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Kern High School District Shoots Down Harvey Milk Day

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On Wednesday, the Board of Trustees for the **Kern High School District in Bakersfield**, California, voted 3 -1 to "... not conduct exercises commemorating Harvey Milk Day... nor encourage or require its schools or their staffs to conduct such exercises." The proposal was introduced by Board Vice President Ken Mettler (who is running for the California Assembly) and is widely seen as a cynical move to toughen up his image and appeal to conservative voters in Kern County.

Local LGBT youth and allies spoke eloquently [1] about the harmful impact stopping Harvey Milk Day would have in the district's school at the May 3rd Board meeting when the Board first considered voting against Harvey Milk Day. GSA Network youth leaders and staff came out to support the local LGBT community at the final vote on May 19th. Despite repeated efforts to educate the Board of Trustees on the consequences of their action, the Board voted [2] to ignore the community's voices and tell LGBT students and staff in its district that it believes they don't have the right to be safe, to be themselves in school and to learn about their history.

GSA Network is very concerned that this vote will increase what is already a difficult environment for LGBT students and staff. We will be working closely with GSAs in the district and local Kern County LGBT groups to make sure that students and staff are safe and their rights are protected.

Not all folks in Bakersfield agree with what the Kern High School District Board of Trustees did on Wednesday. Local Bakersfield Californian columnist Valerie Schultz wrote a good column on why Harvey Milk is worthy of being honored [3] by local schools and why the Board's actions will contribute to hate and discrimination in the district schools.

East Bakersfield High English teacher David Lollar bravely agrees with Valerie and provides the perspective of a parent and teacher [4].

Others in the community pointed out Trustee Mettler's long standing use of hot-button issues [5] and less than honest tactics to move his political career forward no matter the cost to other people. He especially has used the LGBT community to make himself seem as a real conservative.

Help support GSAs in Kern High School District and tell the Board of Trustees that you oppose their vote. Please email board@khsd.k12.ca.us [6] to contact the Trustees.

For tips on how to organize a Harvey Milk Day in your school as well as community events that your GSA can be part of, check out our Harvey Milk Day resources [7]!

Let's make the first ever Harvey Milk Day a day of education and action that would make Harvey proud!

Source URL: http://gsanetwork.org/news/blog/kern-high-school-district-shoots-down-harvey-milk-day/05/20/10

Links:
[1] http://www.turnto23.com/video/23441358/index.html
[2] http://www.bakersfield.com/news/local/x1008888786/High-school-trustees-say-no-to-Harvey-Milk-Day-observances
[3] http://www.bakersfield.com/news/columnist/schultz/x1008888821/VALERIE-SCHULTZ-If-only-Kern-High-trustees-had-half-the-guts-of-Harvey-Milk
[4] http://www.bakersfield.com/opinion/community/x1008888732/Mettlers-idea-sends-the-wrong-message-to-Kerns-teenagers
[5] http://www.bakersfield.com/news/columnist/price/x735123865/Trustee-Mettler-giving-students-a-civics-lesson
[6] mailto:board@khsd.k12.ca.us
[7] http://gsanetwork.org/hmd