Title: Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles (MECLA) records

Identifier/Call Number: Coll2012.160

Contributing Institution: ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 2.5 linear feet. 1 archival box + 3 archival cartons

Date (bulk): Bulk, 1983-1985

Date (inclusive): 1977-1991

Abstract: The Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles records document the business functions, fundraising operations, and outreach programs of the political action committee during its existence from 1977-1991. The bulk of the collection comprises board meeting minutes, agendas, and financial reports, as well as correspondence to and from political figures lobbyng for support of gay and lesbian rights.


Arrangement
This collection is arranged in the following series:

Historical Note
Established in 1977 by members of the Orion gay men's consciousness raising group, the Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles (MECLA) was a political action committee supporting and contributing funds to political candidates in favor of human rights and, in particular, gay and lesbian rights. Although there were some administrative changes over the years, MECLA's executive structure consisted of two co-chairs, up to 16 members of the board of directors, and numerous ex-officio directors forming a board of governors. The directors were broken down by pairs into committees that controlled the day-to-day and long range functions of the business. As a show of their support of both gay and lesbian rights, the constituency of these groups was split evenly by males and females.

Initially focused on issues at the city and county level, MECLA's sphere of influence rapidly expanded to include political support of gay rights at the state and federal level. MECLA's first political victory was the passage of a Los Angeles city ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. At the state level, MECLA fought against California's Proposition 6, known as the Briggs Initiative, defeating legislation aimed at keeping gay teachers out of the classroom. MECLA played a role in striking down Proposition 64, the LaRouche Initiative, classifying AIDS as a communicable disease. MECLA helped push Assembly Bill 1 through the California legislature to end statewide discrimination based on sexual orientation, although it was later vetoed by the governor.

Not all of MECLA's work was viewed favorably by the gay population. MECLA's directors actively opposed the presence of gay bath houses in Los Angeles and worked for their closure at the height of the 1980s AIDS epidemic.

MECLA was widely known for its fundraising events, the largest of which were the MECLA anniversary parties held every spring. Hollywood celebrities and politicians at every level would gather at these parties and dinners, raising six-figure bounties which were directly funneled to MECLA's causes. One of the more successful events was a dinner with Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro, the first female nominee for the Vice Presidency. With the goal of sensitizing politicians and the community at large to the issues affecting the gay community, MECLA also participated in community events, voter registration drives, speaking engagements, and efforts to put gays in government appointed posts. MECLA ceased operations in April 1991.


Access
The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.

Conditions Governing Use
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Acquisition Information
Source and date of acquisition unknown.

Preferred Citation
Box #, folder #, Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles (MECLA) records, Coll2012.160, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

**Processing Information**
Collection processed by Erick Hawkins, November 1, 2012.

**Related Archival Materials**
Larry Sprenger Papers, Coll2012.167, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

**Scope and Contents**
The Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles records document the business functions, fundraising operations, and outreach programs of the political action committee during its existence from 1977-1991. The bulk of the collection comprises records maintained while MECLA was co-chaired by Larry Sprenger and Carol E. Childs from 1983-1985. The collection consists of board meeting agendas and minutes, financial reports and associated records, correspondence to and from elected officials, and records relating to the administrative and functional operations of the 17 formal committees of the board. Also included are fliers, direct mailings, and video recordings of MECLA anniversary dinners.

**Separated Materials**
ACLU of Southern California Lesbian & Gay Rights Chapter News, March 1984
Society for Senior Gay & Lesbian Citizens Newsletter, Volume 1, No 1
The Log, July-August 1984, Volume 3, No 2
People, August 12, 1985; September 23, 1985; October 21, 1985
Newsweek, August 12, 1985
Los Angeles Herald Examiner, Volume 113, No 314, March 11, 1984
Midnight Alarm, Volume 2, No 4, Spring-Summer 1985
Friends of the Center Roast of Gayle Wilson, program
AGLA, fifth media awards program
ECCO, 1984 dinner program and calendar
The Honor Roll: A narrative portrait of the California State Assembly by Willie L. Brown, Jr., undated

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
Gays--Legal status, laws, etc.--United States--California
Gays--Political activity
Homosexuality--Law and legislation--California
Homosexuality--Political aspects--California--Los Angeles

**MECLA records**


**Arrangement**
This series is arranged alphabetically by business function. Executive records are followed by committee records.

