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# Out in the Mountains

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## Massachusetts Passes Gay Rights Bill

Groundbreaking gay rights legislation has passed the Massachusetts legislature. Vermont's southern neighbor has become the second state in the nation to pass gay rights legislation. Setting a precedent which will influence numerous states across the nation which are considering similar bills. The bill passed the MA House April 3 by a vote of 76-72 and received full approval by the Senate on November 6. By a vote of 21-9, the Senate rejected a last ditch effort by die-hard opponents who tried to use parliamentary tactics to stall the bill's passage.

First introduced in 1973, the bill passed the House for the first time in 1983. For the last several years the House passed the bill but it has been blocked in a majority supporting Senate by opponents using parliamentary tactics.

After 17 years of being filed, both the MA House and Senate passed the gay civil rights bill which will prohibit discrimination against gays in employment, housing, credit, insurance, and public accommodations. The bill will empower the MA Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) to investigate and prosecute cases

of anti-gay discrimination. The MA Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights, a primary lobbying and organizing force for the bill, will continue statewide organizing and public education in 1990 to ensure that the law will be publicized and enforced.

"This is a proud moment in Massachusetts history and a milestone in the national civil rights movement," said David LaFontaine, lobbying director for the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights. "We're excited about the potential of this bill to give impetus to gay and lesbian rights struggles throughout the nation."

Wisconsin passed a gay civil rights bill in 1982, thanks in part to support from the Roman Catholic archdiocese in that state. In 1983, California a bill introduced by then state legislator Art Agnos passed in both branches of the state legislature, only to be vetoed by Governor Deukmejian. In 1987, the Connecticut gay rights bill initially passed both the House and Senate only to lose by one vote in the final House vote. In New York, the gay rights bill has been perennially quashed by the conservative state Senate, despite strong support from Governor Mario Cuomo. Here in Vermont,

the Senate has passed a bill only to see it not survive the House.

Numerous other states around the country are actively battling to enact gay civil rights legislation as well as to pass bills pertaining to collection of data about violent crimes and harassment directed at against gays and lesbians. States which have achieved a measure of success and seem poised for further gains include Rhode Island, Vermont, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Maine, Ohio, Illinois, Texas and Washington.

"The success of the Massachusetts gay and lesbian community will inspire and energize activists all over the country," said Sue Hyde, spokesperson for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Hyde emphasized that of all the legislative work being done by gays and lesbians, none is more important than passing comprehensive civil rights legislation. "The lesson learned from 17 years of filing the bill in Massachusetts is 'don't give up, don't shut up and don't go away.'"

Momentum generated by passage of the Massachusetts Gay Rights Bill may

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## OUTRIGHT VERMONT Receives Grant

by Howard Russell

OUTRIGHT VERMONT, an organization established to attend to the needs of young gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) persons, has announced the receipt of two grants.

The first is a \$2,000 grant awarded by Gaymarket People's Fund, a Boston-based progressive foundation. The purpose of this grant is to establish a lending library for GLB youth, their parents and people who work with them. This lending library will include books, periodicals, pamphlets and videotapes. It will be housed in the OUTRIGHT VERMONT office at 30 Elmwood Avenue in Burlington.

The second grant is in the amount of \$2,000, awarded by the Ben and Jerry's

Foundation for the purpose of hiring a part-time coordinator of services. This person will be responsible for coordinating contact with schools and other youth-serving organizations, providing training to persons working with young people and overseeing direct service to young GLB people.

A hiring committee has been established and begun the search for a person to fill the role of coordinator. They are looking for someone with sensitivity and knowledge about GLB youth issues, experience in presenting to a variety of audiences, and organizational ability. Anyone interested in applying for this position should send a letter of intent and resume to OUTRIGHT VERMONT, P.O. Box 4175, Burlington, VT 05406, attn. hiring com-

mittee. Organizers hope to have a coordinator in place by mid to late January.

Anyone interested in becoming involved in the organization is welcome to attend monthly meetings which are held the second Wednesday of each month at the office at 30 Elmwood Avenue, upstairs.

Projects which organizers anticipate undertaking in the next six months are the establishment of a hotline, the formation of weekly or bi-weekly youth support groups, trainings for professionals working with young people and the consolidating of the OUTRIGHT VERMONT office space into a welcoming place for GLB youth and those who work with them. Volunteers will be needed to do all of the above so whatever skills people can offer will be welcomed.