

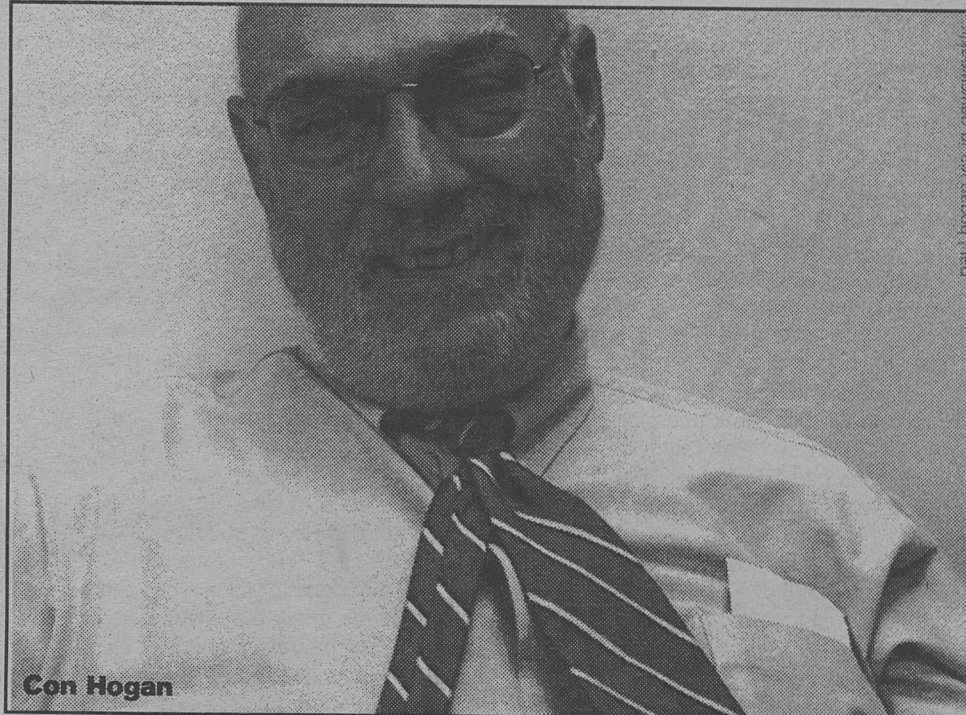
# Gubernatorial Candidate Sounds Off on GLBTQ Issues and the Upcoming Election

## political preview

BY PAUL OLSEN

*Editor's Note: With Democratic Governor Howard Dean seeking higher office, Vermonters face electing a new Governor on November 5, 2002.*

In exclusive interviews with Paul Olsen for *Out in the Mountains*, each of the three major candidates – Con Hogan, Jim Douglas, and Doug Racine – discussed a variety of issues of concern to Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans community. In this series of articles, each candidate is profiled briefly and asked for responses to the same issues. All of the interviews were done in July, and although we are publishing them sequentially due to space considerations, no candidate had access to the others' responses before his own interview. The interview with Con Hogan appears below. Jim Douglas's interview will appear in the September issue, followed by Doug Racine's interview.



### Cornelius "Con" Hogan

Independent Con Hogan has served Vermont in a variety of administrative roles in the Davis, Salmon, Snelling and Dean gubernatorial administrations. He served as Vermont's Human Services Secretary from 1991-1999. In 2001, Hogan chaired Gov. Dean's bipartisan health commission. He currently works as a consultant and lives in Plainfield.

**OITM:** Why should gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Vermonters support your candidacy for Governor?

**Hogan:** I think all people should support my candidacy because I don't think about Vermonters in segmented terms. I think about all people who live in this extraordinary and beautiful place, and I think about all people being able to get along, and Vermont is one of those places where that's still possible in the world. I present myself as a candidate for everybody. When you run as an independent, you can do that. You don't become a prisoner of party philosophies, religious philosophies, or anybody's philosophy. You are free to choose and take your own road. That's the fundamental premise upon which I run.

**OITM:** As Governor would you appoint openly gay men and lesbians to the Legislature, state commissions, and/or your Cabinet?

**Hogan:** Certainly. I would appoint anyone who has the skills and the belief that Vermont is the place where they are investing their human cap-

ital and energy. In the last several years I have worked for a gay man and I count him among one of my closest friends.

**OITM:** What changes, if any, would you support to Vermont's civil union law?

**Hogan:** We're seeing nicely the acrimony and divisiveness around that slowly fade. I think there will come a day when people will examine what has been created and say simply that these privileges and opportunities should be available to others who live together for other kinds of reasons. So I could see a moment when all of the things that are attached to the civil union law, which make it much easier for people to support each other and live together, that that would be nicely expanded to others.

**OITM:** So would you have supported H.502, the so-called "repeal and replace" bill that would have repealed civil unions and replaced them with a broader reciprocal partnerships plan?

