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**Date:** February 18, 2012 12:09:17 PM EST

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Monmouth by the Shore - extremely important about your legislators

**Reply-To:** [Goldstein@GardenStateEquality.org](mailto:Goldstein@GardenStateEquality.org)

Hi, Garden State Equality members in the 11<sup>th</sup> legislative district in Monmouth by the Shore. First, a reminder that from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm tomorrow, Sunday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, in Red Bank right in the heart of your district, is Garden State Equality's member appreciation wine-and-cheese open house – totally free. Please join us at Hip and Humble Home, 58 Broad Street in Red Bank. No RSVP needed – and please bring whomever you'd like. On Sunday, this incredibly cool home furnishings store is offering a 25 percent discount to all Garden State Equality members on your purchases.

This has been some week, hasn't it – New Jersey became the third state to pass a marriage equality bill under a Governor hostile to marriage equality, and that's quite an understatement. The veto was expected. I think most of us don't feel deterred as much as we're energized by our phenomenal legislative victory and ready to override! We have two years, until the end of the legislative session in January 2014, to win the override, and you bet we will.

There was a twist here, however, that specifically relates to your

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11<sup>th</sup> legislative district, which includes Asbury Park, Ocean Grove, Neptune City, Neptune Township, Red Bank, Long Branch, West Long Branch, Allenhurst, Colts Neck, Deal, Eatontown, Freehold Borough, Freehold Township, Interlaken, Loch Arbour, Ocean Township, Shrewsbury Borough, Shrewsbury Township and Tinton Falls.

Senator Jennifer Beck, whom Garden State Equality endorsed, voted in favor of marriage equality as she promised. Assemblywoman Mary Pat Angelini, whom Garden State Equality also endorsed, was absent for the marriage equality vote. Assemblywoman Caroline Casagrande, who refused to go on the record about marriage equality last fall, and thus whom Garden State Equality could not endorse, voted no.

Before we get to Mary Pat Angelini, we'd like to say a word about Senator Beck. This go-round, Senator Beck was magnificent. She not only voted for the bill – one of two Republican Senators to do so – but she was also a lead sponsor and gave a spectacular speech for marriage equality on the Senate floor. Behind the scenes, she worked tirelessly with us and the legislative sponsors. She has also been incredibly accessible, keeping in touch with us constantly on her own volition. She has been outspoken in declaring she will vote to override.

Jen Beck has been a fantastic partner to work with. We're proud to have endorsed her.

Now about Mary Pat Angelini. We have never gotten as many calls and emails about a single state legislator before as we have gotten about Mary Pat in the not-even 48 hours since Thursday's vote. We've actually gotten more calls and emails about Mary Pat than when Sean Kean voted against marriage equality two years ago and topped it off with a remarkably insensitive speech on the Senator floor.

Overwhelmingly, the calls and emails about Mary Pat express deep pain more than anger – and they all ask what Garden State Equality will do in response.

As you know, Garden State Equality has endorsed Mary Pat from the very start of her career, including in her first election and every one thereafter. She was quite public in her support for marriage equality, and that doesn't come every day from a Republican. She was also a prime sponsor of the anti-bullying law. It would be the understatement of the year to say that Garden State Equality has put itself on the line for Mary Pat. We not only endorsed her, but we have sent volunteers to her, raised money for her, and honored her. When few other progressive organizations would even think of endorsing a Republican, we did. We bit the bullet to prove our

bipartisanship, which worked in the case of Jen Beck, and put our trust in Mary Pat.

You and we – all of us – were deeply pained by Mary Pat's absence on Thursday. Where was she? Celebrating her 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in Jamaica. Let's be clear: Our public servants are entitled to personal lives. And you won't find a couple as wonderful as Mary Pat and her husband Bob, a pro-LGBT champion in his own right whom we honored separately years ago. So our collective upset comes out of love – out of being hurt by people you love – rather than anger.

Two other Garden State Equality members and I spoke with Mary Pat the day on Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, the day before her vacation. We asked her to come back two days early – to make it in time for Thursday's vote, rather than to come back today, Saturday. It was hardly asking her to skip her wedding anniversary vacation. She would not. The reasons alternated: We had the votes anyway, she said; we also heard that if the marriage equality bill failed, it wouldn't matter because it would be voted on again in three weeks. If she were told that, we don't know why in the world she would have believed it. It reminds us of disenfranchised voters being told in the 1960s, oh, don't worry if you're busy on election day, you can vote next week.

The fact is, we could have used her vote. We won the Assembly with 42 votes, and it takes 41 votes in the Assembly to pass a bill. Mary Pat's absence may also have cost us the vote of one other Assembly Republican who got the signal that if Mary Pat didn't care enough to vote for the bill, this other Assembly member wouldn't either.

Dear members, as so many of you have told us through your avalanche of calls and emails, it shouldn't matter whether or not Mary Pat's vote was needed. She is elected to vote in the legislature, and certainly elected to vote on the biggest issues of the day – perhaps the biggest issue of all time to so many in her district like you. If you are a public servant, there are absolutely times to have personal lives. Was this really one of them, especially when the legislature will be on break in a month?

To be sure, Mary Pat represents you in one of the two most LGBT-populous districts in the state and one of the most LGBT-populous areas in the entire country. We feel your pain. We also feel a bit used – and for that, we are sorry. Last fall, Garden State Equality endorsed all six pro-marriage equality candidates running for the Senate and Assembly in your district, including all three Democrats, an independent and Senator Beck and Assemblyman Angelini. The Democrats running for state Assembly took issue, saying they would be there for us when they weren't

sure Mary Pat would be. The Democrats were right and we were wrong. One of the Democratic candidates for Assembly, Vin Gopal, is now running for Monmouth County Democratic Chair, and we want to make it up to him.

Where do we go from here? We want to hear your thoughts on Mary Pat. Email me or call me on cell, [\(917\) 449-8918](tel:9174498918), at any time. As you know, we are not about holding grudges but about building bridges. Conciliation is how we passed the marriage equality bill and that's how we will override the Governor's veto. Many of you have told us you want to see Mary Pat issue a written public statement that she will vote to override the bill, and want to meet with her to hear specifics how she will work to get other Republican legislators to vote to override. We're game – if there is such a meeting, we will let you know and invite you all.

But much of this really depends on Mary Pat. The human mind often rationalizes: Those in the wrong sometimes become defensive – as if THEY are the ones being wronged. It is a fabulous coping mechanism, so much easier than to feel badly. The ball is in Mary Pat's court. If she reaches out to us to meet, we will meet her eagerly – all of us together – to see what bridges we can build now.

We love you for all you do and we hope to see you tomorrow.

All best,  
Steven Goldstein  
Chair, Garden State Equality