



PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GLAAD REACTS TO ABC WAFLING ON *ELLEN* ABC TAKES A “WAIT-AND-SEE” STANCE ON AIRING “COMING OUT” EPISODE

WASHINGTON, DC, JANUARY 10, 1997—According to the Associated Press, ABC's *Ellen* is ready to “come out.” However, AP reports, “it’s another question whether ABC is ready to let her.” ABC Entertainment President Jamie Tarses admitted this week that an episode of the sitcom that reveals that Ellen DeGeneres’ title character is a lesbian is in the works. The ABC executive also stated that the network will “wait-and-see” whether the episode will air.

In the January 10 wire story, Tarses is quoted telling reporters at the Television Critics Association meeting, “We are very seriously considering about going in the direction that everyone’s speculating on.” She would not, however, make any guarantees that the episode will air and stated that she and other ABC executives would make the final decision on the episode’s fate. It has also been reported that *Ellen* will go off the air in March and April in order to make room for a new sitcom that stars Arsenio Hall. *Ellen* is expected to return for the May sweeps.

The following is a statement from GLAAD’s Managing Director William Waybourn:

“It is a great tragedy that ABC is now waffling on what could be one of the boldest and most dramatic steps ever taken by an American television network. It defies understanding that ABC would float yet another trial balloon to determine if they should air this groundbreaking episode of *Ellen* after the first trial balloon rose so successfully and to such unexpected heights. We hope that with the ascension of Jamie Tarses we will see ABC do the right thing and take a stand for diversity, that includes lesbian and gay Americans. Diversity is a hallmark of American life—not fear and ignorance which only perpetuate bigotry and hatred. It would be a grave injustice if ABC robbed the American public of this tremendous opportunity to get to know such a positive lesbian character.”

GLAAD maintains an “*Ellen* Watch” World Wide Web site at <http://www.glaad.org>.

GLAAD is the nation’s lesbian and gay news bureau and the only national lesbian and gay multimedia watchdog organization. GLAAD promotes fair, accurate and inclusive representation as a means of challenging discrimination based on sexual orientation or identity.