



July 20, 2012

Hon. Robert Tierney  
Chair, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission  
One Centre Street, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10007

Re: 186 Spring Street's extraordinary history

Dear Chair Tierney:

I'm writing to urge you to act immediately to preserve 186 Spring Street.

This nearly 190-year-old house has an extraordinary story in connection to LGBT and HIV/AIDS activism and history. Those who helped found our organization — the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force — as well as the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the Gay Activists Alliance and the Gay and Lesbian Independent Democrats, all lived at 186 Spring Street. Each of these organizations has had a profound impact upon our city and country with respect to LGBT equality.

Among those who lived at 186 Spring Street was Dr. Bruce Voeller, an early president of the Gay Activists Alliance, which he left to help found the National Gay Task Force in 1973 (now the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force). The Task Force became the first and largest national political advocacy organization for LGBT people, and Bruce served as our founding executive director until 1978.

In 1973, under his leadership, the Task Force secured the American Psychiatric Association's removal of homosexuality from its official Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, a groundbreaking redefinition of gayness that paved the way for legal reforms. Also under his leadership, the Task Force advocated for the successful ruling by the U.S. Civil Service Commission allowing gay people to serve in government employment in 1975, ending decades of witch hunts against government workers suspected of being gay.

In addition, Bruce conducted early research establishing that condoms help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, and also helped establish the use of the term "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" rather than the inaccurate and stigmatizing "Gay Related Immune Defense Disorder (GRIDD)," to describe this syndrome. He was also the subject of a landmark case before the U.S. Supreme Court establishing the rights of lesbians and gay men to visit and have access to their children at a time when they were still considered by many to be mentally ill and a danger to children.

The bottom line is that 186 Spring Street has had an extraordinary impact upon the lives of LGBT people in New York City and beyond. This house is not alone in the South Village in its unique significance in the history of the LGBT community, which flourished in bars, clubs, theaters, cafes, music halls, bookstores and other gathering spaces throughout this neighborhood.

For this and many other reasons, I urge you to protect 186 Spring Street and swiftly move ahead with designation of the proposed South Village Historic District, of which 186 Spring Street is a part.

Sincerely,

Darlene Nipper  
Deputy Executive Director  
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force