



## *A Decade of Progress,* **A LEGACY OF RESISTANCE**

Ten years ago this month, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision that transformed the legal landscape for LGBTQ+ people across the country.

### ***Obergefell v. Hodges* wasn't just about the right to marry; it was about dignity, equality, and belonging.**

This victory made clear what Lambda Legal had long fought to prove: that LGBTQ+ people and our love, relationships and families deserve full and equal protection under the law. But as history shows, a civil rights victory like *Obergefell* is rarely ever the end of the story. In the last ten years those who oppose equality for LGBTQ+ people have resisted the decision and have intensified their attempts to roll back this landmark ruling. Further, our community has faced intensifying legislative efforts to undermine the rights we've fought hard to earn. As we have for more than 50 years, Lambda Legal has met this resistance with resolve, leading the way in the courts and the court of public opinion to safeguard all that we've gained and protect our communities.

### **Brief History of *Obergefell***

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, establishing the constitutional right of same-sex couples to marry. It was a landmark victory built on decades of litigation, advocacy, and grassroots organization. Lambda Legal, alongside many other organizations, had spent years dismantling discriminatory marriage bans, challenging

unequal adoption policies, and securing relationship recognition across dozens of states.

But securing marriage equality was never going to be the finish line. *Obergefell* did not signal the end of homophobia, transphobia, or systemic exclusion. Instead, it ushered in a new chapter, one where the fight moved from wedding chapels to hospital rooms, bake shops, school board meetings, and state legislatures. In this new era, Lambda Legal has remained at the forefront, responding to a legal and political environment increasingly hostile to LGBTQ+ people and everyone living with HIV.

### ***Obergefell v. Hodges Then and Now***

Before *Obergefell*, Lambda Legal had already laid the foundation for marriage equality with landmark cases like *Lawrence v. Texas*, which struck down sodomy laws and affirmed the constitutional rights of LGBTQ+ people to intimacy and privacy. State by state, Lambda Legal fought to win marriage equality in Iowa, Illinois, and New Jersey, before the issue made it to the Supreme Court where the *Obergefell* decision finally made marriage equality the law of the land.

After the ruling came implementation and Lambda Legal played a critical role in ensuring the law was followed. An important example included work to secure Social Security survivor benefits for same-sex partners who had been unjustly denied their applications simply because discriminatory laws had barred them from marrying before 2015.

Lambda Legal continues to lead on issues that impact the lives and futures of LGBTQ+ people and everyone living with HIV beyond marriage. We've fought discriminatory bathroom bans for transgender people, restrictions on the access to gender-affirming care for youth, policies that prevented people living with HIV from serving in the military and efforts to erase LGBTQ+ people from public life. Lambda Legal has always been committed to standing as the last line of defense for those who need us most. Whether protecting the rights of trans youth in hostile environments or defending healthcare access for LGBTQ+ people, we have fought, and we will continue to fight, for the equality and dignity every person deserves.

### Looking Ahead: United. Fearless. Unstoppable.

As we celebrate ten years since this landmark ruling, the right to marriage is under attack. Nine states have passed legislation asking the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision in the case. At Lambda Legal, we are meeting this moment with everything we've got: a powerful legal strategy, fearless plaintiffs, and a community that refuses to be erased.

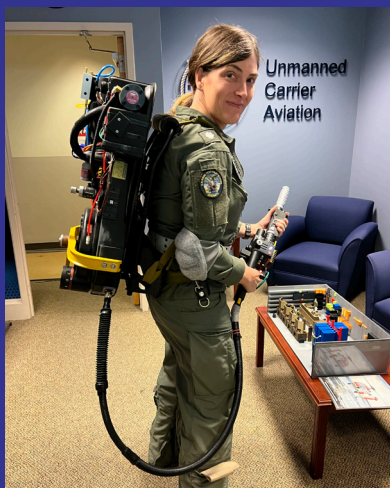
Lambda Legal remains committed to protecting and expanding civil rights for LGBTQ+ people and everyone living with HIV. From defending access to healthcare for transgender youth to challenging the unlawful ban on transgender members of the military, Lambda Legal has the back of our community. The battles may be difficult, but we have never been afraid to fight for what is right, for the future we know is possible.

