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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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guest editorial

Restoration and Healing

As I contemplate returning to the Vermont House in January for the second half of the 2003 – 2004 session, I'm looking at a House of Representatives which for the third consecutive year is under the control of legislative leadership that came to power in the backlash election of 2000 following our Vermont LGBT community's most historic achievement – the passage of Civil Unions.

The good news is that the Civil Unions law – under which over 800 Vermont couples have now been joined in Civil Union and gained the legal rights (that Vermont can bestow under Vermont law) of married heterosexual couples – is now an accepted part of the Vermont legal landscape, and is no longer in any real danger of repeal.

The remaining bad news is that the coalition of legislators, made up of mostly Democrats, Progressives, and some liberal/moderate Republicans that passed the Civil Unions law of 2000 is no longer in charge of the Vermont House – and, as a result, no longer in charge of the House political agenda.

It is true, Civil Unions is no longer in danger of being repealed. But we are not done. Our LGBT community's political work – and our healing and the restoration of our community – is not really complete until we make the Vermont legislature, and particularly the Vermont House, "whole again." Vermont's LGBT communities must recognize that the legislative coalition which brought us Civil Unions is no longer in power, in very large part because of the specific political risks taken by legislators who supported this historic piece of

legislation.

As members of the Vermont LGBT communities we must commit ourselves to work actively to return to power in 2004 – in the Vermont House and in the Governor's office – and to sustain in the Senate – a coalition of legislators who come to the Statehouse principally representing issues outside of the so-called "gay agenda" – issues concerning the environment, women's rights, economic justice, worker's rights, educational reform.

Despite fears that supporting Civil Unions might lead to the loss of their own personal political position and power, and the loss of control of a broader legislative agenda for which they cared deeply, nevertheless, many legislators and legislative leaders rose to the occasion in the spring of 2000, risked their political careers, and voted for Civil Unions – for us.

Some legislators lost their House or Senate seats because of that vote. But equally important is the fact that those legislators who supported Civil Unions, and who were re-elected, by and large came back as a *minority* coalition, having won their legislative seats but no longer controlling the broader legislative agenda about which they care, and which they put at risk with their vote.

We succeeded in passing Civil Unions. We succeeded in keeping Civil Unions from being repealed.

But our Civil Union opponents succeeded in taking control of the political leadership of the Vermont House and of the broader political agenda.

As a member of the Vermont lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, I call

on us to continue our political efforts. We must not be absent in the coming political season just because Civil Unions is now safe from repeal.

It continues to be our turn, individually and as the LGBT community, to stand up for the political allies who stood up for us – when we most needed their support.

Individually we do not have to fully agree on every aspect of each gay-positive candidate's or incumbent legislator's political platform. We must recognize, however, that until we return this coalition to political power, neither our continuing LGBT equality agenda nor their broader agendas can move forward politically, under the current legislative leadership that fought against our community's legislative work.

How will we know when we have been successful? Our success will be measured when we have helped return to Montpelier's golden dome a coalition of legislators and a partner in the governor's office who would have passed Civil Unions, and who can once again focus their energies on a broader legislative agenda that benefits us all.

The November 2004 elections are 13 months away. It will be too late if we wait until the fall of 2004 to become active politically. October, 2003 is just the right time to begin strategizing how Vermont's LGBT communities, and how each of us individually, can become involved in the upcoming political campaign to fully reclaim Vermont government – for our LGBT communities and for our political allies who stood with us in the political battles of the year 2000.

Rep. Bill Lippert
Hinesburg

OITM Editor Wins National Award

When the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association announced its annual Excellence in Journalism award winners at press time last month, OITM Editor Euan Bear's name was on the list.

Bear won a third-place certificate in the Excellence in Writing Opinion/Editorial category. First place (and \$500) went to conservative gay commentator Andrew Sullivan for a piece in *Time* magazine. Second place was awarded to *Dallas Morning News* columnist Steve Blow.

Judges from the *St. Petersburg Times*, the Associated Press, the *Rutland Herald*, the *Miami Herald*, and the *New York Daily News* cited two editorials in

Bear's third place award: "Passing On" (October 2002) and "Making a Difference" (November 2002). Pulitzer Prize-winning editor and Vermonter David Moats was on the judging committee.

Bear had been notified in mid-August of the award, but the news was embargoed until the day before the presentations were made at the NLGJA's national convention in Los Angeles.

The NLGJA honored *Los Angeles Times* film critic Kevin Thomas with its Lifetime Achievement Award. Thomas is only the second recipient of that award; the first was the late AIDS writer and journalist Randy Shilts. Writer Patrick Letellier became the first recipient of the Sara Pettit

Memorial Award, in honor of the *Out* magazine cofounder who died in January at age 36 of non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

The NLGJA awards were established in 1993 to foster, recognize and reward excellence in journalism on issues related to the gay and lesbian community. Awards were presented in seven categories: Written News/Feature, Written Opinion/Editorial, Radio, Television, Photojournalism, New Media, and LGBT Media.

Samara Foundation Director Bill Lippert announced Bear's award at the Samara Foundation Thank You event at the State House on September 12, saying that it was yet another cause for celebration for the work of grant

recipients to further the wellbeing of the LGBTQ community. OITM is partially funded through a Samara Foundation grant to its nonprofit publisher Mountain Pride Media.

Bear, contacted at the OITM office, said she was thrilled by the award, and both gratified and a little embarrassed at its announcement at the Samara event. "This is such strange company to be in," she said, referring to *Time* magazine and the *Dallas Morning News*, a metropolitan daily newspaper. "It makes me laugh," she said with a chuckle. "There they are, these big news outlets, and then there's us – a tiny, under-funded, non-profit, mostly volunteer monthly paper in small-town Vermont." ▼