

# the rest of



# our world

## Republican Unity

WASHINGTON

Republicans say they're following their new president's lead as a "uniter."

To demonstrate that, they celebrated George W. Bush's inauguration with the formation of the Republican Unity Council.

"Politics is a game of addition, it's not a game of subtraction," said Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, the fund raising and recruitment apparatus for the House GOP.

Charles Francis, chairman of the Unity Council, said the organization will use its alliance of gay and straight Republicans to help the party expand.

"The Republican Unity Council is about making being gay or lesbian a non-issue in the Republican Party," Francis told more than 250 people at a breakfast meeting on the eve of George W. Bush's swearing in. The group, he added, "is about helping President-elect Bush succeed as a uniter."

Francis, a gay public relations executive from Washington whose brother raised money for Bush, also helped arrange a meeting between Bush and a dozen gay Republicans in Austin, Texas, last April. Afterward, Bush declared, "I welcome gay Americans into my campaign."

## Civil Unions Nationally

NEW YORK — State lawmakers across the country are looking at their marriage statutes and wondering how or whether to respond to Vermont's civil unions law for same-sex couples.

In Texas, conservative legislators will try this year to make their state the 35th to adopt a law or constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. In New York and Rhode Island, gay lawmakers will introduce bills to legalize it.

"It isn't going to happen overnight. There will be setbacks and right-wing backlash," said Evan Wolfson, a leading gay-rights lawyer with the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. "That's exactly how every civil rights movement in American history has proceeded."

Opponents are mobilizing their strength to fight any attempts to enact civil unions or gay marriage.

"This will be a long-term battle, like abortion," said Peter LaBarbera, President of

Americans for Truth, a Washington, D.C., group that opposes legal recognition of gay couples.

"The people on our side are every bit as committed as the people on their side," he said.

## Freshmen-gay Politics

LOS ANGELES — College freshmen, when they think about politics at all, are more liberal than their predecessors were.

A new study of freshmen finds that they typically support ideas like gay rights much more broadly than people of their age group have in the past.

But the study conducted last fall by the University of California, Los Angeles, in conjunction with the American Council on Education, finds that politics and issues of social policy don't interest today's students much.

The survey was based on responses by 269,413 students at 434 colleges and universities.

Only 28.1 percent had an interest in political affairs — a new record low, beating the 28.6 percent figure of 1999. The survey's peak figure of 60.3 percent came in 1996.

Some 27.7 percent of freshmen identified themselves as "liberal" or "far left," up slightly from 1999. The "middle of the road" percentage shrank slightly to 51.9 percent, while those identifying themselves as "conservative" or "far right" remained fairly constant at 20.3 percent.

## AIDS among Blacks

NEW YORK — AIDS is on the rise again among young black men in New York City.

A city survey found that 33 percent of gay or bisexual black men ages 23 to 29 tested positive for HIV.

The study conducted by the city's Health Department found that young black New Yorkers "are experiencing a larger burden of the HIV infection," said Sandra Mullin, the department's associate commissioner of public affairs.

The survey found that only 2 percent of the city's white gay men in the same age group were HIV-positive, while 14 percent of Hispanics were infected.

"We don't have a solid explanation for that because we don't see the kinds of differentials in behavior between black and white men to explain

this," said Lucia Torian, who directed the study.

A national survey came up with similarly startling results.

The study found that among young gay men, 3 percent of Asians, 7 percent of Whites, 15 percent of Hispanics and 30 percent of Blacks are infected with the virus.

"That 30 percent is an amazing statistic," said Dr. Helene Gayle, AIDS chief at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC study was presented at the Eighth Annual Retrovirus Conference in Chicago.

## Kicked Out of the Scouts

OAK PARK, Ill. — The Boy Scouts of America is booting troops that don't toe the anti-gay line.

The national organization rejected the charters of seven Cub Scout packs and Boy Scout troops because their sponsors challenged the group's policy of excluding gay members and leaders.

