

the rest of our world

Transgender Awareness Grows

WASHINGTON – According to a recent poll, most people accept that a person can be transgender, but more education is needed to help people better understand the lives of transgender Americans.

"The data shows that most people want to treat transgender Americans fairly and protect them from workplace discrimination and hate crimes," said HRC Communications Director and Senior Strategist David M. Smith. "Still, the majority of Americans report being uncomfortable about transgender issues."

Celinda Lake, of the polling firm Lake Snell Perry & Associates Inc., said, "Most people accept that it is possible for a person to be 'born as one sex but inside feel like the other sex.' However, many are confused about what transgender means, and which people would be considered transgender."

"Three-quarters of those who say being transgender is a choice also see it as a moral issue," said Lake, "while two-thirds who do not see it as a moral issue say people are born transgender."

Among other findings:

- 61 percent believe the country needs laws to protect transgender people from discrimination.
- 57 percent incorrectly believe that it is not legal to fire a person just because they are transgender.
- 53 percent believe it is "all right" for a person to be transgender, while 37 percent believe that it is wrong.
- 77 percent of people believe that transgender students should be allowed to attend public schools.
- 48 percent of Americans would have "no problem" working with a transgender person, while only 8 percent claim they "would not" be willing to.

New Hampshire Governor Meets with Gay Dems.

BOSCAWEN, NH – The New Hampshire Stonewall Democrats made history last month by hosting Governor – and U.S. Senate candidate – Jeanne Shaheen. Shaheen met with gay and lesbian Granite Staters for a discussion on civil rights and the fall elections at a campaign event at the home of former openly gay State Senator Rick Trombly on October 12 in Boscawen.

Although Shaheen has previously hosted gay citizens at state functions, this marked the first time in state history that a sitting governor has attended a gay and lesbian event.

Jeanne Shaheen has a long history of support for New Hampshire's LGBT community. Shaheen, as governor, overturned the state's ban on gay adoption, implemented the New Hampshire Safe Schools Act, and officially proclaimed each June as Gay Pride Month. Shaheen remains the only elected official in the nation to vote for non-discrimination law while in the state Senate, and then sign it as Governor.

Anti-Gay General's Promotion Opposed By SLDN

WASHINGTON – President Bush has nominated Major General Robert T. Clark, former Commanding General of Fort Campbell, Kentucky, for promotion to Lieutenant General, the Army's second-highest rank. Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) has called on the Senate Armed Services Committee to reject Clark's nomination in light of the anti-gay climate that festered at Fort Campbell during his command.

In 1999, PFC Barry Winchell was murdered by fellow soldiers at Fort Campbell. Targeted because he was believed to be gay, PFC Winchell endured constant anti-gay harassment in the months leading up to his murder. A Department of Army Inspector General's report found that Major General Clark failed to order training on policies and issues involved in the murder.

"Major General Clark's conduct both before and after the murder of PFC Winchell raises serious questions about his leadership and commitment to the safety of those under his command," said SLDN Executive Director C. Dixon Osburn. "Clark's confirmation would be a dangerous endorsement of the pervasive anti-gay sentiment that infects our armed forces."

PFC Winchell's mother, Patricia Kutteles, has joined the organization in calling for Major General Clark's nomination to be rejected. "MG Clark's nomination by President Bush is disrespectful to every parent who has lost a child to the shadows of hate," said Mrs. Kutteles. "It disrespects our men and women in uniform, and sends a dangerous message that anti-gay harassment is condoned in our armed forces."

No opposing testimony was permitted at the hearing on the general's nomination for his third star.

Jeb Bush Shamed for Homophobic "Juicy Details"

WASHINGTON – The Human Rights Campaign called on Gov. Jeb Bush, R-Fla., to apologize for insensitive, homophobic remarks he made about two caregivers of a missing girl who were arrested on allegations of welfare fraud.

Rilya Wilson's mysterious disappearance in Miami eight months ago made national news and spotlighted Florida's embattled child welfare system, which has had difficulty keeping track of the whereabouts of children in its care.

When Wilson's caregivers, Pamela Graham and GERALYN Graham, were arrested, Bush told visiting legislators that he had "some juicy details": allegations that the two women were lesbians.

"While Bush is giving 'juicy details,' the details that people want to hear about are where is Rilya Wilson and what can Florida do to improve the health and welfare of its children?" said HRC National Field Director Seth Kilbourn. "Bush should apologize for his insensitive remarks and focus on the real issue that affect the lives of Floridians."

"Bush's comments were the kind of childish, locker-room homophobia all too prevalent on school campuses," said Nadine Smith, executive director of Equality Florida, the statewide GLBT organization. "His comments have the potential to send a dangerous message to those who run Florida's child welfare system, a message that disparages lesbian and gay childcare workers and foster parents."

No Gov't Money for Dyke Health

WASHINGTON – Despite the withdrawal of \$75,000 in promised – and budgeted – federal funding, more than 300 researchers, providers, activists, consumers and caregivers shared information, experiences and strategies at a national lesbian health conference in Washington, DC, in late September.

"The National Lesbian Health Conference is crucial to the advancement of lesbian health on all levels," said Kathleen DeBold, Executive Director of the Mautner Project, which organized the three-day conference.

