

Election shakes up national rankings of sexual, reproductive rights

On November 10, Ipas, an international reproductive health and rights organization in Chapel Hill, NC, released an updated ranking of states' commitments to sexual and reproductive rights following national elections. The updated rankings are part of *Mapping Our Rights: Navigating Discrimination Against Women, Men and Families*, an online resource, created in conjunction with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective.

Mapping Our Rights (www.mappingourrights.org) is an unique interactive Web site that identifies 25 state laws and policies that promote or prohibit individuals' abilities to make the most intimate personal decisions: whether to form partnerships or marry, or whether or not to become a parent. The site was created in May 2006 and was updated to reflect election results and incorporate significant changes to policies following state legislative sessions.

The indicators used to rank the states include, among others:

- public funding for family planning and abortion
- whether health-care providers can deny medical services because of their beliefs
- whether same-sex couples can adopt
- the use of abstinence-only curricula in schools
- whether states have anti-discrimination clauses that explicitly protect gays.

Interest in the map since its May release has been widespread. In May, an Associated Press story about the new tool was picked up by 1800 news outlets nationwide. In the 10 days following the release of the updated map, nearly 2200 users have visited the Web site.

“The decisions to choose a life partner and start a family are the most personal decisions individuals will make,” said Leila Hessini, Senior Policy Advisor for Ipas.

The partnership between Ipas, the Task Force and SisterSong is in and of itself innovative. There are few examples on a national scale of organizations that reach across interest areas in a longterm collaborative partnership. However these organizations are bound by a belief that decisions about whether to form intimate unions or create families are inherently linked, and that the separation of reproductive rights and sexual rights does not benefit either movement.

“We believe that everyone has the right to have a child, not to have a child and to parent they children they have,” said Loretta Ross, National Coordinator of SisterSong.