

## Terry Bean Reflects on Three Decades of the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund: Empowering LGBTQ+ Voices in Public Office

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**Portland, Oregon Jan 7, 2025 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com))** - As the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund marks over three decades of transforming the political landscape, [Terry Bean](#), one of its co-founders, reflects on the groundbreaking organization's legacy and the strides made in LGBTQ+ representation in public office. The Victory Fund's journey is a testament to the power of collective action and determination to ensure that LGBTQ+ voices are heard in the corridors of power.

Since its founding in 1991, the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund has supported thousands of LGBTQ+ candidates, helping to elect over 1,600 individuals to public office across the United States. For Terry Bean, the organization's achievements underscore the importance of representation, not just for policy change but for inspiring a new generation to see themselves as leaders.

## The Genesis of the Victory Fund

The early 1990s was a period of intense challenges and limited visibility for the LGBTQ+ community. While activism had led to some progress in civil rights, political representation remained sparse. Terry Bean and a group of like-minded advocates recognized the urgent need for systemic change. They envisioned an organization that would not only support LGBTQ+ candidates but also challenge the barriers that kept them from running for office in the first place.

“When we started the Victory Fund, LGBTQ+ individuals were vastly underrepresented in public office,” Bean recalled. “We knew that having a seat at the table was essential to ensuring our voices were heard and our rights protected.”

The Victory Fund was groundbreaking in its approach. It provided financial support, strategic training, and a network of resources to help LGBTQ+ candidates overcome the unique challenges they faced, from prejudice in the media to discriminatory policies that discouraged them from running.

## Building a Legacy of Representation

The Victory Fund’s first major victory came in 1991 with the election of Sherry Harris to the Seattle City Council, making her the first openly LGBTQ+ Black woman elected to public office in the United States. This historic win set the tone for the organization’s mission: breaking barriers and making history.

Over the years, the Victory Fund has supported trailblazers like Tammy Baldwin, the first openly LGBTQ+ woman elected to both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, and Pete Buttigieg, who became the first openly gay presidential candidate to gain significant traction in a major party primary.

“Every candidate we’ve supported has contributed to a larger movement,” Bean said. “Their victories represent more than personal achievements—they signify a shift in societal attitudes and a step forward for equality.”

## Challenges and Triumphs

Reflecting on the early days of the Victory Fund, Bean acknowledges the immense challenges the organization faced. LGBTQ+ candidates often encountered hostility from voters, skepticism from potential donors, and a lack of institutional support.

“There were moments when it felt like an uphill battle,” Bean admitted. “But we knew that every effort we made, no matter how small it seemed, was part of a larger fight for justice and equality.”

The organization’s success was not just due to its funding and training but also its ability to build coalitions and foster allyship. Bean emphasizes the importance of allies in advancing LGBTQ+ representation, both in politics and beyond.

## The Ripple Effect of Representation

For Bean, the impact of the Victory Fund extends far beyond the candidates it has helped elect. He believes that representation has a profound ripple effect, inspiring countless others to pursue leadership roles and challenge societal norms.

“When LGBTQ+ individuals see people like them in positions of power, it sends a powerful message: You belong here,” Bean said. “Representation isn’t just about policy—it’s about validation and hope.”

The organization’s work has also highlighted the importance of intersectionality in politics. By supporting candidates from diverse backgrounds, the Victory Fund has ensured that the LGBTQ+ movement reflects the full spectrum of experiences within the community.

### **A Look at Today’s Challenges**

While the Victory Fund has achieved remarkable progress, Bean is quick to point out that challenges remain. Across the country, LGBTQ+ rights are under threat, with legislation targeting transgender individuals and attempts to roll back protections for the community.

“In many ways, the fight is as urgent as ever,” Bean said. “We need more LGBTQ+ voices in public office to counter these attacks and advocate for policies that protect and uplift our community.”

Bean also highlights the importance of addressing barriers that still exist for LGBTQ+ candidates, particularly in rural areas and conservative regions. He calls on the next generation of activists and leaders to continue pushing for a more inclusive political system.

### **The Future of LGBTQ+ Representation**

Looking to the future, Bean envisions a world where LGBTQ+ representation in politics is no longer a groundbreaking achievement but an expectation. He hopes to see the Victory Fund continue to grow, supporting not just candidates but also initiatives that empower LGBTQ+ individuals to engage with the political process at every level.

“The ultimate goal is normalization,” Bean said. “We want to reach a point where an LGBTQ+ candidate’s sexual orientation or gender identity is just one part of who they are—not the defining factor of their candidacy.”

Bean is particularly optimistic about the younger generation, whom he sees as more accepting and inclusive than any before them. He believes their energy and passion will drive the movement forward, building on the foundation laid by the Victory Fund and its allies.

### **Celebrating Three Decades of Change**

As the Victory Fund celebrates over 30 years of empowering LGBTQ+ voices, Bean reflects on the organization’s achievements with pride and gratitude. From its humble beginnings to its role as a leading force for equality, the Victory Fund has shown that representation matters and that change is possible.

“We’ve come so far, but there’s still work to do,” Bean said. “I’m incredibly proud of what we’ve accomplished, and I’m excited to see where the next 30 years will take us.”

### **About Terry Bean**

Terry Bean is a pioneering civil rights advocate, accomplished political strategist, and leading voice in the LGBTQ+ rights movement. Based in Portland, Oregon, he has co-founded organizations that have reshaped the landscape of equality in America, including the Human Rights Campaign and the Gay &

Lesbian Victory Fund. A lifelong advocate for inclusivity, Bean continues to inspire and empower through his dedication to equality.

To learn more visit: <https://www.terry-bean.com/>



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