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Statement of Purpose
 The purpose of Out In The Mountains [OITM] is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see OITM as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

Editorial Policy
 We will consider for publication any material that broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of Out In The Mountains. This paper, as a non-profit organization, cannot and will not endorse any political candidates. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic.

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Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and a contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

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editorial

Homophobia, Continued

Just in case you thought we have arrived in an era where working for glbtq rights is passé, unnecessary, where we can just be assimilated and live like everyone else, here are two instructive stories.

In mid-April, the Douglas Administration proposed regulations that would ignore the Vermont Civil Union law when assessing a same-sex couple for eligibility for Medicaid funding for long-term care. It's one of those things you hope never to need to know, but here it is.

Medicaid is made up of a combination of state and federal funding. Under federal regulations, the state would not include a same-sex civil union partner's income when assessing the resources of a low-income gay man or lesbian in need of long-term care. This is the infamous "spend-down" provision: how poor do we have to get before Medicaid kicks in?

The existing regulation requires the state to assess the financial resources of both partners in a marriage when one spouse needs Medicaid-funded long-term care. But the proposed regulation might end up costing the state money by excluding consideration of a civil union spouse's financial resources.

Confused yet?

It's one of those places where equality would cost gay men and lesbians money, and even so, we want it. It's like the "marriage tax." As Rep. Bill Lippert said, it's what we "deliberately established" in the civil union legislation: all the rights, benefits, and responsibilities of marriage, including supporting each other when we're ill.

The regulation was approved by the Legislature's Administrative Rules Committee, but as of press time, there was a move afoot to reconsider. The regulation ignoring the state civil union law for Medicaid purposes could still be imposed by the Administration over the objection of the legislature. But if it was ever contested in court, the burden of proof would fall on the state rather than on the plaintiffs.

Bottom line: state regulations should be the same for all of us, and the Douglas Administration is apparently attempting an end-run around the civil unions law, nibbling away at our new parity by regulation instead of legislation. And they're doing it just as we're celebrating the third anniversary of the signing of the civil unions bill into law on April 26.

The second story involves the comments of Pennsylvania Republican Senator Rick Santorum, third in the Republican lead-

ership line in the Senate. In an interview with the Associated Press, transcripts of the relevant parts of which were circulated in the Internet, Santorum outlined his view of homosexuality as on a par with bigamy, polygamy, incest, and adultery. He suggested that if the Supreme Court overturned Texas's same-sex sodomy law in a finding supporting a right to privacy for consensual sexual acts within one's home, then those "deviant" acts are what will result. According to Santorum, the state should have the right to regulate (read "criminalize") any sexual activity that is not occurring within a heterosexual marriage created to beget children.

His comments were carefully hedged with statements insisting that he has "no problem with homosexuality. I have a problem with homosexual acts."

All the usual suspects among the glbtq rights organizations have sent out emails blasting Sen. Santorum's bigoted and offensive remarks and calling for him to apologize or resign from his leadership posts.

Among the Democratic candidates for president, Sen. Bob Kerry was first off the mark with a one-paragraph statement castigating the White House for its support for Santorum.

Second across the line was our own former Governor Howard Dean, who seems to have recognized the value of his glbtq constituency only since leaving the governorship. He actually issued two responses, a day apart, the first of which cited the anniversary of his signing the civil union law on April 26.

What is more interesting to media-watchers is that the press release was distributed by Witeck-Combs Communications, an out gay public relations firm.

Dean said, "That a leader of the Republican Party would make such insensitive and divisive comments - comments that are derogatory and meant to harm an entire group of Americans, their friends and their families - is not only outrageous, but deeply offensive."

"The silence with which President Bush and the Republican Party leadership have greeted Senator Santorum's remarks is deafening. It is the same silence that greeted Senator Lott's offensive remarks in December. It is a silence that implicitly condones a policy of domestic divisiveness, a policy that seeks to divide Americans again and again on the basis of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation."

"It is a policy that must end, and it is a policy that will end with a Dean Presidency."

And in the second release, he said, "Sen. Santorum has refused to apologize for his repugnant remarks, calling his comments 'a legitimate public policy discussion.' Gay-bashing is not a legitimate public policy discussion; it is immoral."

We cannot rest, friends. Bigots are everywhere and in Bush's America we're criminals in too many places. Write letters, march, make your voice heard and your presence known in your town, state, and nation in whatever way works best for you. Silence will not help.

A Quiet, Powerful Impact

We note with sadness the sudden death late last month of Kathleen Layman, age 48, of Richmond, Vermont. Kathleen lived on the western end of town, where she and her partner Annie Condon built an indoor pool and spa. Kathleen had coached UVM's divers, then taught Richmond's children to swim, coached the Blue Dolphins swim team, ran aquatic fitness classes for adults, and taught adaptive aquatics programs for disabled youths.

Not known as an activist on gay and lesbian issues, she worked with the town's children and made a quiet and powerful impact as a positive, trustworthy role model for athletic achievement, a level of involvement that is as important as marching in demonstrations. Parents whose children were on the swim team praised her ability to build confidence in her young competitors.

Kathleen was also a talented landscape photographer.

She continued to help others after her death through the arrangements she had made for organ donation.

Kathleen is survived by her partner, Annie, and their three children. The family asked that anyone wishing to make a memorial contribution contact the American Civil Liberties Union (phone: 212-549-2585).

We did not know her, but we wish we did. We drove past the sign for her spa and fitness center many times, thinking we should go, and never did. And now we can't. Carpe diem, seize the day. Every day tell those you love that you love them. Reach out to new people in our communities and welcome them. Speak your truth how ever you can. Love life and help kids do their best - that's what Kathleen did.

Euan Bear

at witt's end leah wittenberg

