

# the rest of our world

## Bait & Switch

Seattle – Check out Peacefire, the Seattle-based anti-censorship web site and mailing list ([www.peacefire.org](http://www.peacefire.org)) maintained by Bennett Haselton. The site says it is a “people for young people’s freedom of speech” organization.

One of its projects this spring was to investigate blocking software. In a test, Peacefire anonymously created “anti-gay” webpages and put them on free sites such as GeoCities. The “anti-gay” pages consisted entirely of quotes taken from the Web site of a prominent conservative group such as Focus on the Family, Family Research Council, the Official Dr. Laura web page, and Concerned Women for America.

Then, through anonymous HotMail accounts, Peacefire submitted each of these pages to the blocking companies for review, never stating that the hate speech came from conservative websites. Not knowing where they came from, all of the blocking software companies agreed to block each of these pages as hate speech.

Until they were told the sources for the anonymous web pages, that is. According to Peacefire, none of the companies – SurfWatch, Cyber Patrol, Net Nanny, Bess, WebSENSE and SmartFilter – has agreed to block the web sites of the organizations where the hate speech originated. Peacefire is not in favor of censorship, but apparently thinks hypocrisy and double standards are worse. Get the whole story at [www.peacefire.org/BaitAndSwitch/](http://www.peacefire.org/BaitAndSwitch/).

## Post Prints Gay Wedding Notice

Washington DC – The *Washington Post*’s first same-sex wedding announcement featured the Canadian marriage of nationally syndicated columnist Deb Price and her partner of 10 years, Joyce Murdoch – both former *Post* editors.

“We’re delighted to be able to share the joyful news of our marriage with all the *Washington Post*’s readers,” Murdoch said. “We are lawfully married, thanks to Canada. And the *Washington Post* should be heartily applauded for recognizing that simple reality and for showing us exactly the same respect it has always given married couples.”

Gay & Lesbian Advocates And Defenders met with the *Washington Post* last year to request that the newspaper change its policy,

whereby gay and lesbian couples’ announcements were relegated to a separate “Celebrations” section on a separate day from straight couples’ announcements. Currently, 209 papers print these announcements.

## Lesbian Elected to Colorado Senate

Denver – Jennifer Veiga won a Colorado special election in July to fill a vacancy in the state senate. She becomes just one of ten openly lesbian, gay or bisexual state senators currently serving in the country.

Veiga was the Democratic leader in the Colorado House before her move to the Senate, where she now represents portions of Denver and Adams counties as the Rocky Mountain State’s first openly lesbian (or gay) senator.

“I’m thrilled to have this opportunity to move to the Senate to continue working on behalf of Colorado’s working families, children and seniors,” Veiga told the Associated Press.

As a state representative, Veiga played a key role in defeating a bill that would have prevented adoptions by same-sex couples and has been a stalwart supporter of LGBT civil rights and hate crimes measures.

## Gay Snow Sports

London – It might be summer but last month, the creation of the International Gay & Lesbian Snowsports Association (IGLSA) was announced. The IGLSA, the only international Snowsports association of its kind, will represent the interests of gay and lesbian skiers, snowboarders, and snowmachine enthusiasts.

In its press release, the group announced that members will benefit from discounts on snow sports related equipment, travel, and accommodation, group holidays, access to resort reps, comprehensive online services, live weather and snow forecasts, resort and travel guides, and a lot more.

Founded by Matt Hobbs, the IGLSA has an online presence at [www.gayski.org](http://www.gayski.org), and has been recently approached to participate in a taskforce established to pursue the possibility of holding the first ever Gay Winter Games.

“There are so many gay and lesbian snowsports enthusiasts out there, which is apparent from the number of popular gay ski weeks and associated travel companies around,” says Matt Hobbs.

## MCC Church Goes Its Own Way

Dallas, TX – The Cathedral of Hope, a huge congregation formerly affiliated with the Metropolitan Community Church, has voted to dissolve its association with the predominantly gay denomination. Of the 1100 members present on the last Sunday in July, 89 percent voted to disaffiliate.

According to a protocol devised by the MCC for such situations, a proportional percentage of the church’s assets would be awarded to the minority group, which may join another MCC congregation in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

None of the reasons for the split were discussed in the MCC’s press release.

