

work taking lots of people and time, and I did not have either. I worked 40 hours per week, tried to keep up socially, and tried to run a campaign from the most social place I know, Pearls.

From the beginning, my close friends and advisors suggested that I run as openly gay and HIV+. This idea did not really sit well with me. My approach to government was to sneak up on the establishment and then tell all when I have proven what I can do, not to mount a frontal assault and pray no one would throw rocks. For the first weeks of the campaign, we played the game my way. I was the talk of the bar, but no one else knew I existed. So two weeks before the primary, I decided to announce to the news media that I was running as an openly gay and HIV+ candidate. I was running on a "no more politics as usual" platform. If I hid my orientation and my status, I would be just like all the politicians before me with their secrets and hidden agendas.

Only one newspaper and one television station picked up on my announcement, the *Burlington Free Press* and WPTZ-TV. I was the top story on three news broadcasts--must have been a slow news week.

Although I did not make it through the

primary, I realized that most of the fear and apprehension I felt was due to what we are taught about what people will do and say. I exposed myself for all the world to see and NO ONE THREW ROCKS. The reality was that almost no one cared. I was just another politician. I still do get an occasional look or the "I like you but..." from our community, but I received a great deal of support and understanding from the voters of

Chittenden County. As for the future, I will see all of you in two years--still openly gay, HIV+, and running for State Senate.

By the way, I have been living with HIV for six years and counting. I do believe that HIV is not a death sentence, but a chance to live. And thank you for not throwing rocks. ▼

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