

editorial

Thanks and Good Luck!

By **CARRIE RAMPP**
President Mountain Pride Media

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Mountain Pride Media, I am pleased to acknowledge the tenure of Jason Whipple as editor of *Out in the Mountains* and saddened to note his departure with this, the March issue. Jason joined our team in January of 2001, having just graduated from the University of Vermont, and quickly took the reins of *OITM*.

Each editor leaves his or her mark on the paper, and Jason is no exception. During Jason's tenure we saw some exciting growth in the maturity of the paper. In the June 2001 issue we saw the unveiling of a redesign, complete with color on the front page. He shepherded the celebration of *OITM's* 15th anniversary throughout the pages of most of his issues. He boldly went where no one had gone before when he took on the reorganization of the *OITM* office — definitely a memorable moment in his tenure.

Perhaps his greatest achievement, and what the paper requires for success, was the introduction of so many new voices. To name a few: Jade Wolfe, Chuck Franklin, Pat Robinson, Sky DeMuro-Miller, and Dennis Scott-Bush.

We were again delighted when Jason, in partnership with our new art director, Pete Gershon, unveiled perhaps the freshest and most exciting look in *OITM's* history with the February 2002 issue.

All of us wish Jason well in his "next chapter." I'm confident it will be at least as exciting as his *OITM* chapter. We are so pleased that we could be a part of what is sure to be an exciting career. ▼

news

Racine Continues To Court GLBTQ Voters

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ence of the governor. What would you have state government do?" "Well, for one thing," replied Dozetos, "We could have an Education Commissioner that backs Outright Vermont." Dozetos was referring to the decision by past Commissioner David Wolk to suspend a contract with Outright Vermont for inservice training, apparently due to political pressure from anti-civil union forces. Racine reminded Dozetos that the governor does not pick the Education Commissioner, the State Board of Education does, although he admitted that the governor has some influence.

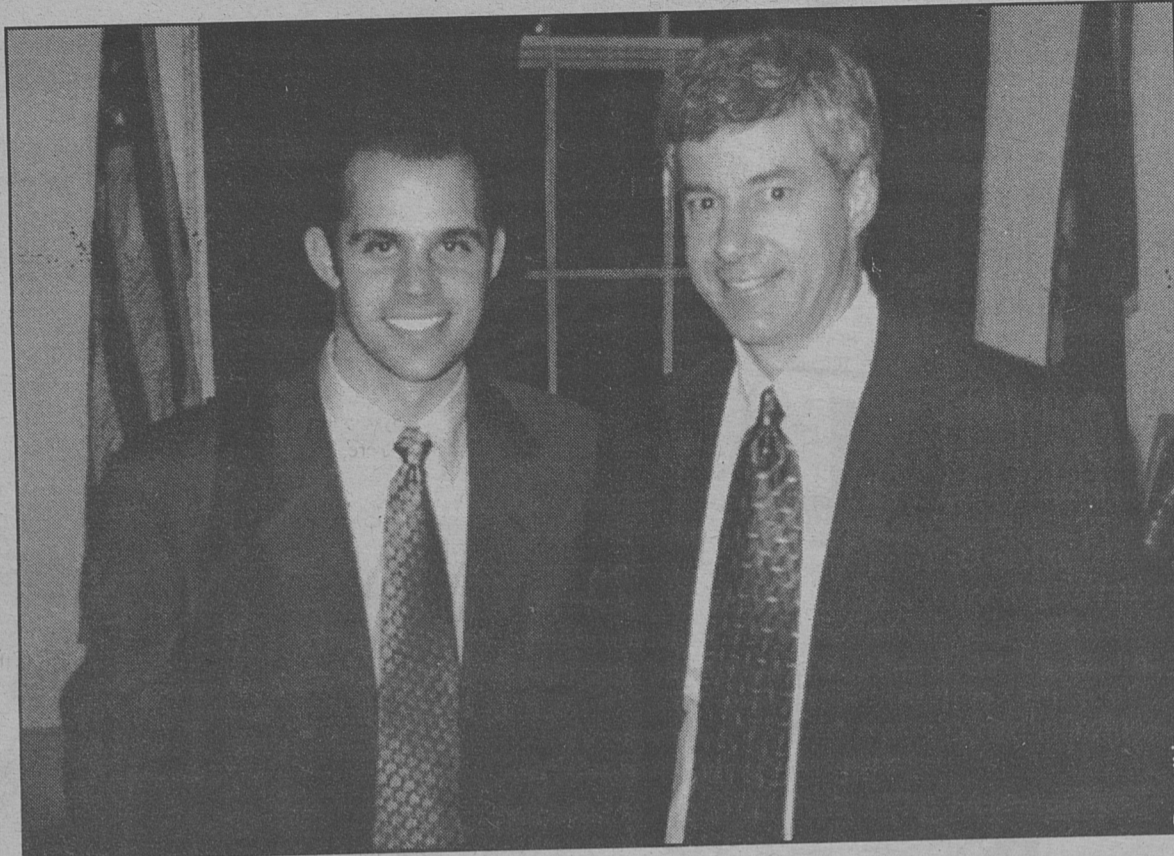
B.J. Rogers, executive director of Outright Vermont, suggested that the state needs a comprehensive health and sexuality education curriculum.

