous cities in the country, the three largest cities in every state, the city home to each state’s largest public university, and the 25 large, 25 mid-size, and 25 small municipalities with the highest proportion of same-sex couples.

Twenty-five cities earned a perfect 100-point score and serve as shining examples of LGBT inclusivity, with excellent policies ranging from non-discrimination laws, equal employee benefits, and cutting-edge city services.

2013 MEI at a glance:

- Cities across the country achieved excellent scores, demonstrating that cities have a commitment to LGBT equality that is unbridled by regionalism and not confined to parts of the country many people assume are most LGBT friendly;
- 25 cities received perfect scores (100 points) in 2013; 11 did in 2012;
- Of cities that scored 100, 8 cities came from states without comprehensive relationship recognition and without statewide non-discrimination laws (compared to two such cities in 2012);
- 31 million people live in cities that cover trans people at the city level alone;
- In 2012 we rated 137 cities with a total population of 55,853,651; in 2013 we rated 291
- 10% of cities scored over 96 points, 25% scored over 78 points. The average score was 57 points, half of cities scored over 60 points. 25% of cities scored 35 points or fewer; and 3.5% of cities scored 10 points or fewer.
- Cities tended to have higher scores where the city was selected for having a high proportion of same-sex couples, and the presence of openly LGBT city officials and LGBT police liaisons tended to be correlated with higher scores.

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