

# OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

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## VT GOV. DEAN WILL NOT SEEK REELECTION IN 2002

BY PAUL OLSEN

Montpelier, Vt.- In a surprise announcement that will likely alter Vermont's political landscape for the next decade, Gov. Howard Dean (D) recently announced that he would not seek reelection in 2002. Dean's announcement creates a wide-open field for the state's highest office and leaves members of Vermont's gay and lesbian community wondering whether an equally pro gay Governor will succeed him.

Dean, 52, has served as Governor since 1991 and has historically sided with Vermont's gay and lesbian community. He is credited with helping pass and ultimately signed into law legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. He also supported the extension of benefits to the domestic partners of state employees. In 1994, Dean appointed Bill Lippert, an openly gay man, to fill a vacant seat in Vermont's House of Representatives.

Shortly after the Vermont Supreme Court's landmark ruling mandating marriage benefits for gay and lesbian couples Dean publicly stated his support for domestic partnership legislation. At the same time, he also indicated that gay marriage made him "uncomfortable."

In announcing his retirement on the lawn of the Vermont Statehouse Dean said that, after 10 years in office, it is time for him to move on. "By the time I leave this job I will have been in state service for 20 years," he said. "I came into the Legislature on January 1, 1983. I will leave this building in January of 2003. I will not be a candidate for governor in the year 2002."

Gay and lesbian activists in Vermont greeted Dean's announcement with both nostalgia and sadness.

"It is notable that Governor Dean has been Governor during the most major landmark legal changes for the gay and lesbian community in Vermont," said state Rep. Bill Lippert (D-Hinesburg). "He will be missed for his steadfast support for the gay and lesbian community."

"He signed the gay rights bill and he was Governor when second parent adoption was ruled on by the (Vermont Supreme) court and when the legislature codified into law no (adoption) restrictions for gay and lesbian individuals or couples. It was during his administration that Vermont became the first state to provide domestic partner medical benefits to state employees. It is an unprecedented set of achievements for the gay and lesbian community that took place during his terms as Governor."

Freedom to marry activists also credit Dean with his strong support of the civil union law throughout the state's debate over providing marriage-related rights and benefits to gay and lesbian couples.

"Governor Dean took a great deal of flack for supporting civil unions, and he resisted the temptation to run away from his position in the heat of the subsequent reelection campaign," said Beth Robinson, a lawyer in the Baker v. Vermont gay marriage lawsuit. "He stood firm against bigotry and exclusion, and his fortitude made a difference."

Although Dean announced his plan to retire as Vermont's chief executive officer, he plans to remain active throughout his remaining 16 months in office. "I do not intend to be a lame duck,"

he said. "I intend to use all the powers of the office, and they are considerable, and the powers of personality, and they may or may not be considerable, you'll have to judge that on your own. But there is work to be done."

The campaign to replace Dean as Vermont's Governor has already begun. Likely Republican candidates include State Treasurer Jim Douglas and former Agency of Human Services Secretary Cornelius Hogan. Democrats expected to enter the race include Lt. Governor Doug Racine and U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and former Progressive Party gubernatorial nominee Anthony Pollina are also considering the race.

Dean's announcement creates a wide-open field for the state's highest office and leaves members of Vermont's gay and lesbian community wondering whether an equally pro gay Governor will succeed him.



## OPENLY GAY FORMER STATE AUDITOR ANNOUNCES STATE TREASURER BID

BY PAUL OLSEN

Montpelier, Vt. - With Gov. Howard Dean's recent announcement that he will not seek re-election, Vermont's game of political musical chairs has begun. In the first round of the game, openly gay former Vermont State Auditor Ed Flanagan unofficially announced his plan to run for State Treasurer in 2002.

Flanagan, an attorney, Democratic National Committeeman, and former board member of the state's largest AIDS service organization, Vermont CARES, was first elected State Auditor in 1992. In 1995, he publicly came out as a gay man. He made national history when, in 1996, he became the first and only openly gay statewide elected official in the United States.

Flanagan, 50, left the State Auditor's post in 2000 to run for the United States Senate making him the first openly gay U.S. Senate candidate in the nation's history. Last November he lost to incumbent Republican Sen. James Jeffords, 26% to 66%. Jeffords later made history by abandoning the Republican Party and handing control of the Senate to the Democratic Party.

In spite of his loss to Jeffords, Flanagan was proud of the support he received from Vermonters. "I'm a candidate who has been elected four times as a statewide elected official as a proud and openly gay man," he said last November. "I think that speaks volumes about the core of Vermont and its deep respect and commitment to individual liberties."

Since losing to Jeffords, Flanagan has been practicing law in Vermont.

Republican Jim Douglas currently holds the State Treasurer's office. Douglas is leaving the post to run for Governor and is expected to face a primary challenge from former Agency of Human Services Secretary Cornelius Hogan. Lt. Gov. Doug Racine will seek the Democratic nomination. Independent Congressman Bernie Sanders and former Progressive Party gubernatorial nominee Anthony Pollina are also considering a run for Governor.

In addition to Flanagan, former state Sen. Jeb Spaulding (D-Washington County) announced his intention to run for State Treasurer as a Democrat. Spaulding served in the state Senate for 16 years and currently works at the

Vermont Department of Education. Spaulding has already received the endorsement of Gov. Dean. On the Republican side, former Rutland Mayor Jeff Wennberg may also run for State Treasurer.

In making his intentions known, Flanagan said he had the support of many members of the Vermont Legislature. "I've been talking for a number of months about it and was encouraged by well over 50 Democratic supporters in the Legislature," he told the Rutland Herald.

"I served for eight years in the office that critically reviewed the financial operations of state government," he added. "... We worked more closely with the state treasurer's office than any other."

According to Flanagan, his early announcement was triggered by Gov. Dean's plan to retire. "The schedule has been quickened by Governor Dean's early decision," he told the Associated Press. "I believe it is important to make one's intentions clear, so I did."

Election Day is 14 months away.

Paul Olsen is the Vermont correspondent for in newsweekly.

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