Our victory ten years ago demonstrates what's possible when we are united movement wide in the fight for LGBTQ+ civil rights. Today, the threats to our rights are real. We must remain united and fearless in the face of new challenges and steadfast when encountering setbacks.

As we look to the next decade and beyond, our resolve has never been stronger. We carry the victories of *Obergefell*, the strength of those who fought before us, and the courage of those rising to lead today. Lambda Legal stands ready to defend against the current administration and state governments that seek to erode our hard-fought victories. We are United with our allies in the movement.

**We are fearless like our plaintiffs. And we are unstoppable in our fight.**

## BEYOND THE UNIFORM



Commander Emily "Hawking" Shilling, United States Navy  
(She, Her, Hers)



Commander Blake Dremann, United States Navy  
(He, Him, His)

On February 6, 2025, Lambda Legal, in partnership with the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and Perkins Coie LLP, filed *Shilling v. United States* to challenge the discriminatory Executive Order issued on January 27, 2025, which bans transgender people from serving in the United States military. The lawsuit centers on courageous plaintiffs like Commander Emily Shilling and Commander Blake Dremann, transgender service members who have worn the uniform with distinction and pride. Their exemplary military records underscore the absurdity of this ban, but their value extends far beyond their service.

The Beyond the Uniform project provides a deeper look into who our plaintiffs are—sharing their passions, relationships, and views on honor. In this excerpt from the project, you will meet Emily and Blake—two plaintiffs who live full lives and who deserve to continue their careers in service to the United States.





## Life Beyond Service

Beyond the titles and uniforms, Commanders Emily Shilling and Blake Dremann live full, vivid lives shaped by creativity, companionship, and the passions that ground them.

**Emily Shilling** shared her deep love for science fiction, robotics, and building detailed film replicas—an unexpected but richly expressive side of her identity.

“I’ve got a lot of hobbies. I’m kind of eclectic in my hobbies. Unfortunately, I’m not super great at any particular one of them, but I do try to avoid collecting more of them. I tend to build with a mixed medium of things, from electronics to mechanical things, to programming. I’ve done a lot of robotics in my past, and I’ve done a lot of movie replicas. I grew up wanting to be in the movie industry—to do special effects.

Unfortunately, it seemed like an industry that was hard to get into and didn’t really pay too much, so at the last minute, I made a different choice, and I went into aerospace engineering and then eventually joined the Navy. But I’ve always taken that love with me, and I still to this day enjoy building props and replicas and adding electronics and motors to them to kind of bring them to life.

I love science fiction; I grew up loving Star Wars and Star Trek and Serenity and Battlestar Galactica. You know, these were my heroes—these were the characters where I saw pieces of who I wanted to be.”

Meanwhile, for **Blake Dremann**, connection and care take the shape of a small but mighty companion named Lucas. Their bond tells a story of resilience, routine, and unconditional love.

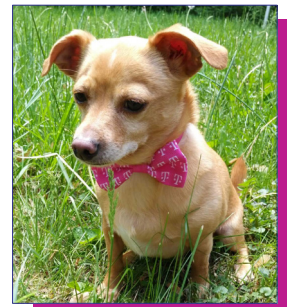
“Let me tell you about Lucas. Lucas is my 15-pound Chiweenie. He’s my grumpy old man who owns every blanket in my house, and every scrap of food that is mine is also his. His gotcha day is around Valentine’s Day, 2014. My best

friend and her husband spotted him at a PetSmart shelter in Poulsbo, Washington, and I was not supposed to get a dog—but he was mine from the start.

He’s my right-hand man. He likes to sit next to me, but not in my lap—usually on my left side, though. He travels with me everywhere I can take him. He has an elevated car seat.

We’ve done several cross-country trips. We’ve traveled up and down the East Coast. He’s totally my ride-or-die buddy.

We both struggle when one another is not around. He refuses to eat, and I can’t sleep. I don’t know what I would do without him.”



## More Beyond the Uniform

Lambda Legal is committed to standing with individuals like Commander Shilling and Commander Dremann who embody not only the valor and honor of military service but also the depth and richness of their lives beyond the uniform. Their stories are a powerful reminder that transgender service members are more than just their roles; they are innovators, caregivers, and passionate individuals whose contributions extend far beyond their service. As we continue to challenge discriminatory policies like the executive order banning transgender people from the military, we do so knowing that every act of resistance is an act of affirmation for the many trans people who serve the United States.