## Military Fails Antiharassment

Washington, DC – Members of Congress have asked the Department of Defense to implement a July 2000 Anti-Harassment Action Plan (AHAP) which includes steps to curb anti-gay harassment. In their letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, 22 congressional representatives conclude “that the Services are not in full compliance” with the plan.

The Anti-Harassment Action Plan was adopted in 2000, in the wake of PFC Barry Winchell’s murder at Fort Campbell, Ky. Created by a DoD Working Group, the plan includes 13 steps to curb harassment, including annual anti-harassment education and training, accountability for those who harass or condone harassment and measurement of each Service’s compliance with the AHAP.

The Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) found that “[t]he Department of Defense has failed to issue a single directive on harassment as required by the AHAP.” The <I>Conduct Unbecoming</I> report urged the Pentagon to fully implement the plan and critiqued each service’s progress in complying with the AHAP.

“This letter sends an important message to Pentagon leaders that they must do more to implement the Anti-Harassment Action Plan,” said SLDN Executive Director C. Dixon Osburn. “Past verbal commitments by military leaders have proven to be empty promises. The Pentagon must take its responsibility to end harassment and protect service members more seriously.”

## Gay Catholics Dispute Vatican Stand

Springfield, IL – Responding to the Vatican’s call for Roman Catholic politicians to vote against any measure offering legal recognition to same-sex marriage, the Rainbow Sash Movement of the U.S. (gblt Roman Catholics) issued a press release disputing the Vatican’s reasoning.

Rainbow Sash characterized the Vatican’s approach as needing “less hysteria and more reason” and implied that the reason for releasing the document now was to distract attention from the growing clergy sexual abuse scandal. The Papacy, said the press release, “has lost its moral compass.”

The Vatican has called for politicians *not* to follow their consciences on the issue of gay marriage in favor of deferring to Church doctrine. However, says Rainbow Sash, “Does the Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith really believe that God speaks directly to the Vatican, and the Vatican in turn will tell Catholic politicians how to vote? Or that the sense of the faithful can be overridden by Vatican Clerics?”

The Vatican’s document “is based on fear ... [and] shows a certain negative bias towards western cultures, and a clear disdain for the democratic process, and it ignores the separation of Church and state that is one of the cornerstones of Democratic societies.”

The Rainbow Sash Movement has a website at [www.rainbowsashmovement.org](http://www.rainbowsashmovement.org).

## CA Gov Signs Trans Equality Bill

Sacramento, CA – Politically embattled California Governor Gray Davis presented the gift of freedom to thousands of his fellow Californians last month by signing Assembly Bill 196. The measure clarifies the state’s Fair Employment and Housing Act by including gender-identity and expression. California now becomes the most populous jurisdiction to enact equal rights for transgendered citizens.

The bill was introduced by Assemblymember Mark Leno (D-San Francisco), sponsored by Equality California (EqCA), and formally supported by more than 50 other local, state and national groups. It achieved the status of law on its third attempt.

“I’m amazed – and pleased

– that Gov. Davis chose to sign this bill, even in the midst of mounting attacks from the religious right and from the conservatives behind the recall attempt,” said Gwen Smith, founder of Remembering Our Dead, a website devoted to transgender victims of murder.

The amended California law describes discrimination based on ‘sex’ as including discrimination based on ‘gender,’ which includes a person’s “identity, appearance or behavior whether or not that identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person’s sex at birth.” Thus, the law protects effeminate men and masculine-appearing women as well as the transgendered.

## Library Backs Down

Topeka, KS – Responding to a letter from the American Civil Liberties Union, the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library has conceded that, under the law, it cannot forbid one of its employees from talking at work about the recent historic Supreme Court ruling banning sodomy laws.

Dick Kurtenbach, Executive Director of the ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri, said, “We’ve made certain that the public library understands that it cannot strip Bonnie Cuevas of her constitutional right to free speech by prohibiting her from ever talking about this important development at work.”

On the day after the ruling, Bonnie Cuevas, a longtime Topeka activist and member of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), had been ordered by two library managers to never again discuss at work the decision and its impact on her family. Under the law, public employees – such as people who work at public libraries or for the government – may discuss matters of public concern at the workplace as long as that speech doesn’t interfere with the employees’ ability to do their jobs, the ACLU said.

“Everyone who supports the rights of gay people needs to speak out and work to make gay people truly equal,” said Ken Choe, a staff attorney with the ACLU’s Lesbian and Gay Rights Project. ▼