

# The Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus

*Lesson Plan for Digital Exhibit*

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## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

This lesson plan is designed to be covered in one to two 40-50 minute class periods. The goal is for students to understand what the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus was. Students should be able to identify the Caucus's mission, values, influential people and purpose. Moreover, after two days students should be able to address how the PA Rural Gay Caucus influenced and how it is situated within the Gay Rights Movement at that time. The goal of this lesson is to familiarize students with the Gay Rights Movement in PA. Students will be led through the lessons with primary documents, oral histories and images in order to educate them on the objectives of the lesson and to begin discussions. The use of the online exhibits will allow for students to immerse themselves in primary documents and engage in pieces that they find interesting. At the end of the lesson students will be able to expand their curiosity by asking questions and furthering their knowledge in the subject matter. All students should be able to address all of the objectives which have been listed. Also, students will be able to answer the key questions that have been asked in the beginning of the lesson. At the end of the two days students will be able to identify how the PA Rural Gay Caucus was impactful for the LGBTQ+ community and how it has impacted the Gay Rights Movement as a whole during that time.

## AUDIENCE

High schoolers, grades 9-12 (ages 14-18).

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to understand the main mission of the PA Rural Gay Caucus
2. Students will be able to understand how the PA Rural Gay Caucus impacted the Gay Rights Movement as a whole
3. Students will be able to identify major accomplishments, key people, and events that occurred because of the PA Rural Gay Caucus

## MATERIALS NEEDED FOR LESSON

- Recommended readings for teachers:
  - William Burton, and Barry Loveland. *Out in Central Pennsylvania: The History of an LGBTQ Community*. 2020.
  - Emily K. Hobson. "[LGBTQ Politics in America since 1945](#)" in Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History. Published online: 20 November 2017.
  - Lillian Faderman. *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015.
- Students will be given access to the online exhibit and background information which they will be able to utilize throughout the lesson
  - Link to website: <https://www.centralpalgbthistory.org/the-pennsylvania-rural-gay-caucus.html>
- Students will have access to the objective questions and discussion questions while completing the lesson activities
- Paper (to brainstorm, write, and/or draw)
- Writing utensil(s)
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils

## ACTIVITY & QUESTIONS

*Introduction:* This exhibit and lesson plan will explore the story of the creation of the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus and the accomplishments of the organization; including important people, the first gay education or lobby day, the first series of statewide conferences for LGBTQ+ people and several important public demonstrations for LGBTQ+ rights.

*Main questions:*

- Why was the PA Rural Gay Caucus created?

- How can the PA Rural Gay Caucus be situated into the broader LGBTQ+ movement?
- What were the key events, people, and mission of the PA Rural Gay Caucus?

*Prior knowledge worth having:*

- The state of the LGBTQ+ community in the 1960s and 1970s
- Prior events leading up to the creation of the PA Rural Gay Caucus
- Knowing that PA is traditionally conservative
- What is a caucus?
  - In this case, it is an informal group composed of individuals with shared concerns or interests with the purpose of advising legislators.
- What policies were challenging for LGBTQ+ communities in rural PA?
  - In 1972, same-sex activity was legalized, but it wasn't until 1995 that all laws against sodomy were repealed.
  - Same-sex marriages were not legalized until May 2014, but regionally "domestic partnerships" were legal. Technically, there are no prohibitions against same-sex couples adopting children.
  - Pennsylvania created an anti-hate crime law that included protections for LGBTQ+ people in 2002, but it was repealed by PA Supreme Court in 2008 on a technicality. Further attempts to create an anti-hate crime law have failed.
  - In 1975, Pennsylvania became the first U.S. state in which an executive order was issued providing for discrimination protection on the basis of sexual orientation in state government employment. In 1978, this protection was extended to employees and students at state universities in PA. Some municipalities in PA have passed local ordinances providing for protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation, and a few based on gender identity.
  - As recent as May 2021, there were still actions to repeal existing anti-LGBTQ+ laws

***Day one:***

Activity: Students will have time to explore and interact with the digital exhibit and have a discussion based on the main questions. They will also analyze a primary source document that is part of the LGBT Collection at Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections.

- Why was the PA Rural Gay Caucus created?
- How can the PA Rural Gay Caucus be situated within the broader LGBTQ+ movement?
- What were the key events, people, and mission of the PA Rural Gay Caucus?

Primary Source Analysis: Gay Lobby Day Report, found [here](#). Questions for primary source document:

- What were the main goals of the Gay Education/Lobby Day? Did they achieve these goals?
- What did they achieve on Gay Education/Lobby Day?

***Day two:***

Main activity: Gay Lobby Day “recreation”

Students will refer back to the main questions of the day before and give a brief summary of the activity that was done the previous day. Then, using past and present anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in Pennsylvania and information on Gay Education/Lobby Day in the exhibit, students will create their own “lobby speech” or poster to present to PA legislators to make them repeal the specific law in their own version of a Gay Education Day. They should investigate anti-LGBTQ+ laws that have been repealed recently, and question how they would participate in a Gay Lobby/Education Day, and reflect on how they would convince legislators to repeal a discriminatory law.

**CLOSURE:**

Students will gain an understanding and empathy for those who participated in the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus, and reflect on how discriminatory practices continue into today.