If you would like to learn more about Emily and Blake as well as hear stories from the lives of other transgender service members, follow the QR code next to this article and check out the full Beyond the Uniform landing page.

## TRACKING TRUMP

Lambda Legal is fighting back to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ people and everyone living with HIV. From the agenda of the Trump White House to the acts of his allies in Congress and statehouse across the country – our team is in court with dozens of cases in 19 states. Currently, 6 of those cases challenge President Trump’s executive orders targeting transgender and nonbinary people including youth and highly decorated military service members, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs, accurate passports, cuts to research on LGBTQ+ health issues and critical funding for organizations serving our communities.



# SIX OPEN CASES:



## ***Schlacter et. al. v. U.S. Department of State et. al.***

**ISSUES:** Trans Rights, Identity Documents

Lambda Legal has filed a lawsuit on behalf of seven transgender U.S. citizens, including one who is nonbinary, challenging the Trump administration's policy denying them U.S. passports with accurate sex designations. The discriminatory passport policy exposes transgender U.S. citizens to harassment, abuse, and discrimination, in some cases endangering them abroad or preventing them from traveling, by forcing them to carry identification documents that share private and inaccurate information against their wishes.

## ***San Francisco AIDS Foundation v. Trump***

**ISSUES:** Trans Rights, HIV

Multiple LGBTQ, Health, and HIV organizations sued the Trump Administration represented by Lambda Legal challenging three executive orders that together seek to erase transgender people from public life, defund the organizations that provide them with life-saving services, and terminate equity-related grants essential to the health and lives of other underserved communities, including communities of color, and people living with HIV. The lawsuit claims the administration's actions violate free speech and due process rights, constitute intentional discrimination, and exceed the authority granted to it by Congress.

## ***National Urban League v. Trump***

**ISSUES:** Anti-LGBT Policies, Trans Rights

Lambda Legal and the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of nonprofit advocacy organizations challenging three anti-equity executive orders from President Trump targeting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies, and transgender rights.

LDF and Lambda Legal argue these orders will severely restrict the plaintiff organizations' ability to deliver critical social and health services such as HIV treatment, fair housing, equal employment, affordable credit, and civil rights protections. This would harm countless people across the U.S., including people of color, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and those living with HIV.

As in the San Francisco AIDS Foundation case, this lawsuit also claims the administration is violating free speech, equal protection, and due process rights and is acting beyond the authority granted to it by Congress, all in violation of the U.S. Constitution.

## ***Shilling v. United States***

**ISSUES:** Trans Rights, Employment, Military

Lambda Legal and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation filed a federal lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the Trump administration's ban on military service by transgender people.

## ***PFLAG v. Trump***

**ISSUES:** Health Care, Trans Rights, Youth

Lambda Legal, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the ACLU of Maryland filed a federal lawsuit challenging a Trump administration executive order seeking to cut off access to medical care for transgender people under 19.

Trump's order directs federal agencies to withhold funds from providers offering gender-affirming treatments like puberty blockers and hormone therapy, jeopardizing critical care. Some providers have already canceled appointments and announced they will stop treating transgender youth.

## ***GLMA v. NIH***

**ISSUES:** Science Funding, HIV Research

Lambda Legal filed a lawsuit against the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over the termination of hundreds of research grants that funded essential research addressing the health of LGBTQI+ people, including critical HIV research.

The termination of these research grants – which are worth more than \$800 million but are estimated to equal less than 1% of the total NIH portfolio – is a direct result of the executive orders issued by Trump that target equity-related grants and forbid federally-funded entities from recognizing the existence of transgender people and engaging in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs.

**United.  
Fearless.  
Unstoppable.**



**For more than 50 years, Lambda Legal has been United, Fearless, and Unstoppable in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights and equality for all living with HIV. From court victories to policy change, we've led the charge. This pride month support Lambda Legal's expert legal team as they stand as the last line of defense for our community.**



Donate today and support our expert legal team as they take the administration to court.

**Visit [LambdaLegal.org/donate](https://LambdaLegal.org/donate)**