

High Profile, Three-Way Race For Lt. Governor

BY PAUL OLSEN

The three-way race to be Vermont's next Lieutenant Governor is likely to be one of the most spirited campaigns in the state this year. With different leadership styles, divergent opinions regarding the role of government, and opposing views on the future of civil unions, Republican Brian Dubie, Progressive Anthony Pollina, and Democrat Peter Shumlin offer gay men and lesbians clear choices regarding the future of Vermont.

For the second time, Republican Brian Dubie is running for Lieutenant Governor. Two years ago, he largely based his campaign on an anti-civil union theme. He lost to Lt. Gov. Doug Racine who is running for Governor this year. Dubie graduated from the University of Vermont, currently serves in the Vermont Air Guard, and works as a commercial pilot. His electoral experience includes serving on the Essex Junction School Board.

Progressive Anthony Pollina founded Rural Vermont, a farm advocacy organization; worked for U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-VT); and most recently served as policy advisor for the Vermont Public Interest Research Group. In his 2000 run for Governor, Pollina's support for gay marriage distinguished him from his opponents, Democratic Gov. Howard Dean and Republican Ruth Dwyer.

Democrat Peter Shumlin graduated from Wesleyan University, served in Vermont's House of Representatives from 1990-1992, and has represented Windham County in the Vermont Senate since 1993. In 1997, he was elected President pro-tempore of the State Senate. In addition to his work in the Vermont Legislature, Shumlin owns and operates a small business with his wife.

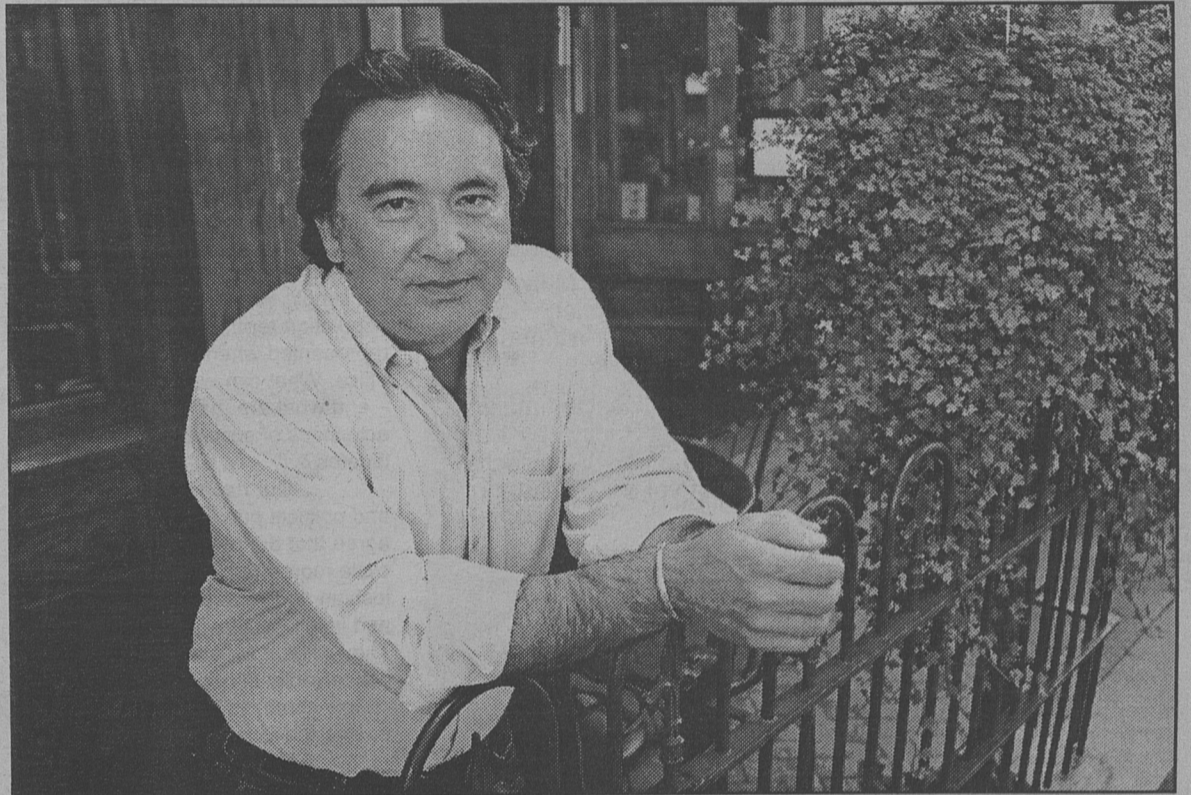
Both Pollina and Shumlin point to their support for gay rights as reasons why Vermont's gay and lesbian community should support their candidacies. "I've been a supporter for years of equal rights for all Vermonters," Pollina said in an interview. "I was a strong supporter of the civil unions law and I also do support the right to marry."

