

John Quigley



John B. Quigley was a professor of law at the Moritz College of Law at Ohio State University, where he is the Presidents' Club Professor of Law Emeritus. In 1995 he was recipient of the Ohio State University Distinguished Scholar Award.

John was born in St. Louis in 1940. He graduated from Harvard undergraduate school in the class of 1962, later obtaining a law degree from Harvard Law School in 1966.

John was admitted to the bar in Massachusetts in 1967. Before joining the Ohio State faculty in 1969, he was a research scholar at Moscow State University, and a research associate in comparative law at Harvard Law School. He held an adjunct appointment in the Political Science Department.

In late 1969, one of the students at Ohio State cornered John after class and said that he and others were planning to form a gay rights group. He wanted to know if John would be the faculty advisor. John agreed and they started a group they called the Gay Activists Alliance in early 1970. They met once a week and John attended their meetings.

Being an advisor to the gay student group was a bold move. There were no faculty who were openly gay at the time. Gay faculty surmised that remaining in the closet was necessary for their career.

John helped spearhead the repeal of a cross-dressing ordinance in Columbus, Ohio. The repeal effort was prompted when campus police arrested three male students who wore dresses to a dance on campus. John helped with an appeal of their convictions. The Court of Appeal overturned the verdicts because the men had beards and were thus not trying to impersonate women. That narrow ruling did not satisfy the gay community. So John and others pressed the City Council for an outright repeal of the ordinance. They succeeded.

In addition to being an advisor to the Gay Activists Alliance for several years, John later became a faculty advisor for a gay rights group that formed at the College of Law.

John convinced the faculty to adopt a resolution to ban the military from recruiting on campus because of the government's prohibition against gays and lesbians serving in the armed forces.

In an [interview](#) about his life conducted in 2021, John explained how his involvement with the gay rights groups on campus eventually brought him into the gay rights battle outside of the university setting. He defended mothers in two contentious child custody disputes involving lesbians whose former husbands were trying to gain custody of their children on the ground that the mothers were unfit due to their homosexual relationships. John won both cases.

Another off-campus activity occurred in 1973 when the State of Ohio required all municipalities to revise their criminal codes to put them in line with a recent major change in state law. In response, the mayor of Columbus created the Commission to Revise the Penal Code. John was appointed one of the 17 commissioners. He promptly argued that sexual orientation discrimination should be prohibited by the new code.

The commission approved forbidding discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in the areas of housing, public accommodations, and employment, and an ordinance doing so was passed by the Columbus City Council on November 26, 1973. The Columbus Dispatch promptly published a very homophobic article about this part of the new Code, and there followed much public outcry at the sinfulness of it all, with an emphasis on the employment nondiscrimination portion. Mayor Tom Moody vetoed the bill creating the new Code the next day.

The following year, the City Council passed a new ordinance , but it only protected gays from discrimination in housing and public accommodations. It was not until the 1990s that employment discrimination was added.