FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JENNIFER HARRIS VINDICATED AND COACH RENE PORTLAND GIVEN SLAP ON WRIST

The National Center for Lesbian Rights Condemns Penn State's Disciplinary Measures as Inadequate

(HARRISBURG, PA) – Today, Penn State concluded that Coach Rene Portland discriminated against former Lady Lions' player Jennifer Harris by creating a hostile, intimidating, and offensive environment because of Harris' perceived sexual orientation. In its internal investigation, the University issued Portland a written reprimand and warned her that she will be dismissed from her post if her discriminatory behavior continues. While the National Center for Lesbian Rights is pleased that the claims of Jennifer Harris were vindicated, it condemns the disciplinary measures taken against Coach Portland are inadequate, especially given Coach Portland's continued denials and refusal to be held accountable for her discriminatory and damaging actions.

"The courage and bravery of Jennifer Harris finally has exposed Rene Portland's reign of terror. I've spoken directly with a number of women who played for Coach Portland over the past three decades and who were traumatized by her anti-lesbian policy. They lived in fear of losing their scholarships, and, for most of these women, their scholarships were the only means to receive a college education," said Kate Kendell, Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights. "Given the damage done by Penn State and the personal sacrifice of Jennifer Harris, the consequences faced by Rene Portland are insulting and inadequate."

"We are pleased that Penn State has chosen to implement several of the policies Jen Harris suggested, including informing all incoming student athletes about Penn State's non-discrimination policies and alternative methods of reporting such violations to officials outside of the athletic department. However, we are deeply disappointed that Penn State has chosen such a minor rebuke to address such a systemic, quarter century long problem," said Karen Doering, Senior Counsel for the National Center for Lesbian Rights. "We will still go forward with the court ordered mediation scheduled for mid-May, but we do not hold out much hope for a negotiated resolution at this stage given Penn State's anemic response and Coach Portland's continued denials and failure to acknowledge that her discriminatory and unlawful behavior needs to change."

"I am disappointed by this result," said Harris. "Penn State did not take the allegations seriously and does not appear interested in solving the underlying problem."

Coach Portland will be required to pay a $10,000 fine, a written reprimand will be put in her personnel file, she will be required to participate in a professional development experience devoted to diversity, and has also been informed that further violations will result in termination with cause.

Harris has now taken her high-powered game to James Madison University where she is coached by Kenny Brooks. Because of NCAA transfer rules, Harris must sit out the 2005-2006 season before she is eligible to play her junior and senior seasons. Harris is represented by the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) and the law firm of Hangley Aronchick Segal & Pudlin

The case is *Jennifer E. Harris v. Maureen T. Portland, Timothy M. Curley, and the Pennsylvania State University.*

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The National Center for Lesbian Rights is a national legal resource center committed to advancing the rights and safety of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families through litigation, public policy advocacy, and public education. We can be reached through our website at www.nclrights.org.