



NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS



**Joint Statement of LGBT Legal and Advocacy Groups
Urging District Attorney to Try Alleged Perpetrator in Lawrence King Murder
in Juvenile Court**

As organizations defending and advocating for the rights of LGBT people, we are saddened and outraged by the murder of junior high school student Lawrence King. At the same time, we call on prosecutors not to compound this tragedy with another wrong – we call on them to treat the suspect as a juvenile, not as an adult.

The facts in this matter seem clear: one boy killed another in a climate of intolerance and fear about sexual orientation and gender expression. The alleged perpetrator, who turned 14 years old less than three weeks before the shooting, should be held accountable for his actions. But we support the principles underlying our juvenile justice system that treat children differently than adults and provide greater hope and opportunity for rehabilitation. In addition, public safety is not served by treating children as adults. According to research released by the Centers for Disease Control in 2006, children transferred to adult court are more likely to re-offend than those committing similar offenses who remain in the juvenile justice system. California law does not require District Attorneys to prosecute 14 year-olds as adults, even in circumstances such as these, and we oppose them doing so. We are issuing this joint statement because we believe so strongly in principles of justice that protect all our young people and know that, even in the face of strong emotions, we should not abandon them. We refuse to let our sense of outrage blind us to the fact that the suspect is only 14 years old.

Prosecuting the alleged perpetrator as an adult will not bring Lawrence King back nor will it make schools safer for LGBT youth. We must respond to this tragedy by strengthening our resolve to change the climate in schools, eliminate bigotry based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and hold schools responsible for protecting students against discrimination and physical harm.

Signed by: American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California; American Civil Liberties Union of San Diego and Imperial Counties; American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California; Ally Action (CA); Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE; national); Community United Against Violence (San Francisco); Different Avenues (DC); Equality California; Gay Straight Alliance Network (CA); Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD); Human Rights Campaign; LAGAI – Queer Insurrection; Lambda Legal; LifeWorks Mentoring (Los Angeles); Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Lesbian Rights; National Center for Transgender Equality; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) National; Safe Schools Coalition; San Francisco LGBT Community Center; Sylvia Rivera Law Project (New York); TGI Justice Project (CA); Transgender Law Center; The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (NY); TransYouth Family Allies, Inc.