

Commentary

Psst *from page 7*

for your specific case, however, still feel it necessary to come forward. We still need you.

Last year in the Senate, the child custody and the domestic violence sections of the bill were deleted. This year we need mothers and fathers who can present issues both raised or hidden during their divorce proceedings and what the ramifications were. We need a few articulate children of these divorces to testify about the positive aspects of living with or visiting their lesbian or gay parent. Asking our children to testify must be a well thought through issue. The children must be confident and clear in their intent. There no can no sign of coercion by the parent.

We need to present cases of same-sex couple violence. It exists. The people involved do not necessarily have to be lesbian or gay, only same-sex people living within a household. When the current domestic violence statute was passed into law, same sex households were pointedly omitted.

The V.L.G.R. survey reported several years ago that loss of employment was a clear issue with us. We need those respondents and all others to come forward.

People from all professions who can testify to the fears and realities of job security are needed.

Who has evidence of housing discrimination? Have you attempted to rent office space or live somewhere and been denied access because you are homosexual? Tell your story at the hearing.

Have you ever been denied a mortgage or credit because of your sexual preference? It is important these stories be told. Give names and specifics of the offending institutions and individuals.

The bill addresses public accommodations, these include hotels, restaurants, and any place to which the public has access. We need testimony from people who were denied entry or were discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, either real or perceived.

Availability of insurance affects all of us, particularly partners in a live together situation, for example, who wish to name each other as beneficiaries on a life insurance policy. Doesn't it seem strange that married heterosexual couples who separate after a year or two can cover still cover their "spouse" under a work health insurance policy--but a same sex couple living in a

long-term relationship can not?

Church officials from a variety of religions who will testify on our behalf are needed. These individuals are our most effective answer to the hordes of fundamentalist "Christians" who use, ad nauseam, their interpretations of biblical texts to illustrate our immorality.

Grandparents and extended family members who can prove the existence of loving, supportive families are welcome. Testimony or support by their presence alone are needed.

Testimony must be no longer than two minutes in length. It must be articulate and concise, the time limit is strictly enforced. Do not waste any of your two minutes thanking the committees for their time.

Please bring a copy of your testimony to give to the committee and a copy for the Coalition records.

Please call either Keith or myself if you have questions or concerns. Our phone numbers are listed on the back page of OITM. If you decide to testify, let me know via the Coalition, address also on the back page, so I have an idea which sections of the bill still need to be addressed.

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*135 Pearl Street
Burlington, Vermont*