

# New Mayor

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**OITM:** Was your opposition related to any thoughts or beliefs you have about gays or lesbians?

**Brownell:** No, absolutely not. I was accused certainly during the campaign of having opposition to the gays and lesbians as well as hating children as well as hating art...Some people accused me of hating women, so here I am, homophobic, but I also don't like women either, I guess. I don't know of anything I've done in my life, either personally or professionally that would lead anybody to believe that I harbor any ill feelings or sense of, I'm not sure what the right word is...but I have no problems

**OITM:** Prejudice?

**Brownell:** Absolutely none at all. Many people I have known who have been good close friends, particularly in college, have been friends whose lifestyles were much different than my own.

**OITM:** Given the tone of the Republican National Convention, and the fact that you're a Republican, I'd like to know to what extent you are or are not aligned with the stuff about gays and lesbians that was voiced at the convention from the likes of Pat Robertson, Pat Buchanan.

**Brownell:** Not at all. One of the things that is encouraging about this election, and I'm talking also about Jeff Wennberg's election down in Rutland, is that here are two cases where Republicans were elected to positions of Mayor in two of Vermont's largest cities, both cities fairly liberal cities, Democratic cities. I'm very excited and I think Jeff is as well about trying to move the image of Republicans away from the image that was presented at the national convention, away from the image that was presented by a number of statewide candidates in the last Vermont election. Most of the Republicans that Jeff and I know and deal with are very moderate people.

Every political party has their spectrum. Every political has people that are at opposite ends, and I think that both Jeff and I are very much in the center of the spectrum of Republicans, certainly not way at the right end but not at the extreme liberal end either.

**OITM:** I think that some people in the community are afraid that, from the domestic partners thing, and the fact that certainly there was some homophobia playing a part in that, and the Republican umbrella as it looks now, I think people are afraid of a backlash.

**Brownell:** I understand. In terms of my term as Mayor, there should be no reason to expect that. I will do everything I can to continue whatever policies exist in terms of the city's policies. I was asking Peter [Clavelle] exactly what his policies were to make sure that I didn't change something. He and I talked and there's no reason for me to change anything, that I know of. The Republican connection and the fact that I ran as a Republican, I've always run as a Republican, in the early 80's, the fact that that issue [gay and lesbian] was there, it's not something I brought up. I didn't place that issue on the table.

**OITM:** What is your reaction to what's happening with the Community Based Police and the gay and lesbian community?

**Brownell:** Certainly communication with the local police department, and understanding, has got to be one of the most critical elements of a program of understanding. Not just in terms of the gay and lesbian community but in terms of the Vietnamese Community...there are an awful lot of communities that are starting in Burlington now that are foreign to Burlingtonians in terms of Vietnamese, Cambodians, and there's going to be an increasing need for understanding, an increasing need for communication and

tolerance. Certainly in terms of having the local police officers develop that understanding first and set an example is critical.

**OITM:** Are you aware that there's violence against lesbians and gays on the streets of Burlington?

**Brownell:** On a daily personal basis, no. I'm certainly aware that it's something which occurs in Burlington and all over the world. I went to college in Philadelphia. I probably have fewer gay and lesbian associations than I did when I was in school and when I was in the military, but I'm certainly familiar with the fact that it exists, that it is a problem, and that it's something we need to deal with.

**OITM:** Is there any particular message you want to send out to the gay and lesbian community?

**Brownell:** Other than that I hope that people will keep an open mind about the Burlington administration, I don't expect to see, relative to the city's historic level of understanding and tolerance for different lifestyles, I expect that to continue. The city's encouragement for the arts I expect to continue, the city's encouragement for youth programs I expect to continue. In terms of budgetary constraints there are some reorganizations, realignments that will have to be taken for some period of time. In terms of the governments interpersonal relations with different constituencies I don't expect that to change dramatically. I have no reason to believe that any organization or group that felt that they were serviced by city government should feel that they're going to be left out in the cold.

**OITM:** I want to ask, and invite you to come to the Gay and Lesbian Pride March that will be happening in June.

**Brownell:** OK.

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