

# the rest of our world

## More Violence at Gay Youth

New York – Lambda Legal reported last month that it is expanding its youth rights educational campaign to communities where students have faced antigay actions in the aftermath of the election.

At a Salt Lake City high school, a policy now requires students to get permission from their parents if they want to take a same-sex date to a school dance. A Missouri school punished a student for wearing a gay pride shirt although antigay clothing is common at the school. The Texas Board of Education wouldn't approve health textbooks unless the text was changed to define marriage as between a man and a woman. A school board in Pleasant Valley, Iowa, passed a policy that prevents teachers from reading books with gay characters in class.

"We're alarmed by a noticeable increase in gay youth facing discrimination or hostility in just the last month since the election. While we've just been through a very contentious national election that focused a great deal on the rights of gay couples, that can't be allowed to threaten the well established rights of gay youth to be out, safe and respected in schools," said Michael Adams, Director of Education and Public Affairs at Lambda Legal.

## TWIRP Day Banned

Houston – According to an Associated Press report, a tiny Texas school district has scrapped plans to hold a homecoming tradition in which boys dress like girls and vice versa, thanks to a parent's complaint about the event's "homosexual overtones."

Instead of corrupting malleable young minds with the gender-role switching "TWIRP Day," the elementary to senior high schools held "Camo Day" for the militarily inclined or indoctrinated, with black boots and Army camouflage to be worn by everyone who wants to participate.

TWIRP stands for "The Woman Is Requested to Pay," a switch on traditional roles wherein the man pays for date expenses. Spurger schools had celebrated the event, a kind of "Sadie Hawkins" celebration, for years during Homecoming Week.

Delana Davies, 33, said she complained after reading a school notice about TWIRP Day. "It's like experimenting with drugs," said Davies, whose 9-year-old son and 4-year-old daughter attend Spurger schools. "You just keep playing with it and it becomes customary. ... If it's OK

to dress like a girl today, then why is it not OK in the future?"

## Hoosiers Expand Gay Parents' Rights

Bloomington – The Indiana Court of Appeals ruled late last year that lesbian partners in Indiana who agree to conceive a child through artificial insemination are both the legal parents of any children born to them.

According to the Associated Press, in a unanimous ruling, the court chided state lawmakers for being slow to deal with advances in reproductive technology and urged the General Assembly to address the "current social reality" of unconventional families.

"No (legitimate) reason exists to provide the children born to lesbian parents through the use of reproductive technology with less security and protection than that given to children born to heterosexual parents through artificial insemination," Judge Ezra H. Friedlander wrote.

The court's decision overturns a ruling by a Circuit Court judge who found that a Bloomington woman, Dawn King, had no legal standing with the girl born to her former partner, Stephanie Benham, because King was not a biological parent.

Previously in Indiana, the only way for same-sex partners to each attain legal parent status was through a "second-parent adoption," a costly undertaking that grants parental rights to a non-biological parent. Some judges in Indiana have refused to allow second-parent adoptions for same-sex partners.

## Official Cohabitation

Los Angeles – The Housing Authority of Santa Monica agreed, after ACLU intervention, to allow a gay man on disability to live with his partner of ten years.

Gene Boccia, disabled since a 1974 hate crime, learned this fall, that he could apply to the Housing Authority to have his life partner Brett Crowley, a disabled vet, share his apartment with him. Although the couple has been together over ten years, they had always lived apart for fear of violating rules and jeopardizing their public assistance.

The Housing Authority failed to act on the couple's request until the ACLU intervened, pointing out that state and local law prohibit housing discrimination based on sexual orientation. Last month, the Housing Authority notified Boccia that

his request to share his apartment with Crowley was approved.

Because the two men could not live together, they were unable to apply to the state to become domestic partners. Now, they plan to register with the state and take advantage of the expanded protections afforded to domestic partners that are scheduled to take place on January 1, 2005.

## Let's Get Married, Eh?

Toronto – Canada's highest court said early last month the government can redefine marriage to include same-sex couples, but it added that religious officials cannot be forced to perform unions against their beliefs. As reported by the Associated Press, the ruling by the court in Ottawa brings to the final stages a long, bitter fight over whether gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry in Canada.

Judges in six provinces and one territory had already overturned the traditional definition, allowing thousands of same-sex weddings. Canada would join Belgium and the Netherlands in allowing gay marriage if the government acts to make it legal nationwide. To pass in the House of Commons, the legislation needs the approval of about 44 of the 95 Liberal members of Parliament to obtain the necessary majority.