The seven were sponsored by parent-teacher organizations. Two other school-sponsored Scout groups found new sponsors.

The groups were believed to be among the first to lose their charters because of the policy.

"They are allowed to participate if they want to agree to values held by the Boy Scouts of America," said Gregg Fields, the organization's national spokesman. "If they don't agree, no one is forcing them to participate."

The sponsors of the Oak Park packs and troops said they couldn't abide by the no-gays rule because of village ordinances and school policies that ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"This collides with our beliefs," said Caroline Newberry-Schwartz, District 97 PTO Council co-president.

## The Pope and Marriage

ROME — The pope has taken up his crusade against gay marriage again.

He says there was no possibility that the Church would redefine its view of matrimony.

"Marriage is not just any old union between human persons, susceptible to being configured according to a plurality of cultural models," the pope said in a speech to the Roman Rota,

the Vatican tribunal that can grant marriage annulments.

"When the church teaches that matrimony is a natural thing, it proposes a truth made plain by reason for the good of the couples and of society," said the pontiff.

In November, the Vatican blasted lawmakers for giving legal recognition to so-called "de facto" unions, including those between homosexuals, and said attempts to allow adoption by gays were "a great danger." That Vatican document reflected denunciations over the past several years by the pontiff.

## Caribbean Gay Laws

GEORGE TOWN, Cayman Islands — Religious leaders in the Cayman Islands are organizing protests of Britain's order decriminalizing homosexuality in its five Caribbean territories.

In January, Britain scrapped laws making homosexuality a crime in the Cayman Islands and four other territories after local legislatures refused to do so.

The move angered church leaders who say that homosexuality is immoral and goes against the cultural grain of the deeply religious and socially conservative islands.

A petition says those who sign "object to enacting legislation against the will of the people of the Cayman Islands," said the Rev. Al Ebanks, chairman of the Cayman Ministers Association.

"The people of the Cayman Islands as well as other overseas territories have made it abundantly clear what our position is on this matter," Ebanks said recently. "I don't know any partnership that could survive on the basis of this kind of one-sided relationship."

He said the petition would be turned over to the Cayman Islands legislature and its British governor.

## Missouri Execution

POTOSI, Mo. — A 37-year-old man was executed by lethal injection despite protests that his death sentence may have been prompted in part by his sexual orientation.

Stanley D. Lingar was convicted of the 1985 slaying of a teen-ager who was beaten with

a tire iron and run over by a car.

In a final statement issued by his family, Lingar sought forgiveness from the family of his victim, Thomas S. Allen, 16.

Advocates for Lingar made several claims on his behalf: he suffered from a severe mental disorder and was borderline mentally retarded; was drunk at the time of the killing; and that the other man involved in the crime, David L. Smith, served just six years in prison.

Most prominent among the claims was that Lingar's homosexuality played a role in his sentence. Lingar's attorney, Jeremy Weis, said prosecutors raised the issue of homosexuality to inflame the jury against Lingar.

Amnesty International and the New York-based gay activist group Queer Watch had asked Holden to halt the execution.

"There is concern he got the death penalty because he is gay," said Bill Dobbs of Queer Watch. "It's a very ugly, reprehensible murder. However, there are serious due process issues."

"That's absurd," Missouri Attorney General Jay Nixon said. "It's the brutality of the crime, not the sexual orientation of the killer."

## Bush-AIDS Office

WASHINGTON

President Bush has decided against doing away with the White House AIDS policy office, but it will not play the same role as it did under former President Clinton.

At one point, the Bush administration suggested it would be abolishing the Office of National AIDS Policy and the Office of the President's Initiative for One America.

But spokesmen reversed course.

"They're not being closed," said Margaret LaMontagne, Bush's domestic policy chief. As for policies regarding race or AIDS, "They'll be treated the same as any other policy. They will have the same access to the president," she said.

Advocacy groups had a different take: dispersing the offices' duties within the White House actually is tantamount to a closure.

"It doesn't represent the Office of National AIDS Policy as it exists today, and this is of great concern," said David