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## As Pride Comes To A Close, Let's Not Forget Why We Stepped Out

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Hi Troy,

When I first stepped into public office as Alabama's first openly gay elected official, I carried with me the spirit of resistance that defined the Stonewall Uprising.

Coming out in the state legislature wasn't easy. I received hate mail, threats, and plenty of sideways glances from colleagues who had never knowingly worked with a queer person. But I chose to live openly because I believed then, as I do now, that truth is powerful, and that living it publicly can change hearts and minds.

My journey into activism began with a spark in the mid-1970s. My high school sweetheart—who would later become my husband—handed me a copy of *Ms. Magazine*, and I read about the systemic inequalities women face in this country. I was angry, I was awake, and I was ready to act. That issue led me to the National Organization for Women (NOW), where I helped found a local chapter and later served as the first president of Kentucky NOW. This work eventually took me to Washington, D.C., and then back South, where I've continued to work for justice—sometimes paid, often not, but always with a purpose. That purpose has never felt more urgent than it does right now.

We all want to love in peace and provide for our families, and that has been what drives my work for JMA. Good jobs and fair working conditions provide that foundation, not just for LGBTQ+ people, but for everyone.

But across the South and around the country, LGBTQ+ people are under renewed attack. Recent legal battles over access to gender-affirming care are reshaping how states interpret civil rights protections and could set precedents that impact access to other forms of healthcare, including Medicare and Medicaid. Meanwhile, the same lawmakers behind these efforts often support cuts to public programs and oppose worker protections and disproportionately harm the very families they claim to represent.

Working families have fought hard to win protections like anti-discrimination laws and workplace fairness policies backed up by union contracts—but progress is not permanent, and visibility alone is not protection. Keep talking to your neighbors and co-workers. Pride is not just a celebration of how far we've come, it's a commitment to keep fighting for a world where no one has to hide in order to survive.

We owe it to those who came before us, and we owe it to the young people who are watching now.

With Pride and Purpose,



**Patricia Todd**  
Southern Policy Manager

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