One top Liberal predicted the legislation should pass easily after its introduction, likely early next year.

## Mega Church March

Washington – The National Black Justice Coalition, the nation's only national African American gay and lesbian advocacy organization, condemned an anti-gay march led by the Atlanta-based mega church, New Birth, under the leadership of Bishop Eddie L. Long. The focus of the march was to oppose the right of gays and lesbians to marry.

"Gay and lesbian couples deserve the same freedoms afforded to heterosexual couples in this country and African American gay and lesbian couples are no different," stated NBJC Board Member Jasmyne Cannick. "Black ministers should be marching to help garner more HIV/AIDS funding from the Bush Administration as a way of protecting the family instead of pushing a right-wing agenda designed to divide the black community."

The march was scheduled to start at the King Center. "To march from the King Center against the rights of gays is a slap in the face to the legacy of Dr. King," said NBJC

President Keith Boykin. "Dr. King said injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," added Boykin, "but Bishop Long seems to think that injustice against gays and lesbians is perfectly fine." Boykin noted that Coretta Scott King and many other civil rights veterans have spoken out in favor of marriage equality.

## Put Out Your Dyke Shoes

Zurich – Get your shoes out of the closet because the world's largest lesbian online community – www.shoe.org – celebrates the second "International SHOE Day" on March 4, 2005.

On that day, lesbians from all over the world will hang their shoes outside the window to show their lesbian pride and promote lesbian visibility.

The "International SHOE Day" idea was born from the basic need to know that you are not the only one. According to the press release, "Not all lesbians have a fully functioning gaydar and for many women it can get very lonely. Most probably have just one simple wish: that all lesbians woke up with green hair! Just for one day."

The organization behind the celebration claims 100,000 members across the globe.

## Oklahoma to OK Gay Adoptions?

Oklahoma City – In an order made public early last month, a federal judge gave the green light to Lambda Legal's lawsuit seeking to strike down Oklahoma's new antigay adoption law. The state had asked the court to dismiss the lawsuit filed against Oklahoma's Governor Brad Henry and Attorney General Drew Edmondson.

The law in question, passed hastily in the last legislative session, says that Oklahoma, "shall not recognize an adoption by more than one individual of the same sex from any other state or foreign jurisdiction." Lambda Legal represents same-sex couples who adopted children while living in other states and later moved to Oklahoma with their children or want to visit the state with their adopted children.

"The judge clearly sees how dangerous this law is for families in Oklahoma. The legislature singled out these families and tried to strip them of all legal protections, and that's unconstitutional," said Brian Chase, Staff Attorney with Lambda Legal.

## 'Bama Book Ban

Montgomery – An Alabama lawmaker who sought to ban gay marriages now wants to ban novels with gay characters from all public libraries. As reported in the *Birmingham News* last month, Republican Rep. Gerald Allen's proposed legislation would prohibit the use of public funds for "the purchase of textbooks or library materials that recognize or promote homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle." Allen said he filed the bill to protect children from the "homosexual agenda."

If this bill passes, Allen stated that novels with gay protagonists and college textbooks suggesting homosexuality is natural would have to be removed from all public and university library shelves and destroyed. Asked about Tennessee Williams' classic "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," Allen said the play probably couldn't be performed by university theater groups.

A spokesman for the Montgomery-based Southern Poverty Law Center called the bill censorship. "It sounds like Nazi book burning to me," said SPLC spokesman Mark Potok.

## Michigan Workers Lose Benefits

Washington, DC – The Human Rights Campaign denounced the decision to strip domestic partner benefits from Michigan state workers' contracts due to the passage of Proposal 2, an amendment to the Constitution that denies marriage to same-sex couples.

"We're deeply disappointed about this decision," remarked HRC National Field Director Seth Kilborn. "This is a dangerous move for thousands of families who are working just as hard as their co-workers but receiving no health insurance for their families."

## Pope: Gay Destroys

Vatican City – Pope John Paul launched a new assault on same-sex marriage, accusing gays of an "aggressive attempt to legally undermine the family," as reported by 365Gay.com last month. "Attacks on marriage and the family, from an ideological and legal aspect, are becoming stronger and more radical every day," he said.

The Pope also attacked couples who live together, abortion and artificial insemination.▼

Compiled this month by Susan McMillan.