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In celebration of the first annual National Gay-Straight Alliance Day, Gay-Straight Alliance Network and Senator Al Franken of Minnesota will call on all United States Senators to support the Student Non-Discrimination Act

San Francisco – Tomorrow, Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network) will join Senator Franken to honor National Gay-Straight Alliance Day by mobilizing youth and adults to call their Senators in support of the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA).

“GSA Network is proud to see national officials recognize the courageous leadership of GSA activists, who have successfully advocated for essential student protections in several states, including California,” said Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of GSA Network. “It is time for our Senators to honor and exhibit that same leadership by passing federal student protections.”

Senator Franken will host a call with GSA activists on National GSA Day to discuss the country’s urgent need for safer schools. He has already released a video calling on viewers to “make it better” for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth by asking their Senators to co-sponsor the Student Non-Discrimination Act.

"National GSA Day is a time to celebrate the contributions made by Gay Straight Alliance clubs

all over the country," said Sen. Franken. "GSA clubs make schools safer and provide a supportive community for LGBT students, who are bullied far more frequently than other students and, tragically, have a much higher rate of suicide. I'm proud to call myself an ally of the LGBT community and I've been working with the GSA Network to pass legislation – the Student Non-Discrimination Act – to protect students from bullying, harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Together, we can make sure our kids feel safe and supported at school so they can get the education they need and deserve."

The Student Non-Discrimination Act would establish a comprehensive federal prohibition against discrimination, including harassment, in public elementary and secondary schools based on a student's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

"My Gay-Straight Alliance club has empowered me and other youth to improve policies, laws, and culture in my school and in the state," said Trio Harris, GSA Network Board Member and President of the Carlsbad High School GSA. "I'm excited that GSA Network is joining with Senator Franken to celebrate the tradition of youth activism on National GSA Day by advocating for the Student Non-Discrimination Act, a federal law with important protections that would make it better for all students in America."

In preparation for the day of action, Gay-Straight Alliance Network sent a letter Tuesday to the United States Senate urging all Senators to support SNDA. Since its founding in 1998, GSA Network has grown from just 40 GSA clubs in the Bay Area to 870 clubs with an estimated 13,000 student members in California alone. Nationally, GSA Network operates an association of state networks with 35 member organizations. Youth advocates trained by GSA Network have successfully lobbied ten successful pieces of state legislation in California, including student protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

GSA Network is part of a broad coalition of organizations across the country partnering to honor National GSA Day. Coordinated and sponsored nationally by Iowa Pride Network (IPN), National GSA Day on January 25, 2012 is a time to strengthen the bond between LGBT people and straight allies and in particular recognize and honor student organizations called Gay-Straight Alliances. These student led groups work to educate their peers to stop homophobia, transphobia and violence in schools and colleges throughout the country.

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Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network) is a national youth leadership organization that empowers youth activists to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools by training student leaders and supporting student-led Gay-Straight Alliance clubs throughout the country. In California alone, GSA Network has brought GSA clubs to 56% of public high schools, impacting more than 1.1 million students at 870 schools. GSA Network's youth advocates have played a key role in changing laws and policies that impact youth at the local and state level. GSA Network operates the National Association of GSA Networks, which unites 35 statewide networks of GSA clubs throughout the country. GSA Network is also the founder of the Make It Better Project, which aims to stop bullying and prevent suicide. www.gsanetwork.org [2]

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