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BRUSSELS

It's Official: EU Votes No on Homophobia

The European Parliament in June sent a strong warning to member states which condone homophobia and racism, according to a report from the 365gay website.

Parliament passed a resolution calling on all EU countries to toughen their laws to deal with hate crimes. The vote was 301 in favor to 161 against with 102 abstentions. Most of the abstentions came from former Soviet states, the report said.

The resolution also calls on the Council of Europe to approve a proposal that has languished since 2001 that would explicitly ban "homophobic, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and other types of offences motivated by phobia or hatred based on ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion or other irrational grounds."

In addition, the resolution urges, but falls short of requiring, all member states to effectively implement anti-discrimination directives and calls for Member States which fail to do so to be brought before the Court of Justice.

SANTA BARBARA, CA Lawmakers Protest Pentagon Calling Gays Mentally Ill

Nine members of the House Armed Services Committee have written Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld requesting a review and update of a recently discovered military document that defines homosexuality as a mental disorder, according to a June report by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM).

The letter notes that more than thirty years ago, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses and noted that homosexuality "implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social and vocational capabilities," the report said. The APA and the American Psychological Association have also written the Pentagon urging it to remove homosexuality from the list of mental disorders.

CHICAGO Nigerian Leader Denied Visa

Due to visa problems, the scheduled June 23rd Chicago speaking engagement by gay Anglican activist Davis Mac-Iyalla of Nigeria has been cancelled, said the Gay Liberation Network, sponsor of the event. Mac-Iyalla was also scheduled to address the Ohio national convention of Integrity, the pro-gay

organization of Episcopalians in the United States.

Mac-Iyalla has been the foremost leader organizing for gay equality in Nigeria, working to stop a proposed law which would outlaw freedom of assembly for gays and lesbians in that country and ban their political and social organizations, punishable by long prison sentences. Mac-Iyalla has also challenged the anti-gay political activism of the Nigerian church's leader, Archbishop Peter Akinola who, along with local Muslim leaders, are trying to outdo each other in their support of the anti-gay law, the GLN said.

Mac-Iyalla has been beaten and briefly imprisoned by Nigerian police and slandered by Anikola, according to the report. Mac-Iyalla is founder of Changing Attitude Nigeria (CAN), an affirming organization of gays and lesbians in the Anglican Communion.

WASHINGTON, DC Petitioners Demand Rights for Man Living with HIV

Lambda Legal in June delivered a petition signed by 5,000 people urging Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, to repeal the federal government's discriminatory hiring policies and allow a qualified man living with HIV to work as a Foreign Service Officer, Lambda Legal said last month.

"Employers, as well as the general public, look to the federal government to set the standard in workers' rights," said Hector Vargas, Deputy Director of Education and Public Affairs at Lambda Legal. "Dr. Rice has the power to set the record straight and make clear that discrimination in the workplace is not acceptable, starting with allowing Lorenzo Taylor, Kely Smith, and other qualified and dedicated applicants to serve our nation in the Foreign Service."

WASHINGTON Task Force Hails Victory in Washington State

Opponents of a Washington state law banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity failed to gather enough voter signatures to force a public vote on the law, which took effect in June. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force said it applauds the work of LGBT rights advocates, including Washington Won't Discriminate and Equal Rights Washington, and other supporters.

vermont news

VERMONT NEWS/POLITICS

Douglas Defends Transgender Rights Veto

BY PAUL OLSEN

MONTPELIER - When it comes to leadership on issues of concern to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Vermonters, Governor Jim Douglas (R) will probably never win a John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award.

Douglas opposes gay marriage and civil unions, declined to issue a proclamation recognizing Vermont's Pride Day celebration, let Vermont's medical marijuana bill become law without his signature, won't commit to appointing a GLBT person to Vermont's Human Rights Commission, and recently vetoed H.865, legislation banning discrimination in Vermont on the basis of gender identity or expression.

