

First openly gay judge appointed by Brown

LOS ANGELES—In a historic move, California Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. has appointed an openly gay person to a judgeship. On Sept. 15, 1979, Stephen M. Lachs was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Los Angeles Superior Court. This appears to be the first time that an openly gay person has been appointed to a judgeship anywhere in the country.



Stephen Lachs

The appointment is in keeping with what has been called Brown's strong commitment to equality of opportunity regardless of sexual orientation. Earlier this year Gov. Brown issued an executive order prohibiting discriminations on the basis of sexual orientation in state employment.

Stephen Lachs has been serving as a Superior Court Commissioner for the past several years, assigned to hear cases in the Juvenile Division of that court. A Commissioner is appointed to serve in this judicial capacity by a majority of the judges of the court. This appointment by Gov. Brown will now make him a full time judge with equal status to the other Superior Court judges.

For several years Stephen Lachs has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center. He was a founder and is currently an ex-officio member of the board of the Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles (M.E.C.L.A.), a gay political group which makes substantial financial contributions to candidates who support gay causes.

Los Angeles attorney Thomas F. Coleman, co-chair of the National Committee for Sexual Civil Liberties and a friend of Stephen Lachs, commented upon the appointment. "If anyone deserved the honor of being the first openly gay person to become a judge, Steve did. He has been a role model for lawyers and for gay people for a long time. I congratulate Steve and I thank Governor Brown."