

the rest of our world

DADT Closer to Repeal?

WASHINGTON DC – One hundred Members of Congress now support the Military Readiness Enhancement Act, a bill that would repeal the Don't Ask, Don't Tell ban on LGBT personnel. The measure is co-sponsored by Republican and Democratic lawmakers, as reported by U.S. Newswire in mid-November.

According to the Pentagon, more than 10,000 service members have been discharged for being gay, including nearly 800 with skills deemed "mission critical" by the Department of Defense.

"Despite shortages in many specialties and a shortfall in recruiting during 2005, Pentagon leaders recently chose to lower academic standards, raise the maximum enlistment age and waive some criminal convictions for new enlistees while continuing to turn away qualified gay Americans who want to serve," said Osburn, executive director of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network.

In a related story reported by U.S. Newswire, in late October the St. Louis Board of Aldermen approved a resolution urging Congress to repeal the military's discriminatory federal policy. The resolution was passed by unanimous vote.

Victory Fund Glass 2/3 Full

WASHINGTON DC – Nearly two-thirds of gay candidates endorsed by the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund won in early November, according to the Washington Blade.

Historical firsts for gay candidates include the first openly gay elected officials to the Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio, city councils, as well as the first openly gay city council member in Harrisburg, Pa.

Of the 41 candidates endorsed by the Victory Fund in elections held on November 8, 24 won outright, and two forced runoff elections. Of the Victory Fund's endorsed candidates 18 were incumbents; 10 of those won.

The gay officials elected in 2005 bring to 306 the total number of openly gay elected officials across the country.

Several of the victories were achieved in Georgia, while in New York three gay Republicans seeking office were defeated. Three other gay candidates in New York were successfully elected.

In Ohio, four of five openly gay candidates seeking office were declared winners.

Trans Cop Wins in Court

WASHINGTON DC – The Supreme Court refused last month to consider shielding employers from discrimination lawsuits by transsexuals, dodging a workplace rights fight, as reported by the Associated Press.

The court's refusal to intervene leaves in place a victory for Cincinnati Police Officer Philecia Barnes, who was born Phillip Barnes. A federal appeals court upheld a jury's finding that Barnes was a victim of discrimination under a federal civil rights law. The city was ordered to pay the officer \$320,000.

Barnes, a 24-year veteran of the Cincinnati police force, dressed as a man at work but as a woman during off-hours in 1999 when she was demoted. Barnes sometimes wore makeup to work and had manicured nails.

Richard Ganulin, one of the city attorneys, told justices that employers should be protected from discrimination lawsuits based on "transsexual and homosexual characteristics." The city maintains the demotion was for professional reasons.

At issue was the scope of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which protects people from sex or race discrimination, although sexual orientation is not covered in the law.

Holy Anus, Batman!

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA – Dr. Peet Botha, a well-known speaker on the unacceptability of homosexual acts, has come under fire because a section in his latest book is entitled *The Anus is Holy*, according to News24.com.

In the book, *Die Sinode en Homoseks (The Synod and Homosex)*, Botha warns that the church should stick to its stance on homosexual behavior.

Now a debate is raging on Die Kerkbode website (the official organ of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa) about a section of this book in which Botha, based on physiological reasons, argues that people's bodies are not suited to sex with someone of the same gender.

Botha defended himself by saying that the sanctity of the anus was not his own opinion, but something he found in a quotation by the "pro-homosexual" writer Ralph Barnard.

Bid 2 Beat AIDS on E-bay

CYBERSPACE – LIFEbeat is honoring World AIDS Day on December 1 with a massive eBay auction featuring hundreds of rare and auto-

graphed items from stars in music, film, theatre and television.

Proceeds benefit LIFEbeat with a portion of the money earmarked to help rebuild AIDS-related services in the devastated Gulf Coast region. Sponsors include MTV, Borders Books & Music, Sirius Satellite Radio, Vespa and designer Chan Luu.

Gay and lesbian artists have a strong presence among the nearly 1,000 items in the auction. Out artists represented include Elton John, Steven Meisel, Melissa Etheridge, Rufus Wainwright, Erasure, Rent's Anthony Rapp, The Village People cowboy Randy Jones, Hedwig star/creator John Cameron Mitchell, Charles Busch, Tony Kushner, Warhol legend Holly Woodlawn, BETTY, Queer as Folk's Peter Paige, Brini Maxwell and The Pet Shop Boys.

The auction also features original artwork from Joni Mitchell; the actual podium from the 2005 MTV Movie Awards signed by the stars who appeared on the show; signed guitars, gold records, and signed books.

