

Coalition Liaisons Report From Montpelier

by Heather Wishik

During the past two months co-liaisons Heather Wishik and Keith Goslant have advocated on behalf of the lesbian and gay community in the following concerns ;

1. H-460. This House originated bill specifically addresses H.I.V. antibody testing by the insurance industry, both health and life. The insurance industry contends that a positive antibody test increases the actual risk such that the industry could face insolvency if policies were issued to seropositive individuals. It is the position of

both liaisons that the insurance industry has overstated the accuracy of current testing protocols and their long range implications. The industry has quoted statistics pertaining to high risk individuals in high virus concentrated areas as being relevant to all persons (99% accurate with 60+% developing A.I.D.S. within five years). Dr. R. Vogt, Department of Health Epidemiologist, has estimated current protocols are 50 to 75% accurate in a low risk population and low virus concentrated area such as Vermont.

The industry has already utilized national lobbyists for preliminary testimony before the Senate Finance Committee. Heather, at the recommendation of State Finance Chairperson Parker, has been included in negotiations with the insurance industry to work on compromise language. It is hoped that as part of any compromise agreement health insurance will be viewed as an essential service and seperated from any testing requirements granted to underwriting life insurance. Blue Cross/ Blue Shield does not currently require antibody testing and has stated their intention to continue coverage for A.I.D.S. and A.I.D.S. related conditions.

2. H-247. The liaisons want to acknowledge and thank the Coalition Steering Committee, especially Susan Aranoff, and the A.C.L.U., especially Tim Mazur, for the work being done on the bill. Heather has helped provide information on lobbying techniques and strategies. If you missed the last Coalition meeting ask someone about the role play with "Senator Wishik". Both liaisons will continue close contact with the steering committee and advocate whenever possible for this urgently needed bill.

3. H-239. H-239 will provide antidiscrimination protection for persons who are seropositive or have A.R.C; it is believed that persons with clinical A.I.D.S. are covered by Federal and Vermont State handicap statutes. There has been ongoing discussions since the last session with Sally Conrad, Chairperson Senate Health and Welfare, to provide education regarding H.I.V. related concerns. In addition liaisons have talked with members of the Vermont Medical Society regarding the "access to care" language of this bill.

4. Attorney General's Office. Keith had met with one of the Civil Rights Investigators to ensure incidents of lesbian and gay related discrimination were being documented. Since that meeting the rights investigator has resigned and there have been complaints people are being told the Attorney General does not track discrimination unrelated to existing employment and housing statutes.

Keith will do additional follow up with the current rights investigators to re-establish reporting procedures. Please, if you feel you have been discriminated against due to sexual orientation report it to the Attorney General Office. You may want to ask specifically for a Civil Rights Investigator rather than explaining to whoever happens to answer the phone. If there continues to be problems, either contacting an



Tues. Ed's \$1 Bud Night
Wed. Ladies Night
Thurs. Boys Night Out

Womyn's Cocktail Party - Thurs. Dec. 31 ° 6pm - 8pm
upstairs bar ° Champagne and Hors D'oeuvres ° \$3.00

Pearl's New Year's Eve Celebration - starts 8pm
\$5.00

Womyn's Dance - Fri. Jan. 8 ° 5pm - 9pm ° \$3.00

All You Can Eat Pasta Night - Wed. Jan. 20
we open at 5pm ° \$3.75

UVM-GLBA 2nd Annual Homohop - Tues. Jan. 26
starts 9pm ° asking \$2.00 donation

Downstairs Is Open Tues., Thurs., Fri., and Sat.

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