

the rest of our world

Conciseness Counts?

St. Louis – Here is the entire text of presidential candidate Richard Gephardt's statement on President George W. Bush's support for an anti-gay marriage constitutional amendment, all three sentences:

"It is time for President Bush to end his alliance with homophobic bigotry once and for all and speak out against the Republican Party's hostile election-year attempt to amend the United States Constitution to include a ban on gay marriage. Throughout our history, the Constitution has been amended to afford expanded rights to disenfranchised citizens, not to unfairly single out a particular group of Americans by limiting their rights. The president should stand up against these kinds of intolerant forces in his own party and should espouse views of tolerance and equality that truly reflect the values of the American people."

Gephardt is on record as not supporting gay marriage, although he would support a civil union-type arrangement.

Bush Congratulates MCC?

West Hollywood – During the same week that President Bush endorsed the anti-gay Marriage Protection Week, he sent enthusiastic 35th anniversary congratulations to Metropolitan Community Churches, a group that performs more than 6000 same-sex weddings annually.

President Bush's letter to MCC Los Angeles left Rev. Neil Thomas, senior pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles, baffled. "How does one denounce the right of gays and lesbians to marry in their churches and suggest they are incapable of having healthy marriages in one moment, and in the next rejoice in God's faithfulness to a gay and lesbian congregation that performs such same-sex marriages?" Rev. Thomas asked.

Clark Says Review Service Ban

Boston – Early last month, during the America Rocks the Vote live forum for youth, General Wesley Clark said, "I think everybody deserves the right to serve. And when I am president, I'm going to make sure that we treat every man, woman, and child in America with dignity and respect. And that includes the opportunities to serve in the United States armed forces."

As announced by the Servicemembers Legal Defense

Network, Clark called on military leaders to review the policy saying it "needs to be reviewed because there are so many indications that it's not working."

US Naval Academy Alumni Out

Annapolis, MD – For the first time, a U.S. service academy alumni association will be asked to recognize its gay, lesbian, and transgendered graduates by creating a chapter for them.

On Veteran's Day, former U.S. Navy officer Jeff Petrie and a contingent of other former naval officers who served with distinction presented a proposal to establish a gay alumni association chapter – USNA Out – to the United States Naval Academy Alumni Association. The proposal included the bylaws and a roster of more than 25 members, as required to organize a new chapter.

Petrie, a 1989 Naval Academy graduate who is gay, worked with fellow graduates and the unrecognized Service Academy Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association. "The environment at Annapolis has been disapproving and damaging for high-achieving gays and lesbians for many years," Petrie said.

No NJ Gay Marriage Yet

Trenton, NJ – A lower state court ruled last month against legalizing marriage for same-sex couples in New Jersey. The seven plaintiff couples have been together between 11 and 32 years. Five of them have children. All of them need the legal security that comes with marriage but has been denied to them.

"This ruling propels us forward to higher courts where both sides have always known it will be decided," said David Buckel, Lambda Senior Staff Attorney, as he announced that the ruling will be appealed.

The words "husband," "wife," "spouse," or some form of the word "marry" appear in more than 850 provisions of New Jersey law. The New Jersey Supreme Court will have the last word.

Dakota Court Scraps Anti-Gay Ruling

Bismarck, ND – Unanimously agreeing to allow a lesbian mother to maintain custody of her two children, last month the North Dakota Supreme Court struck down a 1981 decision used to deny custody of children solely because of a parent's sexual orientation. The court ruled

that possible prejudice from others is not a valid reason to take children from lesbian and gay parents.

The court had ruled 22 years ago that having lesbian or gay parents was inherently harmful to children because they may suffer "the slings and arrows of a disapproving society."

"It seemed inconceivable to me that my children could be taken away simply because other people might be prejudiced against us," said Valerie Damron, represented by the American Civil Liberties Union. "I'm thrilled that the court saw that it was wrong to punish us for other people's bigotry."

The decision leaves only four states – Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia – where courts still deny custody based on sexual orientation alone.

C.U. Bill in Massachusetts

Boston – A group of leading state Democratic House members, working in secret, launched an effort early last month to devise a bill that would greatly expand legal rights for gay couples in Massachusetts. Led by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman John Rogers, long viewed as a foe of gay rights, the group is seriously considering a compromise that would outlaw gay marriage while approving Vermont-style civil unions here.