For theater fans there is a Playbill from the opening night of the Broadway show Rent, signed by the original cast members. Other Broadway stars, including Patti LuPone, Kathleen Turner, Carol Channing, Idina Menzel, Kristen Chenoweth, and Liza Minnelli are represented in the auction.

BID 2 BEAT AIDS will kick off on eBay on December 1, 2005 at 3:00 PM, and runs for 10 days.

WNBA's Swoopes: Out

HOUSTON – Basketball star Sheryl Swoopes, a three-time Olympic gold medalist and three-time MVP of the WNBA, has come out publicly as a lesbian, making her the highest-profile team sport athlete to come out while playing.

Swoopes, a native Texan who led Texas Tech to the 1993 NCAA title and the Houston Comets to four WNBA crowns, becomes the rarest of athletes, someone who comes out publicly during their career. No North American male team-sport athlete has ever done so.

She is the first woman to have a Nike shoe named after her, "Air Swoopes," in 1995. She is author of a children's book, "Bounce Back." She's won two ESPY awards. She helped lead the USA to Olympic gold in 1996, 2000 and 2004. And she's still at the top of her game, leading the WNBA in 2005 in points scored per game and minutes played among other categories.

Swoopes, 34, was hired as a spokeswoman for Olivia Cruises, after she and her partner, Alisa Scott, booked a trip through the lesbian-oriented travel company. Through an intermediary, Swoopes met with Olivia CEO Amy J. Errett in August in Los Angeles. Errett offered Swoopes an endorsement contract that she accepted.

The endorsement deal is worth about six figures according to the New York Times.

Swoopes told ESPN, "I'm sure life is not going to be easier for me just because I'm coming out. But at least I'll be free."

Gay Sun Shines in Alaska

ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Supreme Court ruled last month it is unconstitutional to bar benefits to the same-sex partners of public employees. This is a victory in one of the first states to pass a constitutional ban on gay marriage.

Overturning a lower court ruling, the high court said barring benefits for state and city employees' same-sex partners violates the Alaska Constitution's equal protection clause.

In 2002, nine gay or lesbian government workers and their partners joined the ACLU in appealing a lower court ruling in a 1999 lawsuit filed against the state and the Municipality of Anchorage after voters the previous year passed a constitutional amendment blocking state recognition of gay marriage.

In the 2001 Superior Court ruling just overturned, Judge Stephanie Joannides had said the state and city did not have to extend benefits to same-sex couples, equating them with unmarried heterosexual couples who also are not eligible.

The high court said the comparison failed to acknowledge the fact that heterosexual couples can choose to get married, while homosexual couples cannot.

Anti-Gay Boycotts Target Liberal Biz

NEW YORK – Levi Strauss donates to Planned Parenthood. Don't buy their blue jeans! Johnson & Johnson advertises Tylenol in a gay magazine. Click here to register your disgust! Support traditional values: Boycott Pampers! Boycott Ford! Don't shop at Target!

In the last 12 months, conservative advocacy groups have urged their millions of members to stop buying brand after trusted brand.

Boycotts have long been a mainstay of both the right and the left,

but analysts say there's a new intensity to the protests as social conservatives test their ability to punish companies for taking liberal stances on issues such as abortion and gay rights.

"It's getting so that if you're going to boycott based on principles, you practically have to show up for work wearing a barrel and eat nothing but grass," said Peter LaBarbera, a conservative activist.

He may soon add to the list. As executive director of the Illinois Family Institute, a conservative lobbying group, LaBarbera is considering calling a boycott against Kraft Foods and Walgreens to pressure them to withdraw their support of next summer's Gay Games in Chicago.

Boycotts remain a time-honored tactic for the left but protests that come from the right tend to make a more visible splash because the American Family Association, the Traditional Values Coalition, Focus on the Family and others can quickly mobilize hundreds of thousands of consumers, thanks to online newsletters and Christian radio stations.

Fruity Flies

IWAMIZAWA, JAPAN – Researchers have finally pinned down a physical difference between male flies that are engineered to behave homosexually and those that are not: one variety is missing a small cluster of nerve cells in the brain. The research was performed at Hokkaido University of Education in Iwamizawa, Japan and reported on Nature.com last month.

Genetically altered flies that are designed to court members of their own sex, or no one at all, have made headlines in recent months but no one knew exactly what those genes were doing, or how the flies differed physically from heterosexual ones. Now Japanese researchers have pinpointed one difference in the brain.

The work helps researchers to work out the complex genetic and environmental factors that help animals to choose their mates. "This finding will provide insight for understanding how a sexual behavior is constructed in the circuitry of the brain through a function of single gene," adds Kimura.

Scientists caution that fly mating behavior is very different from that of humans, as are our brains, so these results cannot be extrapolated to people.▼

Compiled this month by Assistant Editor Susan Mcmillan.