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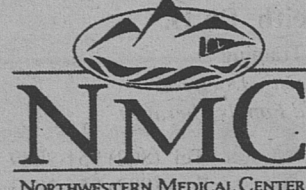
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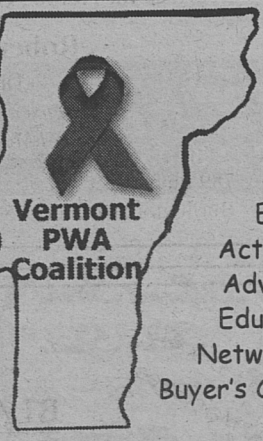
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Top Turkey Award and Other Leftovers

BY GREG D. KUBIAK

With the holiday season upon us, those "end-of-the-year" lists and retrospectives are right around the corner. So, to beat the rush - like all those retailers who put up Christmas tinsel before the Halloween candy was marked to half-price - I want to get in my year-end tributes. Therefore, for their exceptional efforts to roll-back civil rights and attitudes toward the GLBT community, I'm unpleased to present my 2001 list of the Leftover Turkey Awards.

And before I get all those cards, letters and e-mails from the National Turkey Foundation and all of you fans of the most-favored of holiday fowl, I'm not picking on turkeys. True, turkeys are the least intelligent of the poultry family and ran a distant second to the eagle for the "national bird" title. But the "leftover" designation to these awards is meant to denote, in metaphorical terms, the fact that recipients of the award are not only below average in brain capacity, but also are remnants from an earlier time. It's called literary license. Anyhow ...

Coming in as third runner up to the Leftover Turkey Award is repeat winner, U.S. Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) Helms receives the award for his amendment to penalize schools which bar the discriminatory Boy Scouts from meeting in their public facilities. Jesse, as you know, if one of those conservatives who believes that the big, federal government should "stay out of the lives" of our citizens, except when doing so will further his militant anti-homosexual agenda. Jesse will be retiring after this term, but there's no sign that his homophobic tendencies will be silenced in private life. Congratulations Senator Helms.

Our second runner up is Florida State Representative Allen Trovillion. This is the legislator who told Gay students in his district that they "are going to cause the downfall of this country," after hearing their plea to support the Florida Dignity for All Students Act - a gay-positive initiative. He might not have made the upper cut in the turkey competition had he not added to his admonitions that the school kids "were going to hell."

Runner-up to the 2001 Leftover Turkey Award is the "Take Back Vermont" campaign. You will recall that this was the grassroots effort that fought the civil unions legislation giving gay and lesbian couples equal rights to other Vermonters. The campaign fought on past the passage of the legislation. They supported efforts in Vermont to prohibit teachers and "agents" of schools from discussing homosexuality in the classrooms. They were behind an effort to repeal the state hate crimes statute. And the Take Back Vermont (TBV) crowd even tried to get allowances for judges to "opt out" of performing civil unions because of their own moral qualms.

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The TBV group would have edged close to the number one spot in this year's competition, except they've had a real run of bad luck lately. It seems that the group is on "hiatus", as described on their website, for three reasons: (1) post election malaise, (2) travelling and temporary relocation of major contributors, and (3) shorter days and less sun. (And I didn't make that up.)

And now, the winner of the 2001 Leftover Turkey Award for exceptional efforts to roll-back civil rights and attitudes toward GLBTs is ... Jerry Falwell. Falwell as we know, is the self-proclaimed man of God (not Allah), who 48 hours after the September 11 terrorist attacks pointed his finger to the "gays and lesbians" (and other distinguished sinners) and said, "You helped this happen." It was as though Falwell saw the hands of gays and lesbians on the throttle of those four jetliners that crashed that day.

Even without the follow-up statement that his comment was a "misstatement", the reluctant and tardy apology, and the sure-to-follow fund-raising letter, the Falwell comment stands alone for this year's recognition. After all, he painted for his believers a picture that blamed moral decay and being gay for over 4,400 deaths in one day - overseen by a vengeful God. Since then, Falwell got his son to sign a fund-raising letter claiming that the controversy had "brutalized" his father and that those to blame were the "liberals of all stripes," including (you guessed it), "gay activists." But the real icing on the cake was his statement two months later in which he confessed that "Most of the heat I've taken has not been because of the statement. It's from people who are upset that I apologized."

Therefore, Falwell must accept the award for not only himself, but his faithful following that continue to bankroll his \$100 million enterprise. To congratulate Jerry as this year's winner of the Leftover Turkey Award, drop him an e-mail at jerry@falwell.com, and tell him Allah sent you.

Greg D. Kubiak, author, activist, and public policy analyst writes for several Gay publications. The Vice Versa Award winner can be reached via this publication or by e-mail, GKubiak@aol.com.