**Hogan:** No. I wouldn't have done that for a couple of reasons. First of all the timing is not right to reopen this. There is still a substantial period of healing that time can take care of. We're in that process now. I'm seeing that now as I travel the state and the other thing is that the issues begin to change in Vermont. And where that was probably one of the most amazing issues we've faced in many years, we're now seeing issues that impact people's pocketbook and their economic vitality. My basic instinct was that that bill was not the time to

reopen the discussion. There will come a time when the next natural movement will be "OK who else needs this kind of help?"

**OITM:** Had you been Governor what would your position have been on legislation prohibiting sexual orientation-based discrimination in housing, employment, credit and public accommodations?

**Hogan:** I look at that as a law that should apply to every citizen. We all should have access to housing without discrimination and all the things that you just listed in that bill. My personal preference is not to treat it as a gay rights bill but as a people bill. When we think about ourselves as a larger whole, we tend to make decisions that are less acrimonious. I support it for basic reasons of basic human rights.

**OITM:** State Rep. Nancy Sheltra introduced a bill (H. 259) prohibiting the "promotion" of homosexuality in Vermont's public schools. As Governor, would you support that bill?

**Hogan:** First of all this is really not the time to be debating that kind of issue. Secondly, we have a history in Vermont of being able to have open school discussions and curricula having to do with our fundamental health and knowledge about ourselves. So I wouldn't want to do anything that begins to prescribe how processes go on in the learning process. I would be extremely careful about supporting any kind of process that is geared toward promoting the divisions that we have in the state.

**OITM:** Legislation has been introduced in the Senate (S.55) that would permit Justices of the Peace to refuse to perform civil unions. What is your position on that bill?

**Hogan:** That's a public official and a public official has the responsibility to do their job as prescribed in law. You can't have laws that say well sometimes you can exercise that responsibility and sometimes you can't.

**OITM:** What is your position on the medical use of marijuana by people living with HIV and AIDS?

**Hogan:** My position is broader than the gay community and broader than AIDS. My basic belief is that if there is anything that a physician can do and prescribe to someone who is very ill and in pain, then it is a physician's responsibility to order that. So I think it is then the responsibility of the law to provide a framework for that to occur. So I would support prescribed marijuana use for pain relief.

**OITM:** As Governor, would you maintain a relationship with Vermont's gay community through an official liaison relationship?

**Hogan:** That's something I haven't thought about. The responsibility of a Governor is to understand all of the constituencies. To me the machinery on how you do it is secondary to the idea that you should have it. I think that machinery could look different from constituency to constituency. I don't have any preference for that particular machinery or other machinery but I do have a strong belief that every community should have some way of having a direct relationship with its Governor. And we're small enough in Vermont for that to happen.

**OITM:** Do you have any final message to Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community?

**Hogan:** Vermont is rich in its independent history and I think that solutions to some of the very difficult problems that we have are going to be best dealt with when our political process is not a prisoner to political parties. I've learned that deeply over the last months. We have been slipping down a partisan road that is making it very difficult to confront some of the very difficult things we are going to have to be dealing with. What makes Vermont work as well as it does is the range of the kind of folks who live and work here and get along. To me, that's what being Governor is all about, trying to find common ground rather than differences. ▼

*Paul Olsen writes for in newsweekly and lives in Colchester.*

## VT Unity Project Needs Your Help Survey Enclosed: Fill Out, Fold, Fasten & Mail

The Vermont Unity Project, a cooperative LGBTQ fundraising project of the Samara Foundation and The Vermont Community Foundation, wants your help.

Inserted in this copy of *Out in the Mountains* you will find a survey. The survey is part of the "needs assessment" component of the project,

which hopes to use the information to educate big-money grantors and funders to the needs of our LGBTQ communities.

"It's the first time the questions have been asked: what are we doing well, what do we need to do better, what aren't we doing at all that we should be," declared Samara

Executive Director Bill Lippert. "In the survey, we ask people to rate the importance of various issues and needs. What are the top three needs?" In addition, there's space for people "to project issues we haven't identified," he said.

Lippert emphasized that the questionnaire is completely any-

mous. Demographic data requested will be compiled, but no single record will be released, and no answers will be associated with a specific person's data. Every nonprofit in Vermont will have access to a report based on the aggregated data.

The needs assessment will help the Unity Project "prioritize"

grants from funds raised through the project. Organizations within the LGBTQ communities will also be surveyed.

The survey itself and the eventual report will be available online, according to Ted Looby, Administrative Director for Samara. The copy tucked into *OITM* this month is postage paid – just fill it out, fold it, seal it and drop it in a mailbox.

"In some sense, the needs assessment is also a gift to the community," said Lippert. "It's something that hasn't been done before." ▼