

STATEMENT OF DR. FRANKLIN E. KAMENY, CANDIDATE FOR CONGRESS,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, 1971

Early in the history of this country, when our form of democracy was a novel experiment, Alexis deToqueville, writing for European readers, noted that one of the defects of the American system was what he termed "the tyranny of the majority." His words are still relevant to one of the most suppressed, repressed, oppressed, and persecuted of all our minority groups: our homosexual American citizens.

By most estimates, gay people number some 10% of the populace -- the largest national minority group after blacks.

Towards the homosexual community society has exceeded John Stuart Mill's "limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence." Fortunately, the political process has grown sufficiently complex so that an absolute majority is seldom any longer necessary to achieve the goals of a minority segment of society.

Three historical processes have merged here in Washington in the candidacy I am announcing today. First, local politics have reappeared on the Washington scene after a century's absence; second, the increasing self-assertion of our homosexual citizenry is making itself felt; and third, the movement for freedom of sexual expression is manifest everywhere in America.

I am a homosexual American citizen and as a homosexual American citizen, I am determined to move into the mainstream of society from the backwaters to which I have been relegated. I intend to expose the criminality of forcing upon a free people the image of a white heterosexual middle-class suburbanite white-collar married male -- an image to which a huge number of Americans can not or do not want to aspire.

Homosexuals have been shoved around for time immemorial. We are fed up with it. We are starting to shove back and we're going to keep shoving back until we are guaranteed our rights. We are using the traditional political process as but one of a number of effective means for doing so.

Our goals are basic to any definition of Americanism: equality of rights, freedoms, and opportunity, and recognition of our basic human dignity, as the homosexuals that we are and have a moral right to become, and to remain.

Our goals were expressed almost 200 years ago in our country's birth certificate, the Declaration of Independence, with its guarantee of inalienable rights -- not only to life and liberty, but also to the pursuit of happiness. The tyranny of the majority notwithstanding, that means the pursuit of happiness defined and chosen by each person for himself, not by society.

We have broadened our appeal in this campaign to one of general personal freedom in the face of an unfortunately conformist society. Although I am a homosexual and the focus of my campaign will be sexual oppression, I appeal to all minority groups and to all individuals who differ from the contrived conventions of the majority, whether by desire or by circumstance, by race or by gender or by lifestyle.

In this election, for the first time ever, the homosexual community has a candidate of its own, who will put the gay interests first. We hope that this will serve as a further spur to solidarity, activism, and a sense of brother and sisterhood among homosexuals.

This campaign will provide a forum for the first-hand presentation to the public of the feelings, problems, and concerns of the sexually oppressed. I will outline the remedial steps we consider necessary in order that American ideals can apply to all citizens and in order that one of the last, untouched remaining reservoirs of prejudice, discrimination and bigotry can be dispelled.

We are working energetically to get our people registered, to have them sign our petitions and to have them vote. We hope to have our own certified registrars to go to the gay community, register our people, turn out the maximum number of petition signers and voters. We are currently obtaining the 5,000 signatures needed to get on the ballot and we are appealing to the homosexual and sympathetic "straight" community to register and sign.

My campaign for D.C. delegate to Congress marks the entrance of yet another disadvantaged, effectively disenfranchised minority group -- one of substantial size -- into the political arena. This is in the best American tradition of enlightened self-interest, in which the totality of the efforts of each group, looking primarily after its own interests, works to the best interests of all.