**Executive records 1977-1991**

**Physical Description:** [23 folders]

- **Box 1, Folder 1**
  - Annual report 1985

- **Box 1, Folder 2-7**
  - Board meeting minutes 1978, 1983-1991

- **Box 1, Folder 8**
  - Bylaws undated
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 9-18</th>
<th>Correspondence Bulk, 1984-1985 1977-1988</th>
<th>Scope and Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The correspondence file contains letters to and from contributors, supporters, board members, and political candidates and officials at all level of government.</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Physical Description: [3 folders]</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 22</th>
<th>Incorporation papers 1984</th>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 23</td>
<td>Master calendar 1983-1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 24</td>
<td>Retained attorney notes 1984-1992</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 25</th>
<th>Administration committee 1983-1984, undated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 1</td>
<td>Brochures and fliers undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 2-3</td>
<td>Direct mail, events 1978-1979</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 26</th>
<th>Direct mail, other 1984, undated</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 27</td>
<td>Employment Development Department 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 28</td>
<td>Human resources 1982-1986</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 29</td>
<td>Internal memos, notes, and fact sheets Bulk, 1983-1985 1978, 1983-1985, undated</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 30</th>
<th>Roster, board of governors/directors 1984-1985, undated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 31</td>
<td>Roster, committees 1983-1985</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2, Folder 1</th>
<th>Advocacy committee 1983-1985, undated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 2</td>
<td>No on 64 campaign report 1986</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 32</th>
<th>Advocacy committee 1983-1985, undated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 4-7</td>
<td>Dinner committee Bulk, 1983-1985 1979, 1983-1985, undated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 3, Item 1-5</td>
<td>Anniversary dinner ad books 1982-1990</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 33</th>
<th>Correspondence, Geraldine Ferraro event 1984-1985</th>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 34</td>
<td>Video recordings 1983-1985</td>
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| Box 1, Folder 34 | (4) U-matic storage tapes labeled MECLA 4-23-83 #1 Ends
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Tribute to Gayle Wilson, MECLA 4-23-83 #2, and MECLA 1985 Dinner (2 tapes).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) VHS tape labeled Innovision &quot;MECLA&quot; dub 9/12/84.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 35</th>
<th>Political committee 1977-1989, undated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 36</td>
<td>1978 Los Angeles police chief selection notes 1977-1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 37</td>
<td>Contributions 1983-1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 38</td>
<td>Direct mail, endorsements 1985-1986, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 39</td>
<td>Government vacancies lists 1983-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 40</td>
<td>Legislative bills 1982-1985</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 3, Folder 8-11  Newspaper clippings Bulk, 1983-1985 1977-1989
   Physical Description: [4 folders]

Box 1, Folder 40  Protests against MECLA 1985, undated
   Finance committee 1983-1991, undated
   Physical Description: [15 folders]

Box 1, Folder 41
   Finance committee 1983-1984, undated
   Physical Description: [3 folders]

Box 1, Folder 42-44
   Bank statements and cancelled checks, federal account 1988-1991
   Physical Description: [4 folders]

Box 2, Folder 3-5
   Bank statements and cancelled checks, state account 1990-1991
   Physical Description: [3 folders]

Box 1, Folder 49  Budgets 1983-1986
Box 2, Folder 6  Certificates of deposit 1989
Box 1, Folder 50  Federal Elections Commission, California Secretary of State 1984
Box 1, Folder 51  Tax records 1985, 1990
   Public relations committee 1979-1988, undated
   Physical Description: [3 folders]

Box 1, Folder 52  Public relations committee 1983, undated
Box 1, Folder 54  Public relations and marketing 1983-1985
   Speaker's bureau 1984, undated
   Physical Description: [2 folders]

Box 2, Folder 7  Speaker's bureau undated
Box 2, Folder 8  Californians for Justice 1984
   Other committees 1977-1985, undated
   Physical Description: [12 folders]

Box 2, Folder 9  Ad hoc committees 1984, undated
Box 2, Folder 10  Ad hoc committees, correspondence and notes, other political action committees 1983-1985
Box 2, Folder 11  Ad hoc, committees, press releases, other agencies 1984-1985
Box 1, Folder 55  Advisory committee 1977-1978, 1983, undated
Box 2, Folder 12  Benefactor committee 1983-1985, undated
Box 1, Folder 56  Civic breakfast committee 1983, undated
Box 2, Folder 13  Civic events committee 1984, undated
Box 2, Folder 14  Elections committee 1983-1985, undated
Box 1, Folder 57  Foundation committee 1983-1984, undated
Box 2, Folder 15  Nominating committee 1984-1985
Box 1, Folder 58  Republican committee 1983, undated
Box 1, Folder 59  Voter registration committee 1983-1984