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MONTREAL Counselors to Host Same-Sex Wedding

To enhance awareness within the counseling profession of the rights and benefits denied to same-sex couples, the Association for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Counseling (AGLBIC) will host a same-sex wedding event in Montreal, Canada on April 1, 2006 for counselors attending the joint meeting of the American Counseling Association and the Canadian Counseling Association.

According to Lambda Legal, lesbian and gay couples are spending their lives together with the same love and commitment as heterosexual couples. But they are doing it without the same legal protections and support as other Americans, simply because they cannot legally marry.

Joy Whitman, President of AGLBIC, stated that "our purpose in sponsoring a public wedding for same-sex couples at this conference is to highlight the inequity same-sex couples experience and to raise awareness of this inequity for counseling professionals. One of our goals is to identify conditions that create barriers to the human growth and development of GLBT clients and communities. All counseling professionals are charged with the goal to advocate for clients and to change oppressive systems, systems that serve as barriers towards mental health."

NEW YORK, NY SAGE Director Steps Down

SAGE, founded in 1978 to serve seniors in the GLBT community, announced in January that Terry Kaelber would be stepping down as Executive Director. In order to facilitate a smooth transition, Kaelber has agreed to remain with the organization until June, which is the end of SAGE's fiscal year. Terry has spent nine years at the helm of SAGE, the nation's oldest and largest social service and advocacy organization solely dedicated to the gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender senior communities.

"My tenure at SAGE has been the most rewarding time of my life — both professionally and personally. I love SAGE and our community's senior members who have taught me so much since I came to SAGE in 1997," said Kaelber. "Since then, the organization has grown tremendously and has reached a level of health and maturity that provides an ideal opportunity for a change at the helm."

"The timing of this change is especially important to me personally," Kaelber added, "because I have a 6 year old daughter and a large family I want to spend more time with. This was underscored this past fall when my mother died. All families need tending, and at this point in my life I want to tend mine."

SANTA BARBARA, CA 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Costs Millions

A new Blue Ribbon Commission of military experts in February estimated the total cost of implementing the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law to be \$363.8 million between 1994 and 2003, a 91% increase from a February 2005 Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimate. The report, "Financial Analysis of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" was released through the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM) at UC-Santa Barbara. It recalculates the cost of the law banning openly lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members by examining the oversights of the 2005 GAO report, which estimated the cost of the ban to be \$190.5 million.

KISSIMMEE, FL Anti-Gay Treatment Nets Complaint

Southern Legal Counsel (SLC) and the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) filed complaints on behalf of Jamie Beiler this week with the Florida Department of Health and CIGNA Healthcare of Florida against Dr. John R. Hartman and Dawn Pope-Wright, a physician's assistant who works for Dr. Hartman. In March 2005, Beiler consulted Dr. Hartman's office for a routine medical matter. At the close of the visit, Pope-Wright gave Beiler a packet of anti-gay propaganda referring to homosexuality as "sinful" and advising lesbians and gay men to change their sexual orientation. The complaints filed by Beiler allege that Dr. Hartman and Pope-Wright falsely presented their personal beliefs as medical information and provided her with unwanted treatment that has been rejected as ineffective by all major health and mental health organizations. Beiler is asking CIGNA, her healthcare provider, and the Florida Board of Medicine to take action against Pope-Wright and Dr. Hartman for their unethical conduct.

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POLITICS

Gender Identity and Expression: Time's Up



Rev. Sarah Flynn speaks to supporters of H.865 at Burlington's Unitarian Universalist Church.

BURLINGTON — Wending its way slowly through the halls of the statehouse in Montpelier is H.865, dubbed the Gender Identity bill. The bill would add the words "gender identity and expression" to a list of specific groups protected by civil rights, thus making equal rights for transgender citizens part of state law.

Seven states in the U.S. have such legislation on the books at present, Rev. Sarah Flynn told a group of supporters recently at Burlington's Unitarian Universalist Church. Flynn read from stories she said would be presented at hearings before the legislature on the bill. In one person's testimony, an overly curious emergency room doctor caused a transgender patient to feel humiliated, and in another incident, a doctor yelled at a transgender patient. Many conflicts occur when a transwoman or transman attempts to use a public bathroom designated for either gender, Flynn said. Public school students may run into problems using bathrooms in their schools when they don't fit the male or female norm in gender appearance or identity.

A person who is not transgender but androgynous and therefore doesn't fit the female or male stereotype may experience difficulties in situations such as bathroom use. Flynn said she

was using the women's bathroom at the theology school where she studied years earlier, and the students were upset to find her there. Sometimes the difficulties occur in public plac-

es. "I've been harassed in malls by teenagers," Flynn said.

"When people meet someone who is transgender, it opens up a Pandora's box."

—REV. SARAH FLYNN

cus indicating that those with "crushed testicles" may not enter a temple, another passage in Isaiah actually praises eunuchs and honors them as special people who hold an important place in the world.

Flynn said she was cross-dressing at 13 and got married in 1961 to attempt to fit the acceptable stereotype. But her marriage fell apart, and Flynn had to face the issue of her gender identity. Flynn, who changed her gender from male to female in 1978, said it was either that or she "could not go on." While Flynn has much to offer as an employee, she has had difficulty finding work appropriate to her background. Armed with a master's degree, Flynn tells of finding only a clerk-typist position and she "virtually felt like I had to beg for that."

But Flynn said she has no regrets. "We are different and there's nothing wrong with being different," she said. When people meet someone who is transgender, it opens up a Pan-

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cus indicating that those with "crushed testicles" may not enter a temple, another passage in Isaiah actually praises eunuchs and honors them as special people who hold an important place in the world.

Flynn said calls to legislators in support of H.865 will encourage them to vote for it. Constituents' support makes it easier for lawmakers to justify voting for a measure they might otherwise vote down, she said.

Once passed, the Gender Identity Bill will have an educational influence on people, Flynn said. For example, since civil rights laws were passed giving African-American citizens equal rights, "it's no longer okay to say racist words in public."

Advocates believe H.865 may be passed by the legislature this year. ▼