

Above my desk, in simple block letters, is a list of 49 names. They are not close friends, or people who I have even met, but they have had a strong impact on my life. Their names are a constant reminder of a sometimes-fragile existence. A reminder how quickly tolerance and acceptance can turn, and become lethal. These names remind me that while I am home in Vermont, I am truly not alone. That from the Governor, to the Legislature, to local officials, to my community, and to my family, there are many who will stand with me, stand up for me, and who will continue to welcome and include me. Those 49 names, that constant reminder, is the list of people who did not survive the massacre at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016. As you consider and debate J.R.S. 18 please do not under estimate the statement it will give to LGBTQIA Vermonters. The resolution tells us that you understand that fragile balance of tolerance and acceptance, that you understand the true fears that at times confronts us, and that you are committed to ensuring we do not stand alone. For what you have already done, and for what you are about to do, thank you.

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