

Mayor Irked by Criticism Over "Gay-Lesbian Pride Day"

September 24, 1985



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CINCINNATI (AP) — Mayor Charles Luken says a "macho, tough-guy image" had nothing to do with his refusal to proclaim a Gay-Lesbian Pride Day in the city, and he criticized a fellow councilman for suggesting that it did.

Councilman Guy Guckenberger says he stands by his statements.

Luken fired off a letter Monday to Guckenberger, saying there was no need for him to speculate about the mayor's motive in declining to proclaim the day.

"My motivation is simple," Luken wrote. "I just do not believe that proclaiming a day based on sexual preference is in the best interests of the community.

"I have never before been described as either 'macho' or 'tough.'"

Luken, a Democrat, was irked by comments attributed to Guckenberger, a Republican, in an interview with The GayBeat, a newsletter circulated to the city's homosexual and lesbian residents.

The interviewer asked Guckenberger if he was surprised by Luken's recent refusal to sign a proclamation for "Gay-Lesbian Pride Day," or as an alternative, a "Human Rights Day."

"A 'Human Rights Day,' yes," Guckenberger said. "I guess he has to maintain a macho, tough-guy image."

Gay and lesbian groups had asked Luken to proclaim the day earlier this summer.

Guckenberger was quoted in the article as saying he would be willing to propose a city ordinance protecting the civil rights of homosexuals in matters such as housing and employment if other City Council members would support it.

Luken wrote that he sees no need for such an ordinance because of already-existing constitutional guarantees of civil rights.

Guckenberger said in the interview that an election year is not a good time to discuss such an ordinance. Council members stand for re-election in November.

"It really has to be done in an atmosphere that is not politically volatile," Guckenberger said. "In an off-year election, there can be a complete discussion of the issue without campaign rhetoric getting in the way."

Guckenberger said Monday that he has "no specific legislation in mind."

Of Luken's letter, he said, "He is baiting me, trying to set me up as a target, and I have no desire to get into an argument with him over it."

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