

the rest of our world

House Expands Hate Crimes Bill

WASHINGTON, DC — The House voted last month in favor of the Children's Safety Act, which included an amendment by Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.) that expands current hate crime law to include some crimes involving sexual orientation, gender and disability, the *Washington Post* reported. The House has been the chief obstacle in numerous previous attempts to expand hate crimes law, and Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, said it was an "incredibly historic vote" that could give momentum to similar action in the Senate.

According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, if enacted into law, the amendment's provisions would extend existing federal hate crimes laws that already cover crimes motivated by race, color, national origin and religion to include crimes based on actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity, including gender-related characteristics. New gender identity/characteristics language was added just this year to make clear that the legislation applied to hate crimes against transgender people.

The amendment passed unexpectedly in a 223 to 199 vote with 30 Republicans in favor. The full bill later passed the House overwhelmingly.

Bed Check

VATICAN CITY — Investigators appointed by the Vatican have been instructed to review the 229 Roman Catholic seminaries in the United States for "evidence of homosexuality," *The New York Times* reported last month. The American archbishop supervising the seminary review said that "anyone who has engaged in homosexual activity or has strong homosexual inclinations," should not be admitted to a seminary. Edwin O'Brien, archbishop for the United States military, told *The National Catholic Register* that the restriction should apply even to those who have not been sex-

ually active for a decade or more.

American seminaries are under Vatican review as a result of the sexual abuse scandal that swept the priesthood.

Experts in human sexuality have cautioned that homosexuality and attraction to children are different, and that a disproportionate percentage of boys may have been abused because priests were more likely to have access to male targets, like altar boys, than to girls.

The seminary review, called an "apostolic visitation," will send teams appointed by the Vatican to the 229 seminaries, to interview more than 4,500 students. The visitors are to conduct confidential interviews with every faculty member and seminarian, and everyone who graduated in the last three years.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Leave

SANTA BARBARA, CA — The Pentagon's practice of prohibiting homosexuals from serving openly in the armed forces makes more people embarrassed by the military than proud of it, according to a University of California poll. According to the poll, 24 percent of respondents said that the policy embarrasses them, while 17 percent said that the policy makes them proud.

Conservatives were heavily over-represented in the pool of respondents because the sample was designed to match the characteristics of a cohort of new military recruits. Among respondents to the survey, 53 percent were Republicans, 29 percent were independent/other, and 17 percent were Democrats. All were between the ages of 18 and 24.

The survey was designed by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military, a research institute at the University of California.

In a related story released by the same institute, researchers have found a controversial regulation halting the discharge of gay soldiers in units that are about to be mobilized. The document is significant because of longstanding Pentagon denials

that the military requires gays to serve during wartime, only to fire them once peacetime returns. According to the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, gays and lesbians must be discharged whether or not the country is at war.

The regulation, contained in a 1999 "Reserve Component Unit Commander's Handbook" and still in effect, states that if a discharge for homosexual conduct is requested "prior to the unit's receipt of alert notification, discharge isn't authorized. Member will enter [active duty] with the unit."

Gay soldiers and legal groups have reported for years that known gays are sent into combat, and then are discharged when the conflicts end. Pentagon statistics confirm that, as in every war since World War II, gay discharges have declined during the current conflict in the Middle East.

CA Marriage Terminated

SACRAMENTO, CA — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced last month that he would veto a bill that would have made California the first state to legalize same-sex marriage through its elected lawmakers. The announcement came just days before he announced he would run for re-election.

365gay.com reported that Schwarzenegger said the legislation would conflict with the intent of voters when they approved Proposition 22 to prevent California from recognizing same-sex marriages performed in other states or countries.

"Out of respect for the will of the people, the governor will veto" the bill, said the governor's press secretary, Margita Thompson, despite the Governor's remark on the *Tonight Show* last year that gay marriage would be "fine with me."

Queer Books Banned

CHICAGO — Several states have proposed legislation and resolutions to restrict or prohibit access to materials related to sexual orientation. The American Library Association passed a resolution in June affirming the

inclusion of materials that reflect the diversity of our society and encouraging libraries to acquire and make available materials representative of all people.

"The voices and stories of gays and lesbians cannot be silenced in our culture or on our bookshelves," said ALA President Michael Gorman. "Banning books is an extreme disservice to our readers. Not only does it hinder tolerance and acceptance, it also limits the information exchange Americans hold dear."

Banned Books Week: Celebrating the Freedom to Read is observed during the last week of September each year. The annual event was begun in 1982.

Three of the books on the "Ten Most Challenged Books of 2004" list compiled by the American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom, were cited for homosexual themes — the highest number in a decade. The ALA received a total of 547 challenges last year, up from 458 in 2003.

Queer Higher Ed

CYBERSPACE — If you're hoping to locate a gay-friendly college where students and faculty will accept you as an out student, check out the latest issue of the *Princeton Review*, which provides a list of the most gay-friendly colleges in the United States.

According to responses from 110,000 students at 361 top colleges in the United States, New College of Florida ranks number one when it comes to having a campus community accepting of gay students. Located adjacent to the John Ringling Art Museum in Sarasota, New College also ranks as the number one most politically active school, and number one for having a near absence of inter-collegiate sports.

Filling out the top five positions for gay-friendly schools are Macalester College of St. Paul, Minn.; Wellesley College in Massachusetts; Eugene Lang College/New School University in New York City; and Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. The best school

for overall academic experience is Reed College in Portland, Oregon, but that school ranks 18th for being gay-friendly.

Bottoming the list as the least gay-friendly schools are Virginia's Hampden-Sydney College, the University of Notre Dame, and Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Will P-Town Fade?

PROVINCETOWN — For nearly 30 years, Provincetown has attracted the spectrum of people that the rainbow flag represents: gay and lesbian, old and young, rich and poor. Now, many people here say, with its widening gulf between the haves and the have-nots, a town that prided itself on its inclusiveness is beginning to resemble the rest of the United States, according to a *New York Times* story last month.

Marriage equality for state residents has intensified the transformation, according to Andrew Sullivan, the conservative gay writer who bought a small apartment here years ago. With nearly a sixth of all gay weddings performed in Massachusetts taking place here, Provincetown is reinventing itself as a utopia for upper-middle-class gay couples.

The average cost of a single-family house surged by 33 percent in the last two years, according to the Warren Group, a real estate records company in Boston. Other sources envision a less-gay Provincetown.

But Patrick Lamerson, a Bostonian who has been coming to Provincetown for 10 years, said that the rift in town was less between rich and poor than "between gays who need community and gays who don't." In the end, Provincetown "will go the way of other bohemian bastions that had their moment and then faded. It should be documented and mourned and remembered," he said, "and then people can move on." ▼

Compiled this month by Assistant Editor Susan McMillan.