Because of higher risk factors for certain diseases and barriers to accessing health care, lesbians are recognized as a medically underserved population by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women's Health (OWH) had budgeted \$75,000 to help underwrite the 2002 National Lesbian Health Conference. But senior HHS officials overrode the OWH decision, informing the Mautner Project that the Conference did not fit HHS Secretary Tommy Thomson's vision for women's health.

"It's shocking that the agency charged with guarding our nation's health actively undermined the advice of their own experts," said DeBold. "Thanks to the support of [conference] sponsors – including American Airlines, the Susan G. Komen Foundation, American Legacy Foundation, Uncommon Legacy, Astraea, Human Rights Campaign, and the Gill Foundation – the Mautner Project was able to provide scholarships and sliding-scale registration fees to speakers and participants who would otherwise have been unable to attend."

The conference was planned and sponsored by a coalition of more than 60 groups and agencies.

LSNB Launches "Shame On You!" Campaign

SUNNYVALE, CA – Love Sees No Borders, an educational organization focused on raising awareness of the plight of same-sex binational couples and their fight to remain together, has announced the launch of the "Shame on You!" public relations campaign. The campaign's goal is to raise awareness in the international arena about issues faced by same-sex binational couples in the United States, while also providing Americans and their foreign partners living abroad an avenue to fight for their rights.

"The lack of same-sex immigration rights in the U.S. affects people in many countries," said Leslie Bulbuk, co-founder of Love Sees No Borders. "Educating the international community and garnering its support is as vital as educating Americans in our fight for immigration equality."

Love Sees No Borders is asking for help from Americans and their foreign partners who are forced to live abroad because of lack of recognition of their relationships for immigration purposes. Everyone is encouraged to participate, especially individuals living in any of the 15 countries that do recognize same-sex couples for immigration purposes: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Information on the campaign is available at www.loveseesnoborders.org.

Church Political Speech Protection Act Defeated

WASHINGTON – A bill opposed by a broad coalition of allies in the civil rights and religious community, the House of Worship Political Speech Protection Act (H.R. 2357) failed in the House of Representatives. The bill would have permitted churches, synagogues, and other houses of worship to engage in partisan political activity without losing their tax-exempt status. It not only failed to garner the two-thirds vote necessary to pass the legislation under suspension of the rules, but failed to receive even a majority vote. The legislation failed on a 239-178 vote, with 46 Republicans opposing the measure.

"While we are troubled that the bill was able to come up at all, we are relieved that the House very clearly recognizes that churches, synagogues and other religious institutions should continue to have the same rights and privileges as other non-profit groups," said Human Rights Campaign Political Director Winnie Stachelberg. "We believe that all tax-exempt advocacy organizations should be treated equally under the law – regardless of where they fall on the ideological spectrum."

Under current laws all 501(c)(3)s, including organizations like the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, Mountain Pride Media, and most churches, synagogues and other religious institutions, are strictly prohibited from engaging in partisan political activities. If a tax-exempt organization participates in partisan political activity, it must forfeit its tax-exempt status.

Among the groups joining the HRC in opposition to the measure were the Interfaith Alliance, the American Jewish Committee, the Congress of National Black Churches, the NAACP and the Presbyterian Church.

MCC Calls for Peaceful Resolution with Iraq

WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA – The Board of Elders of Metropolitan

Community Churches, a predominantly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Christian denomination, has issued a declaration of conscience and a call to peace in US relations with Iraq.

"Today we call for all governments, faith communities, and international justice organizations – along with all people of goodwill – to work for peace and to call for restraint in the conflict with Iraq," read the declaration.

"We call upon all people of faith and people of goodwill everywhere, especially our sisters and brothers in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities who know first hand what it means to be vilified, labeled and violently attacked ... to join with the friends and members of Metropolitan Community Churches to oppose any further acts of aggression against Iraq. We must stand together unequivocally for peace," the statement read in part.

Further, the statement declared, "This is neither an issue of political affiliation nor nationalistic loyalty." The elders called upon Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to "honor U.N. resolutions," upon President George Bush to foster peace "by encouraging people of diverse faiths and cultures to come together" and on "all nations to avoid the dangerous precedent of the use of preemptive military force."

Supreme Court Rejects Trans Inheritance Case

WASHINGTON – On the first Monday of October, the opening of the Supreme Court Session, the Court rejected a case brought by a transgender wife, J'Noel Ball Gardiner, over who should inherit the estate of her husband, who died without a will.

Under Kansas law, Ms. Gardiner, whose marriage was called into question after her husband, Marshall Gardiner, died in 1999, should have been entitled to half of her husband's estate. Her husband's son, Joe Gardiner, wanted the marriage invalidated on the grounds that J'Noel, a transsexual, had been born male.

Joe Gardiner challenged J'Noel's inheritance claims in probate court, and a trial court agreed with the son. But a Kansas Appellate Court later overturned the decision. The Appellate Court ruled that gender is not fixed and that gender at the time of marriage is the determining factor in the validity of that marriage.

The Kansas Supreme Court, in a 9-0 decision, ruled that J'Noel was "male for purposes of marriage." Relying heavily on dictionary definitions, the Kansas Supreme Court announced: "The words 'sex,' 'marriage,' 'male,' and 'female' in everyday understanding do not encompass transsexuals. ... A post-operative male-to-female transsexual does not fit the common definition of a female." ▼