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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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***GAY/PRIDE WEEKENDS ARE AN IMPORTANT TIME TO  
CELEBRATE AND REFLECT***

*The West Hollywood Lesbian Visibility Committee announces the 2008 Etheridge Award  
will be presented to Senator Sheila Kuehl on Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup>.*

Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup> will not just be the start of the annual Gay/Pride weekend in West Hollywood, California. This year, the West Hollywood Lesbian Visibility Committee (WeHo LVC) and its sponsor, The City of West Hollywood, are planning a string of events that promises to be the highlight of the weekend. Along with the annual Dyke March, performances by several main stream, "out" artists, and speeches by prominent members of the lesbian community, the celebration will also include the presentation of this year's Etheridge Award to recipient, Senator Shelia Kuehl.

Named after one of the most visible and respected lesbians in our country's history, Melissa Etheridge, the Etheridge Award is given to a lesbian who exemplifies the utmost character and determination in today's society. Always honest and forthright about her own lifestyle, Melissa Etheridge's musical career and personal travails have been part of a public journey that has inspired many lesbians throughout the world. WeHo LVC has acknowledged her incredible contribution to the lesbian community by naming an annual award after her, honoring individuals who have made a significant impact within and for the lesbian community. Established in 2007, Etheridge herself received the first Etheridge Award. The second recipient will be actress-turned-politician, Senator Shelia Kuehl (D-California).

As a young actress, Kuehl was best known for her portrayal of the "irrepressible" Zelda Gilroy in the long-running 1950s TV show, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*. However, in 1965 she changed her focus to academics with an acceptance from Harvard Law School.

Still unafraid of the spotlight, she chaired the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first group of women to be admitted to Harvard Law (1950) when she graduated in 1975.

Kuehl was first elected to the California State Assembly in 1994, becoming the first openly gay person elected to the California legislature. She served as Speaker pro tempore during the 1997-98 legislative sessions becoming the first woman in California history to hold the position. In 2000, after three terms in the Assembly, she was elected to the California State Senate, beating Assemblyman Wally Knox in the Democratic Primary. Re-elected in 2004 with 65.7% of the vote, she has been dubbed the "smartest" member of the California Legislature by the *California Journal*. In 2006 she sponsored a bill that would prohibit any school district in California from adopting instructional material that discriminates against persons based on their gender or sexual orientation.

Gay/Lesbian Pride Weekends all over the world continue to garner huge crowds with parades, corporate sponsors, entertainment, vendors and free promotional gifts. Many businesses, particularly Gay/Lesbian run, look to this weekend as a way to find new clientele and increase revenue and community support. WeHo LVC will use this highly visible and exciting time to reach out to women locally and all over the world, encouraging them to be a part of their outreach programs, join the Dyke March, witness the Etheridge Award presentation and celebrate at the LVC after party. Who knows, maybe one day West Hollywood will create its own Dinah Shore Weekend and call it, the LVC Weekend.

For more information about LVC, their outreach support, and the city's weekend events including the after party venue please visit: [www.weholvc.org](http://www.weholvc.org) / [www.myspace.com/wehodykemarch](http://www.myspace.com/wehodykemarch) and [www.weho.org](http://www.weho.org)

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