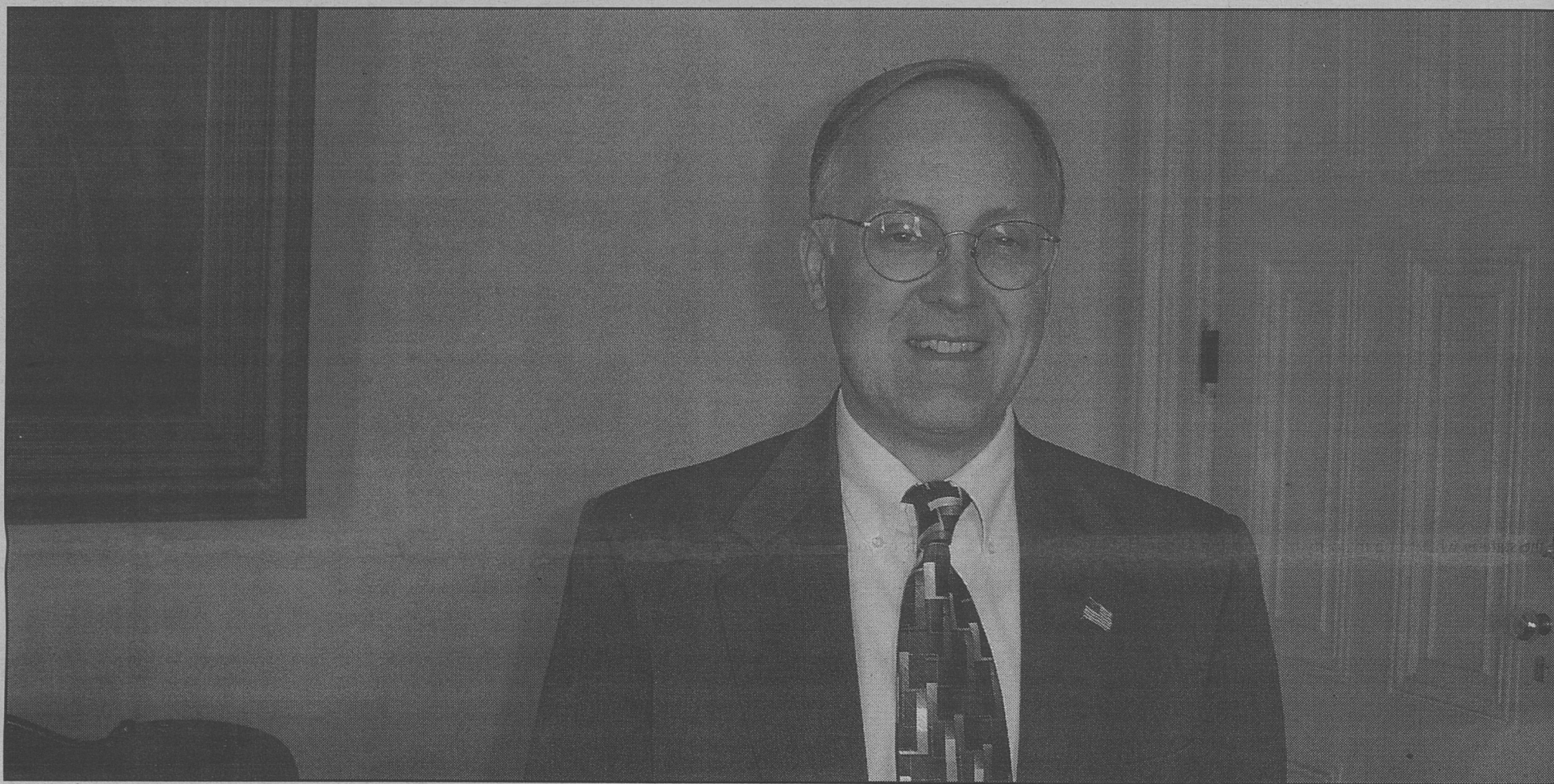


SIXTEEN QUEER QUESTIONS



OITM's Paul Olsen interviews Vermont's Republican Governor Jim Douglas

Just over one year into his first term, Gov. James Douglas (R) agreed to an interview with Out in the Mountains at his Montpelier office. The interview covered a broad range of issues, including gay marriage and civil unions, medical marijuana, Gay Pride Day, and making gay and lesbian appointments. Excerpts from the interview follow.

OITM: Shortly after the Supreme Judicial Court's decision legalizing gay marriages in Massachusetts you said you opposed amending the U.S. Constitution to prohibit gay mar-

riage. How did you come to this decision?

Douglas: I think each state can decide for itself how it wants to handle the issue. Vermont made a decision four years ago after our own Supreme Court decision and I think most Vermonters have come to accept the civil union statute that was enacted that year. I don't see the need for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

OITM: Will you discuss your opposition [to the Federal Marriage

Amendment] with President Bush?

Douglas: I don't know if that will come up. We have a lot of things to talk about when we meet with him. I expect that matters of education, human service programs and funding, homeland security, and other matters might be higher on everybody's agenda.

OITM: Amendments to the Vermont Constitution declaring same-sex marriage illegal have been introduced by Sens. Canns (R-Caledonia), Maynard (R-Rutland), Hull (R-Rutland), Mayo (R-

Caledonia), and Shepard (R-Bennington). What is your position on these amendments?

Douglas: I don't see the need for those proposals. The statute that passed four years ago when we enacted the civil union law restated the statutory definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman. That's sufficient as far as I am concerned. The Governor has no role in constitutional amendments. Obviously I could weigh in, but I don't have the role that I do in legislation.

OITM: State Rep. David Zuckerman (P-Burlington) introduced a bill (H.676) that would change existing civil unions to same-sex marriages in Vermont. What is your opinion of H.676?

Douglas: When Dave introduced it he admitted that it was an antidote to the constitutional amendment proposal in the (state) senate, so I don't know how serious he is in advancing it this session. I think we ought to leave the status quo alone. That's where most Vermonters would like to see the policy on same-sex unions. I

"The civil union law restated the statutory definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman. That's sufficient as far as I am concerned." Governor Jim Douglas