As reported in the *Boston Globe*, the members plan to draft a bill and hope the Legislature will act on it before the Supreme Judicial Court issues its ruling on whether to legalize gay marriage. That ruling was issued November 18.

Golfer Reveals Prejudice

Washington DC – PFLAG announced its dismay at racist and homophobic comments made by LPGA player Jan Stephenson in the November issue of *Golf* magazine. Stephenson asserted women's golf is being hurt, saying "The Asians are killing our tour," and "Society is more open now about gay relationships, but it does hurt the tour. It hurts with sponsors. But if you had two gorgeous girls who were gay, I don't think that would hurt." Although she has apologized to the Asian community for her racist comments, she has yet to apologize to the GLBT community.

"This is demeaning to all GLBT people, especially to the athletes and their families. That they should be singled out and ridiculed for their sexual orientation is disgust-

ing," said David Tseng, Executive Director of PFLAG.

Stephenson, recognized during the LPGA's 50th Anniversary as one of the organization's top 50 players, is known for believing that women should use sex appeal to market their sport.

No Penis = No Cheating

Concord, NH – When a woman cheats on her husband in a lesbian affair, it isn't adultery. At least so says the New Hampshire Supreme Court in a 3-2 ruling. The court ruled that a Dartmouth College professor cannot use same-sex adultery as a ground for divorcing his wife. Adultery, the court said, takes place only when the extra-marital sexual liaison involves a man and a woman.

Justice Joseph P. Nadeau wrote for the majority that New Hampshire law defines adultery as "sexual intercourse" outside of marriage. Sexual intercourse, as defined in Webster's, requires a male organ and a female organ in a sexual connection, "which clearly can only take place between persons of the opposite gender," Nadeau wrote.

The Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders in Boston submitted a brief in the case as a "friend of the court," taking the position that cheating was cheating, regardless of the sexuality of the partners.

Nadeau stressed that the decision was not a gay rights issue. "This appeal is not about the status of homosexual relationships in our society or the formal recognition of homosexual unions," he said.

AIDS Dollars Under Religious Threat

Washington, DC – Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) sent a letter last month instructing the Dept. of Health & Human Services to investigate how an anti-gay lobby came up with a hit list of AIDS research grants. Each of the programs listed studied sexual behavior. The Traditional Values Council compiled information on nearly 300 grants, including authors, dollar amounts awarded and concise descriptions of the studies, and forwarded the list to conservative members of Congress for targeting. Andrea Lafferty, executive director of TVC, claimed the NIH needs "adult supervision," and has asked for a Justice Department investigation of the grants.

Rep. Waxman denounced the review as "scientific

McCarthyism" and called the document a "hit list" created by right wing ideologues.

Ohio City Offers DP Registry

Cleveland Heights, OH – In a victory for the LGBT community last month, voters overwhelmingly supported Issue 35, establishing a domestic partner registry. While domestic partner registries exist in more than 60 localities across the country, the win marks the first time in 13 years that a domestic partner registry has been adopted via ballot.

Collaboration between Heights Families for Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force helped secure the victory. "Cleveland Heights represents the future for advancing equal rights for [LGBT] people," said Dave Fleischer of the Task Force. "Instead of waiting for the next attack by a homophobic ballot initiative, we go on the offensive and speak directly to voters about issues affecting our community."

The registry, open to both same-sex and opposite-sex couples, will provide committed couples a certified record of their relationship. While conferring no benefits, this documentation has been used to secure basic rights in other jurisdictions with registries.

Taiwan & Gay Marriage

Taipei, Taiwan – Taiwan's government is drafting legislation to legitimize same-sex marriages, a cabinet official told Agence France-Presse last month. If Parliament passes the law, Taiwan would be the first country in Asia to legalize marriages among people of the same sex.

Jointly drafted by the presidential office and the cabinet, the proposed Human Rights Protection Law is designed to protect basic human rights. President Chen Shui-bian announced that the government is seeking to legitimize same-sex marriages and recognize the right of same-sex couples to adopt children. The final draft of the bill is expected to be ready for parliamentary review in December. ▽