

➔ the rest of our world

WASHINGTON, DC US Denies Gay Rights at UN

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in January denounced the United States' vote against two gay rights organizations' applications to join the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The United States joined the repressive, anti-gay regimes of Iran, Zimbabwe, China, Cameroon and others in voting against even granting a hearing to the application of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and the Danish Association of Gays and Lesbians (LGL). Instead, the two groups' applications were summarily dismissed without a hearing.

"It is an absolute outrage that the United States has chosen to align itself with tyrants — all in a sickening effort to smother the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people around the world," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "Apparently Iran, which President Bush has deemed part of the 'Axis of Evil,' is a suitable partner when it comes to discriminating against gay people."

MANCHESTER, NH Fired Transwoman Receives Settlement

On behalf of Sarah Blanchette, a transgender woman, Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) has settled on mutually satisfactory terms a lawsuit against St. Anselm College of Manchester, New Hampshire. The college fired Ms. Blanchette, a computer programmer, in April 2004, after learning that she would be transitioning from male to female.

"It's our view that the prohibitions on sex discrimination under state and federal law make it illegal to fire an employee simply because he or she is transgender," said Bennett Klein, senior attorney with GLAD. "As transgender people increasingly seek fair treatment in the workplace, employers must educate themselves about their transgender employees and their legal rights. If they do not, they will find themselves met with a swift and strong legal response."

Ms. Blanchette said in a written statement, "I hope that the lawsuit has brought to public light the issues that can confront transgender people in the workplace. We are not really that different from everyone else, and want the same basic things out of life: happiness, love, security, comfort and peace of mind."

WILMINGTON, NC HIV No Danger to Restaurant

Lambda Legal facilitated a settlement agreement in a case in which a man with HIV was fired from his job as a cook for a small restaurant because of his HIV status.

Aron Pelela worked as a cook at Mike and Katy's Causeway Café in Wrightsville Beach, NC. The restaurant fired him after learning that Pelela has HIV. In October of 2005. With the help of Lambda Legal, attorney Joyce L. Davis filed a lawsuit on Pelela's behalf against the restaurant under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which protects people from being discriminated against based on their disabilities. "There is no risk of transmission of HIV through the preparation of food, yet myths about transmission are clearly still running rampant," said Greg Nevins, Senior Staff Attorney in Lambda Legal's Southern Regional Office in Atlanta. "We are happy to see the owners of this restaurant instituting a policy based on the facts and training their employees on the truth about HIV transmission."

WASHINGTON, DC Crashing the White House Easter Egg Roll

For more than a hundred years children have gathered on the South Lawn of the White House on the Monday after Easter to roll Easter eggs across the yard and meet the Easter Bunny. Seemingly few (if any) Washingtonians have ever tried to exploit the annual White House Easter Egg Roll for political purposes. Until now. A church-based homosexual rights group is planning to crash the event with a "family visibility action" to spotlight their non-traditional families.

"On April 17, 2006, when the White House lawn is opened to families for the Annual Easter Egg Roll, imagine if the first 1,000 families onto the lawn were LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] families," enthused a January 4 email alert from Souforce. Once America sees the White House lawn awash in LGBT families, "there will be no going back," Souforce promised.

Souforce is the political organizing tool of self-described "militant gay activist" Mel White, the former Jerry Falwell speech writer who discovered his gayness and became a clergyman in the predominantly homosexual Metropolitan Community Churches. ▼

vermont news

POLITICS

On A Queer Day You Can See Forever

Visibility Day at the Statehouse

BY CHRISTOPHER KAUFMAN

MONTPELIER — Come OUT! Be Visible! Tuesday, March 14 is our Annual Queer Visibility Day at the State House in Montpelier. This year, our day is the

ciary Committee and proceed to the full House of Representatives for a vote. It is our hope that by the time you receive this, An Act Relating to Nondiscrimination H.865 (formerly H.478) will have passed the House and moved on to the Senate. If so, Visibility Day will focus our attention on the 30 Senators who have the power to help protect transgender and

This year, as in past years, attendees at Visibility Day will have the opportunity to learn about LGBTQ organizations in Vermont, be recognized and introduced from the floor of the House of Representatives, attend skill building workshops on Vermont's legislative process, and most importantly, have the opportunity to speak directly to your elected officials.

H.865 is an important piece of legislation and Vermont's transgender community has been waiting too many years to see its passage into law.

Originally proposed in the mid-nineties, the protections in this legislation were initially delayed to make way for the legislative battle over same-sex marriage. Now, in 2006, we are closer than we've ever been to providing this protection for our transgender friends and neighbors. Join us at the Statehouse this year and help us to make the final push! ▼

Visibility Day 2006 Schedule of Events

TUESDAY, MARCH 14

8:00am	Organizational Displays in the Card Room
10:00am	Introductions on the House Floor
10:30am	Workshops on Grassroots Advocacy
11:30am	Lunch meetings with legislators
1:00pm	Feedback Session, Caucus Meetings
2:30pm	Close

first day back in session after the Legislators take their annual winter break for Town Meeting Day. For the third year running, R.U.I.2? is co-sponsoring and organizing the day with Equality Vermont.

At press time, the Center and numerous ad hoc activists working under the name "Vermont TransAction" are anxiously awaiting word on whether our top legislative priority for 2006 will emerge from the House Judi-

gender-variant Vermonters from discrimination in education, housing, employment, credit and other venues.

Last year, over 100 Vermonters attended Visibility Day, including a large group of high school students from all the way down in Bennington. Leaving home before the sun came up, the group drove more than three hours each way to be at the statehouse in time for the morning session at 8:00 am.

➔ We want to know that you are coming! RSVP to Christopher@ru12.org or call 802.860.7812 to tell us that you are coming. We'll help you identify your legislators and set up lunch meetings with them.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Keeping Promises: New York Gays and Lesbians Win Major Milestone in NY

BY CYNTHIA POTTS

NEW YORK, NY — "They buried her at night," Terry Checksfield said, speaking of Barbara, her partner of 27 years. "And Barb was afraid of the dark."

Thanks to the attention that Checksfield brought to end of life issues for gay and lesbian couples in New York, no one else has to go alone into that darkness. According to Empire Pride, on Friday, February 3, 2006 Governor George Pataki signed legislation that gives same-sex domestic partners the right to make decisions about the remains of their loved ones.

While the Pride Agenda has been passing bills for several

years addressing specific needs of domestic partners, this bill is notable from all the others in one very significant way. For the very first time ever in New York State law, this bill gives our relationships priority over blood relatives and puts us on equal footing as a spouse in being the lead decision-maker on this critical issue.

Now domestic partners (of any orientation) can use a simple form to designate who is to have control of their remains after they pass away. This document will put an end to conflicts like the ones Checksfield faced, when Barbara's blood relatives objected to their relationship and buried Checksfield's partner on private property she is not allowed

to visit. Taking the process one step further, the legislation states that in the absence of said form, an order of priority exists. Domestic partners or spouses take precedence over blood relatives.

New York is the eighth state to adopt such legislation. The District of Columbia also offers such protection to gay and lesbian couples.

When asked for a comment on the new legislation, Checksfield replied, "I am very grateful, but it seems I have a lot more work to see that this legislation gets passed in the rest of the country." ▼

➔ Cynthia Potts can be reached at cbpotts@gmail.com