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Our Mission

The Samara Foundation of Vermont is a charitable foundation whose mission is to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities today and build an endowment for tomorrow.

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Louganis Speaks at Dartmouth



Photo: Jeff Rice

Greg Louganis (c) was welcomed by Dr. Stuart C. Lord (l), Dean of the Tucker Foundation, and Adderly Grant-Lord (r) at Alumni Hall, Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College on Wednesday, May 16th. Louganis discussed issues related to being gay, living with HIV, and triumphing over adversity.

Tuesday, June 5, 2001 will mark twenty years since the Centers for Disease Control published a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) of a new disease, which was affecting gay men. This report heralded the beginning of what we now know as the AIDS pandemic. The significance of the day cannot be understated. OITM encourages its readers to take a moment on this day to remember those who have been, are and will be afflicted by HIV/AIDS."

Vt. Republicans, Model in Contradiction

MONTPELIER — The Republican majority in the Vermont House has demonstrated in the past month that it is a model in contradiction.

On the one hand the House has voted to repeal civil unions for gay and lesbian couples and replace it with a watered-down alternative dubbed reciprocal partnerships.

But, ironically enough, in doing so some of the most conservative members of the Republican caucus and most ardent opponents of gay rights also voted to give state sanction to same-sex relationships.

Political expediency was the cause.

Many Republicans were elected last fall on a campaign promise to do something about civil unions. But they were stymied in their attempts simply to repeal the landmark law without offering an alternative.

Judiciary Committee Chairwoman Peg Flory correctly warned them that repealing the law probably would just lead to another lawsuit that would in turn result in the courts ordering that gay and lesbian couples be granted marriage licenses.

So she devised reciprocal partnerships that would grant the rights and benefits of marriage to same-sex couples and to all others who cannot legally marry under state law.

Those primarily are pairs of

blood relatives who cannot marry because of incest prohibitions.

Civil unions opponents did not like extending rights to gay and lesbian couples, but they said they had little alternative.

"It's difficult because it still gives the same benefits to same-sex individuals, couples as the traditional marriage couple," said Rep. Nancy Sheltra, R-Derby, one of the leading opponents of civil unions, who voted in favor of reciprocal partnerships.

Still, the bill would accomplish some of the goals of opponents because of changes it would make in the way couples obtain their partnerships. Unlike civil unions, they no longer would be required to have their unions certified by a judge, clergy member or justice of the peace in the same way that marriages are solemnized.

It also would require the reciprocal partnerships licenses to be issued by the Health Department instead of by individual town clerks.

"We see this as a step in the right direction," said the Rev. Craig Bensen of Cambridge and a member of Take it to the People. "It's a bill that makes sense only in the world defined by Baker."

The bill is an insult to gay and lesbian couples, though, because it seeks to deny same-

sex relationships some of the dignity that the Legislature recognized a year ago.

"Last year we crafted a Vermont compromise and we called it civil union," said Rep. William Lippert, D-Hinesburg, one of two openly gay lawmakers. "What we have before us today is not just an expansion, as proclaimed, it in fact undoes that Vermont compromise called civil union. You cannot escape that."

Even though Flory warned that a simple repeal would not meet constitutional muster, there were two efforts to do just that. One of the few heartening messages to emerge from the House this year is that there is nowhere near a majority that would support repeal without some kind of alternative.

A repeal proposal sponsored by Sheltra was rejected 111-30 and another was voted down 94-47.

And Republicans even had a very difficult time in pushing through the reciprocal partnerships alternative. Speaker Walter Freed had to break a 69-69 tie on the first of debate to advance the proposal to a final vote. And then it passed by just three votes, 72-69.

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methodology used by Spitzer, calling it biased and unscientific.

In his op-ed, Spitzer tried to make the point that, if an individual has a self-motivated desire to change his or her sexual orientation, then therapists should be allowed to honor that request, caveated by telling the individual the chances for success are extremely low.

"To my knowledge, there is no group willing to pay, literally, millions of dollars to fund such a study. These very ad hoc projects — like a lot of what passes for 'gay research' these days — is content to get a non-systematic sample having an impossible to estimate representation of the population at large," said Larry Rudiger, who holds a Ph. D. in psychological research from UVM.

Rudiger said that even if a person did want to change his or her orientation, it was probably a bad idea because it ends up creating — not preventing — incredible suffering.

In another VTPRIDENet e-mail, Jake Patterson, who identifies as bisexual, said that "bisexuality is completely and totally absent from any main-

stream discussion about this sort of thing."

"I would wager that no CNN newsdroid has ever even uttered the word 'bisexual' on the air," he claimed.

Patterson also pointed out the complexities involved in sexual self-identification when one is truly bisexual and how confusing it can become when someone who now considers him or herself an "ex-gay" might really be a bisexual in denial about the other half of his or her sexual orientation.

The e-mails on VTPRIDENet came from as far away as Oklahoma. Larry Jones, from Lawton, Okla., wrote, "This is research? 45-minute PHONE calls? A population of 200 out of the millions of gay men and lesbians in this country alone. Was the paper porous enough to use in the toilet?"

Bobbi Cote-Whitacre from Colchester wrote, "These people felt highly motivated to 'change' yet 95 of them [out of 132 referred by ex-gay ministries] — a whopping 72% — can't totally repress their feelings after 14 years???"

"Merciful heavens! Can

you imagine their therapy bills???" she wrote.

Jeanne E. Hand-Boniakowski wrote in her post on VTPRIDENet that "anti-queer pseudoscience is rampant in America."

"Just look at all the ads put out by 'Who Woulda Thunk It' last year with lots of legit-sounding stats from the Family Research Council (Gary Bauer's think tank, Dr. Laura's fave quote source)."

"Look at how roundly, soundly and repeatedly the Ex-Gay nonsense is trounced, and it still keeps on ticking, and keeps on tricking folks," she wrote.

Millions of Americans who never read Spitzer's *Wall Street Journal* op-ed got the message on May 9 that being gay or lesbian can be changed. The message does seem to keep on ticking.