In a recent interview with *Out in The Mountains*, Douglas discussed his veto of H.865 and his re-election campaign against Democrat Scudder Parker. Excerpts from the interview:

OITM: Why did you veto H.865?
Douglas: I oppose discrimination against anyone. It is important that each and every Vermonter have the opportunity to be treated equally in our society and maximize his or her potential. But I believe that bill raises questions that are unanswered and may have unintended consequences. Employers raised questions, attorneys who advise employer clients raised questions, some in state government did, and the Human Rights Commission expressed concern. It seemed to me it (H.865) was rushed through without answering a lot of questions. I think the discussion can and will continue.

OITM: Since vetoing the bill you've been labeled "Douglas the Discriminator." Why is this characterization wrong?
Douglas: It has taken on a political overtone. People who don't support me politically look for any opportunity to raise an objection. I think overall I've got a pretty good record on which to seek another term. I regret that (label) and hope those who support the bill will respect other points of view, including mine, and continue the conversation rather than resorting to name-calling.

OITM: You've cited technical concerns with H.865 as the

reasons for your veto and you have also said the bill isn't necessary. Which is it?

Douglas: Both. The Attorney General brought a (transgender) discrimination case with our current antidiscrimination laws. A number of courts in other jurisdictions have said clearly that gender anti-discrimination laws are sufficient for transgender situations. So I'm not sure that it is necessary. The technical reasons are the ones I mentioned (above).

OITM: An Attorney General's opinion doesn't have the weight of law. A new Attorney General could have a very different interpretation. Wasn't the legislature attempting to codify the opinion?

Douglas: The courts have been consistent when these issues have come up around the country. So I wonder if there is likely any other interpretation.

OITM: What changes need to be made to H.865 to insure your support?

Douglas: I'm going to be meeting with the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee (Rep. Bill Lippert) fairly soon to talk about it so it may be premature to get into details. I look forward to continuing that discussion, and it is very possible that the legislature will come up with a bill that I can support.

OITM: Antigay activist Steve Cable of Vermont Renewal said H.865 would call for "affirmative action for cross-dressers and transvestites." Does this description accurately describe your concerns with the bill?

Douglas: I haven't expressed any concern about cross dressing. I'm concerned about how this bill might be interpreted if it were enacted. I think this bill would be good for lawyers as there would be more legal grounds to bring lawsuits and I don't think that is fruitful. My reasons were the ones I articulated in my (veto) message. I know there are strongly held views on both sides of this debate as you have noted. It is important for people to respect other points of view and have a civil discussion and not resort to inflammatory or pejorative language.

OITM: You cited Vermont's Hu-

man Rights Commission (HRC) as one of the reasons for vetoing the bill. Yet the HRC did not support legislation recognizing Vermont's Abenaki Indians and you signed that. Why the inconsistency?

Douglas: I'm not sure why that is an inconsistency.

OITM: Chuck Kletecka, the only openly gay member of the HRC, resigned to protest your veto of H.865. Will you appoint an openly gay man, lesbian, bisexual or transgender to replace him?

Douglas: I haven't made that decision yet. I'll consider all qualified applicants and make a decision that will be in the public interest. The biggest category of complaints that comes before the commission relate to disability, not gender, so a case might be made that that might be a more important representative on the commission.

OITM: You took some political heat for not appointing a person of color to the HRC. Do you see a similar concern around the issue of a GLBT appointment?

Douglas: The purpose is to appoint people who have judgment, are fair, and who can interpret and apply the law equitably. I regret the categorization discussion in terms of appointments.

OITM: Supporters of H.865 criticized you for not meeting with members of Vermont's transgender community. How do you respond to this criticism and would you meet with them now?

Douglas: I have talked with a transgender friend since my decision. I haven't met with representatives of all interest groups on every bill that comes through. It's just not practical. I am going to meet with Chairman Lippert and see where the conversation goes from there. I have to be perfectly honest, when confronted with a demonstration it doesn't make me more likely to want to engage in a conversation. Rather than turning their backs on the issue it would be more fruitful to have a civil discussion.

OITM: Will you issue a proclamation recognizing Vermont's Pride