

## the rest of



## our world

= news =

**DP benefits**

WASHINGTON—More large companies across the country are offering domestic partnership health insurance coverage to their gay and lesbian workers.

The study, by the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign, found that 3572 companies, colleges and states and local governments offered or have announced they would offer health insurance covering their employees' domestic partners.

This was up 25 percent from a year ago, when 2856 large employers extended such benefits.

The findings were included in the group's annual "State of the Workplace for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Americans."

"Domestic partner benefits are increasingly becoming a standard business practice in corporate America," said Kim I. Mills, education director of the Human Rights Campaign. "Employers have discovered that these benefits help attract and keep the best workers, a critical consideration in the current tight job market."

**Child visitation**

PROVIDENCE, R.I.—Another state has clarified the rights of same-sex partners to child visitation after a breakup. The Rhode Island Supreme Court has ruled that a woman can petition Family Court for the right to visit the son she and her former partner raised together.

The 3-2 decision gives de facto—"in fact"—parents, including gay couples, the same rights to petition for visitation as biological and adoptive parents.

In the case, Concetta DiCenzo, 43, was trying to prevent her former partner, Maureen Rubano, 53, from petitioning Family Court for the right to visit the son DiCenzo gave birth to in 1991 after undergoing artificial insemination. She and Rubano sent out birth announcements identifying them both as the child's parents, and the last name of Rubano-DiCenzo was listed on the birth certificate.

"The fact that DiCenzo not only gave birth to this child but also nurtured him from infancy does not mean that she can arbitrarily terminate Rubano's

de facto parental relationship with the boy, a relationship that DiCenzo agreed to and fostered for many years," Justice Robert Flanders wrote in the majority opinion.

**Manhattan Scouts**

NEW YORK—A school board overseeing 42 Manhattan schools has kicked the Boy Scouts out.

The board of Community School District Two, which passed the resolution, became the first district in the city to enact such a ban.

"It's an important message to send that discrimination will not be tolerated in our schools," said board member Brian Ellner, who wrote the resolution.

The ban keeps the schools in the district, primarily elementary and middle schools, from sponsoring troops, which none currently do. The troops may still meet on campus, as can most any independent group.

**AIDS prevention**

WASHINGTON—A new medical report says more must be done to prevent AIDS infection.

A slowing of the epidemic has led to complacency, says a new report that calls on the government to launch stronger prevention efforts and improve tracking of the virus that causes the disease.

"Improved treatments may have contributed to a false sense of security and a dangerous complacency, but the need for prevention has not diminished one bit," warned Dr. Harvey Feinberg, provost of Harvard University and co-chairman of the committee that prepared the report.

While the spread of AIDS among gay men has declined over the last 15 years, there has been an increase among women, minorities, and adolescents, according to the report released Wednesday by the Institute of Medicine, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences.

There have also been recent reports of an increase in risky behavior by men who have sex with men.

**Lesbian cop**

NEW YORK—A federal judge has taken the New York City Police Department to task for the investigation it conducted into complaints by an officer who is a lesbian.

Judge Lewis A. Kaplan said the probe was lax.

He delivered his rebuke of the department as he told a jury hearing the case that the trial would end prematurely because Elizabeth Bryant had reached a settlement with the city.

He said it was "outrageous" if testimony was true that the city did little to investigate Bryant's claims that officers refused to ride with her and posted pictures around the precinct of a male bodybuilder with her face pasted over his.

Bryant said the harassment began after she revealed she was a lesbian and held a public ceremony with her partner in Central Park in 1997.

The judge voiced concern over the testimony of Sgt. Sandra Williams, a retired investigator with the police department's Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, who told the jury that little was done during the investigation beyond interviewing Bryant and employees she had accused of harassment.

**Gay bar shooting**

ROANOKE, Va.—More charges have been filed against a man who walked into a gay bar and opened fire, killing one.

Ronald Edward Gay, 54, who police said opened fire because he was upset that his last name made him the victim of jokes, is accused of killing Danny Lee Overstreet and wounding six other bar patrons.

Gay initially was charged with murder.

The new charges against him include six counts of aggravated malicious wounding, six counts of subsequent use of a firearm, and one count of shooting within an occupied building.

If convicted, Gay could face life in prison on the murder charge and a minimum of 20 years in prison on each count of aggravated malicious wounding.

He remains in jail without bail. One of the shooting victims still is hospitalized in stable condition.

**Alabama Episcopal**

MOBILE, Ala.—The first Episcopal congregation in the state of Alabama has left the denomination over gay rights.

Members of Christ Church voted overwhelmingly Sunday to affiliate with the Anglican Mission in America, whose bishops are under the authority of archbishops of the Province of Rwanda and the Province of South East Asia.

Gay issues have created a rift between liberal and conservative Episcopalians and in other denominations. Delegates to the Episcopal General Convention in July declared the church should support unmarried couples—homosexual and heterosexual—in monogamous relationships honoring religious values.

A spokeswoman for AMIA, based in Pawleys Island, S.C., said they have 17 congregations in at least 13 states, including six in the South.

**VPs on marriage**

WASHINGTON—Both parties' vice presidential candidates have shown some growing recognition of the needs of same-sex couples when it comes to marriage.

Democrat Joseph Lieberman and Republican Dick Cheney both were asked about gay marriage during their debate.

Both said they believed greater recognition was needed for same-sex relationships, including the granting of benefits. But both also stopped well short of endorsing marriage.

"But I must say, I'm thinking about this because I have friends who are in gay and lesbian partnerships who have said to me, 'Isn't it unfair that we don't have similar legal rights to inheritance, to visitation when one of the partners is ill, to health care benefits?'" Lieberman said. "And that's why I'm thinking about it. And my mind is open to taking some action that will address those elements of unfairness while respecting the traditional religious and civil institution of marriage."

HIV (human immuno-deficiency virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).



On the broader question, Cheney said: "People should be able to enter into any kind of relationship they want to enter into. It's really no one else's business in terms of trying to regulate or prohibit behavior in that regard."

When it came to marriage, he said: "That's a tougher problem. That's not a slam-dunk. I think the fact of the matter, of course, is that matter is regulated by the states. I think different states are likely to come to different conclusions and that's appropriate."

**Almost an apology**

LOS ANGELES—Dr. Laura says she's sorry—sort of.

Laura Schlessinger used the Jewish Yom Kippur holiday—the Day of Atonement—to apologize to gays and lesbians for "poorly chosen" words she said have been perceived as hate speech.

"On the Day of Atonement, Jews are commanded to seek forgiveness from people we have hurt," the radio and TV talk show host, who is Jewish, said in a newspaper ad. "I deeply regret the hurt this situation has caused the gay and lesbian community."

The ad, in the form of a letter signed by Schlessinger, was included in a special "Gay Hollywood" edition of the trade paper *Daily Variety*.

Schlessinger has been criticized by gay rights activists for referring to homosexuality as a "biological error" and "deviant." In March, she said she was sorry her radio comments have hurt people, but retracted that apology three days later.

**Gay center**

PHILADELPHIA—The University of Pennsylvania is being rewarded for bringing two men together.

The couple, who met 17 years ago at the school, have donated \$2 million for a new

WORLD BRIEFS &gt; 11



HIV is passed from person to person in 3 major ways: vaginal, anal, oral intercourse; sharing of needles; and from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

HIV is present in 4 body fluids: blood, semen, vaginal fluid, and breastmilk.

