

# Out in the Mountains

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## Rights Bill Sent to Committee

S.278, a bill to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, was introduced on January 11 into the Vermont Senate with eleven co-sponsors, only five votes short of the sixteen it needs to pass. It was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee for study.

Senator Harvey Carter, a Democrat from Bennington county, submitted the bill. According to Susan Aranoff, a member of the Vermont Statewide Coalition for Lesbians and Gay Men Steering Committee, it is highly doubtful the Judiciary Committee will hold a large public hearing similar to the one that took place last year in the main chamber of the Statehouse. In addition to time constraints, the Judiciary Committee faces the formidable task of overhauling the Vermont Criminal code.

Mary Just Skinner, chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, has pledged to bring the bill out of her committee by the beginning of February. According to Aranoff, the Steering Committee is organizing a telephone calling campaign to legislators to coincide with the bill's emergence from committee. Patterned after the highly suc-

cessful effort waged by right-wing fundamentalists last year, the calling campaign is intended to demonstrate a concentrated show of support for the bill.

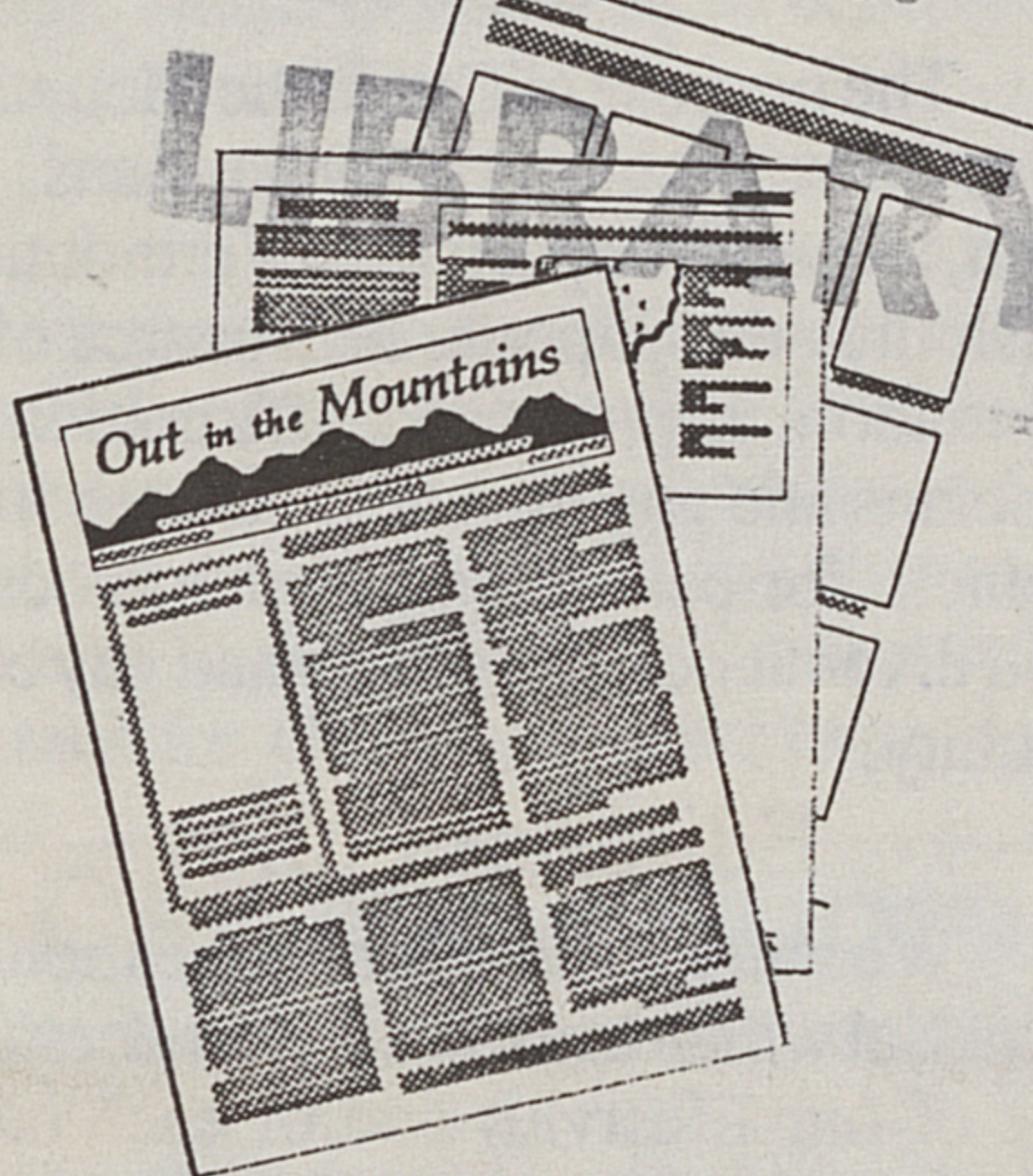
The Steering Committee is made up of representatives from the Statewide Coalition, the ACLU, and interested legislators. It is responsible for formulating the legislative strategy for the bill. Aranoff stressed that membership is open to anyone interested in participating.

In addition to the eleven co-sponsors, the Steering Committee has identified four other legislators who have expressed tentative support for the legislation, bringing supporters to within one vote necessary for passage. In the event of a tie, the Lieutenant Governor would cast the deciding vote.

The co-sponsors of the bill are Harvey Carter (D Bennington), Seth Bongartz (D Bennington), Sally Conrad (D Chittenden), David Dean (D Windham), Phil Hoff (D Chittenden), George Little (R Chittenden), Scudder Parker (D Caledonia), Doug Racine (D Chittenden), Peter Welch (D Windsor), John Finn (D Franklin), and Will Hunter (D Windsor).

### Special Expanded Anniversary Issue

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## Massachusetts Protesters Met with Violence

### Gay Community News

Responding with fury over the Senate's failure to pass the state's gay rights bill, about 400 lesbians, gay men and supporters, organized through MASS ACT OUT, flooded the State House and disrupted proceedings for several hours on Jan 4. 14 people, including 8 who handcuffed themselves to chairs in the Senate viewing gallery, were arrested for trespassing in a planned act of nonviolent civil disobedience that ignited the late afternoon demo.

Law enforcement authorities responded varyingly with smugness, silence, hostility, and outright violence. Many of the Capitol Police officers making arrests were wearing gloves but not badges, justifying their anonymity on the "near-riot" conditions that could result in badges being used as weapons. In full view of news cameras, State House officers pushed and slapped protesters causing at least one bloodied lip and a bruised ankle. A video repeated several times on Boston newscasts clearly showed a court officer stomping on the abdomen of a protester as he was dragged out in arrest. Nine of the protesters were released that night on \$15 bail, while five women who refused to cooperate with the booking procedures were held overnight in the Suffolk County Jail. All 14 pleaded not guilty to trespassing charges

and were released on their personal recognition. The next court date has been set for Feb. 18.

A fiery rally in support of lesbian/gay rights continued inside the State House after the arrests. Community spokespeople shared a megaphone to lambaste homophobia and the sluggish legislative process that has stymied a Mass. gay rights bill for 15 years. Drawing the rowdiest applause, Boston City Councilor David Scondras praised the protesters for continuing the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. by demonstrating for civil rights.

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how to lobby your Senator...pages 10, 11