

Legislation

Back to the Legislature (from preceding page)

Temp in the Senate. The leader in either chamber will then appoint Chairs and make committee assignments.

The traditional response to the anti-discrimination bill has been committee debate, a public hearing, a committee hearing, committee amendments (if any), a committee vote, and then a vote by the full chamber. Debate is usually emotional, at times hostile. If the bill passes in either chamber, it is then sent on to the other, where the process starts all over again. It seems like a long process, but our rights are worth it.

As in previous years, the Vermont chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has made a commitment to be a lead supporter of the anti-discrimination bill. During previous sessions, their assistance has helped to pass the HIV anti-discrimination bill and the HIV and Insurance bill. They have also helped to secure committee hearings and support within the legislature.

As a community, we have made significant gains with our political visibility and activism. We need the continued advocacy and voices of all gays, lesbians, and bisexuals in the state to ensure that full and equal civil rights become a reality for all Vermonters.

Concordia Includes Gays and Lesbians in Benefits

After more than two years of lobbying efforts by gay and lesbian staff and faculty, Concordia University in Montreal has extended its insurance and pension benefits to include same-sex partners. Efforts are currently underway to develop such a plan at the University of Vermont in Burlington.

Concordia's revised policy takes into account supplemental health insurance, dependent life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and pension benefits.

Concordia joins a number of other Canadian colleges and universities which have enacted similar same-sex benefits policies. Studies have indicated that the extension of coverage need not affect the premiums being paid by the institution or its employees.

What You Can Do to Help Get the Gay Rights Bill Passed or, Political Advocacy on a Tight Schedule

1. Call or write your legislators. If you don't know who they are, call either Keith Goslant or Holly Perdue (top left corner on the Resource page). If you can't identify yourself, let your legislator know the cost of not remaining anonymous.

2. Write letters to the editor. Keep track of "anti" letters and either respond or notify the Coalition (see Resource page) so someone else can respond as well.

3. Invite your legislator to meet with a small group (usually 6 - 8) of constituents in an informal setting. Discuss with them the discrimination that occurs in your area.

4. Ask family and friends to write letters of support. If you belong to a community or church organization, ask for their support.

5. Be an area contact for information. Be part of a weekly phone check-in system for updates on critical information and help to spread the news in your area. If you are willing to help, notify either Keith or Holly.

6. If you have experienced personal discrimination because of your sexual orientation but cannot testify in public, please contact Keith or Holly. Arrangements can be made so that your story will be told anonymously.

7. Educate yourself on the anti-discrimination bill, both in terms of what it does and does not say, what it will and will not do. Fact sheets are available through the members of the Vermont Coalition.

8. If you have any questions or want to be more actively involved, contact either Keith or Holly.

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