"There's currently no standard model, no place for kids to talk openly. Under George Bush," he continued, "we have a big increase in abstinence-only education funding. But that leaves out queer youth and their concerns."

Tim Palmer, former director of VT CARES and Coordinator of the Racine 2002 campaign in Chittenden County, cited the existence of federal grants for HIV education but said that the state education department showed no interest in applying. "Your education commissioner," he told Racine, "should make it clear that there is a zero tolerance for prejudice. The Department should provide training so teachers don't assume that every kid has a mother and a father at home. They need cultural competence training."

Racine agreed that attitude is as important as resources. "The resources are often there, it's how they're used that makes a difference."

"The other thing that's important," added Palmer, "is making sure that the people affected by the policies are at the table when decisions are made. The future of gay youth being



Lt. Governor Doug Racine (right) meets with Outright Vermont's B.J. Rogers in Montpelier in January.

decided by straight people is offensive and wrong."

"Diversity belongs at the table in every area," Racine responded. "Bill Lippert told me that and I listen to Bill."

The governor does pick the Health Commissioner, and Deleonardis suggested that the Health Department needs to pay attention to other health issues affecting the GLBTQ communities beyond HIV/AIDS. One such issue is domestic violence within this constituency. Deleonardis, part of the Safe Space initiative creating a hotline and support for victims of domestic violence in same-gender relationships, said it was difficult for gay men and lesbians to acknowledge a battering situation, especially after the passage of civil union legislation. "Everyone's kind of looking at each other wondering who is going to be the first to get a C.U. divorce."

Palmer questioned why current Governor Howard Dean made no clear request to raise the cigarette tax. "The rate of smoking in our community is higher

than among the general population. Tobacco is a major health issue," he said. In the general discussion of raising taxes and cutting budgets that followed, Palmer hoped that Racine would support uncoupling the Vermont income tax from the federal income tax and change it back to the tiered system that was in place under Republican Richard Snelling.

Racine said that he would support some steps to neutralize the effects on Vermont of the Bush tax cuts, which, he noted, were overwhelmingly weighted toward the rich. During the hour and a half discussion, other issues brought up included the need for affordable housing, access for nonprofits to state health care programs geared for small businesses, living wage legislation, parity of pay between state workers and nonprofit workers doing the same jobs — often under contract with the same state agency, and adding "transgender" to nondiscrimination statutes.

In a phone interview ini-

tiated by *OITM*, potential third-party candidate Anthony Pollina said that he would "without a doubt" be meeting with members of the GLBT community. "I'm not out there actively campaigning yet is the only reason such meetings have not yet taken place," he said. "If people wanted to meet with me, I'm available at any time, and maybe they could help me make up my mind" about whether to run as a candidate for governor.

Asked if he recognized the GLBT community as potential swing voters in a 3-way race, Pollina agreed, while noting that it has become a 4-way race with Con Hogan's decision to run as an independent. "I know that some voters in that community were nervous about voting for me in the last election, and I don't fault them for that. But given that I made such a strong showing and I've generally been very supportive of the issues important to gays and lesbians, I think there are a lot of folks who might vote for me if I decide to run." ▼

Massachusetts Sodomy Ruling

As we went to press, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts invalidated parts of two centuries-old sodomy laws but left intact some areas of enforcement. The two laws involved prohibited oral and anal sex and carried penalties of up to 5 and 20 years imprisonment, respectively.

Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders argued that the laws were being selectively enforced against gay men and lesbians and not applied against heterosexuals, and are unconstitutional because they "criminalize common acts of intimacy."

The nine individuals who brought the case were not currently subject to prosecution, so the case was dismissed. But in its terse dismissal, the court for the first time "declared that neither of the Massachusetts laws apply to private, consensual conduct," according to a GLAD press release.

Jennifer Levi, the GLAD attorney who argued the case before the high court, commented, "This is a tremendous victory. The court today clarified that these antiquated laws may not be

used to intrude on individuals' rights to engage in common acts of intimacy in private settings. Moreover, in a key part of the ruling, the court affirmed that neither the Attorney General nor the district attorneys may prosecute anyone under the challenged laws unless the conduct took place either in public or without consent."

According to GLAD, 14 states still have sodomy laws, only 4 of which apply exclusively to same-sex conduct. ▼