

Civil Rights Bill Update

by Ben Truman, Legislative Director,
ACLU of Vermont

IT'S NOT OVER YET FOLKS!

While the 1991 legislature adjourned without taking any action on the civil rights bills, they still have next year to outlaw discrimination in Vermont. Two bills were introduced this year, one in the House, H.162 introduced by Rep. Vi Luginbuhl (R-So. Burlington) and one in the Senate, S.131 by Sen. David Wolk (D-Rutland County). Both would outlaw discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, insurance and banking procedures, and guarantee enforcement of existing domestic abuse laws.

We made the tactical decision to start in the Senate this time in order to provide the momentum needed to pass the bill in the House. We knew that we had the votes in the full Senate once we got the bill out of committee. Unfortunately we didn't realize that of the 15 weeks available for committee time the Senate Judiciary Committee would spend 10 of them on DWI, 3 on proposals dealing with bail and depositions, and one to finish up. So despite the support of three of the six committee members (Sens. Jan Backus, D-Windham Cty., David Wolk, D-Rutland Cty., Mary Just Skinner, D-

Washington Cty.) we were unable to get the committee to spend the one to two days necessary to work on the bill.

While disappointed, we were not discouraged. Through the hard work of Keith Goslant, Holly Perdue, Rep. Ron Squires and others in the Lesbian/Gay community, I am confident that we have the votes to get the bill out of committee and passed by the Senate when the legislature reconvenes in January.

Between now and then, if you live in their districts, please take the time to thank our supporters on the committee. Make a point of contacting the remaining three members who have not yet said they would support these basic civil rights. They are: Sen. John Bloomer (R-Rutland Cty.), Chair of the committee; Sen. Stephen Webster (R-Orange Cty.); and Sen. Dennis Delaney (R-Chittenden Cty). Let them know how important their support for the bill is to you. Supporters in the House are also working to build support for the proposal. Rep. Ron Squires, the first openly gay member of the House of Representatives, will be helping to coordinate our effort in the Judiciary Committee and the full House. As with the Senate, if you live in their

district, contact the Judiciary Committee members between now and January and ask for their support. They are: Reps. Sally Fox (D-Essex Jct.), Chair; Orland Campbell (R-Manchester), Vice-Chair; Mary Sullivan (D-Burlington); Peter Mallery (D-Newbury); Ruth Stokes (R-Williston); David Clarkson (D-Newfane); Ted Pendleton (R-Proctor); Ben Blais (D-Derby); Tom Alderman (D-Middlebury); John Freidin (D-New Haven); Patricia Welch (R-Springfield). Feel free to contact your legislator even if she or he is not on the committee!

Every year we come closer and closer to making these basic rights the law of Vermont. I believe we will win in the Senate, and with everyone's help, we can win in the House. After that the last piece of the puzzle is Governor Snelling. Call or write his office explaining how important his active support is, and why. I know January seems a long way off, but these people are your legislators year round, so go ahead and call. If you have any questions or suggestions contact Ben Truman at the ACLU at 223-6304. To contact your representative and/or senator you can:

1. Call or write them at home, you can get their address and number from the Sergeant At Arms at the State House (828-2228).
2. Write them care of the State House, it will be forwarded. Representative/Senator _____, State House, Montpelier, VT, 05602

To contact the Governor:

1. Call 828-3333
2. Or write: Governor Richard Snelling, Office of the Governor, Pavilion Building, Montpelier, VT 05602 ▼



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