"I have years of experience as a community organizer, coalition builder, and legislative advocate," Pollina added. "There is no doubt in my mind that I can turn the Lieutenant Governor's office into a real voice and advocate for Vermonters. I have worked a lot with kids over the years and have committed myself to continuing to work with all kinds of kids, certainly with kids in the queer community who we know are exposed to a great deal of harassment and bullying in schools. There's a lot of work that we need to do in our schools to build respect and make our schools safe for all of our kids."

Shumlin believes his legislative record warrants evaluation by the gay community. "I don't think you'll find a candidate who has fought harder to help build a tolerant state than myself," he said.

"One of the things I'm most proud of about my thirteen years of public service in Vermont is my role as President Pro-tempore of the Senate when I succeeded in passing the civil union law. I was really proud to be in a position to move forward a civil rights issue that is so basic to human dignity and to be at that place in history at that time."

"We have a lot of work left to do," Shumlin added. "Vermont has led the country in civil rights for gay and lesbian Vermonters. We are incredibly proud of what we've achieved but we cannot underestimate the challenges before us. There's still tremendous hatred out there, there's tremendous discrimination, and there's tremendous anger at those of us who fought the fight. The Lieutenant Governor may well be



Top right, Anthony Pollina. Above left, Peter Shumlin, right, Brian Dubie.

the person who protects everything we have fought for through tie-breaking votes [in the State Senate]. I will never compromise on Vermonters' civil rights and I have proven it."

For his part, Republican Brian Dubie points to his work on the Essex Junction School Board as evidence of his support for the gay community. "There will be no one who is more concerned about violence or discrimination than Brian Dubie," he declared in an interview. "I proposed and initiated [a policy] that treated sexual orientation in our schools like we treat religion. We can and should talk about religion in a historical context for tolerance and understanding and that's the framework in which I proposed we take

when talking about sexual orientation."

In a recent interview with Vermont Public Radio (VPR), Dubie addressed a number of other issues of concern to gay and lesbian Vermonters. On VPR's Switchboard program Dubie said that although he opposes gay marriage, he is opposed to discrimination against gay men and lesbians. "I believe marriage is between a man and a woman and I believe in a Defense of Marriage Act that would describe that," he said. "I still think that that is a reasonable thing to do and if I had the opportunity, that's the kind of legislation that I would support."

"I'm an airline pilot," Dubie said when explaining his opposition to discrimination. "I

probably work with more gay and lesbian people than most Vermonters will ever meet in their life. I've flown airplanes with transsexuals, I've flown airplanes with gays, and I've worked with a lot of lesbian people. We have a zero tolerance policy at work on harassment. Without a doubt, no Vermonters of different sexual orientations or religious beliefs should feel threatened."

On November 5, Brian Dubie, Anthony Pollina and Peter Shumlin will face off at the ballot box. If no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote, the Vermont Legislature will decide the outcome of the race by secret ballot in January. ▼

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