

## National/International News

### Proposal Would Extend Partner Benefits to all State Workers

Boston, MA - A proposal presented to Massachusetts governor William Weld by his Advisory Commission on Women's Issues would grant lesbian and gay state employees bereavement leave for the death of a partner, or partner's parent or child. If approved by the governor, the proposed executive order would extend visiting rights at state hospitals and prisons to individuals in "nontraditional" relationships. The Commission also called for a study into the feasibility of providing health benefits to the domestic partners of state workers. The governor has not indicated his position on the order, although he has been a supporter of the rights of lesbians and gays in the past and appointed a gay man to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. While more than seventy municipalities recognize domestic partners in some form, Massachusetts would become the first state to do so if the order is signed. (*Boston Herald*)

### The Changing American Family

Monroe, OH - The September issue of *Scholastic Update*, a magazine widely distributed to high school students, devoted its cover story to "The Changing American Family." Included among the families in the article was a gay couple and their 14 year old son Jake. A family photo and interview with Jake made this a positive piece. (*GLADD Newsletter*)

### Anti-gay Remarks Defamatory

Los Angeles, CA - Donna Summer is suing *New York Magazine* for \$30 million in damages, charging that anti-gay remarks attributed to her were "false and defamatory." The article quoted a "industry insider" as saying that Summer had refused to include a song that was

"written for the homosexual community" on her most recent recording. Summer issued a denial saying "I would never say the things attributed to me in this article." (*Washington Blade*)

### Massachusetts Anti-Discrimination Law Enforced

Boston, MA - A national consumer credit company and a local car dealership will pay a \$1,500 settlement to a lesbian couple reportedly refused a car lease because of their sexual orientation. The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination took action against the companies, citing a provision in the state's civil rights law prohibiting discrimination against gays in the area of credit. In addition to the payment, the credit company stipulated that it would not deny auto lease loans to "non-spousal co-signers" because of sexual orientation or marital status and would update its application forms to alert consumers of the state's anti-discrimination laws. The car dealership has agreed to place informational posters in its showroom and educate its sales staff about the civil rights law. (*Washington Blade*)

### University of Michigan Discriminates Against Gay Couples

Ann Arbor, MI - Voting unanimously against the recommendations of the University's Housing Law Reform Project and the Study Committee on the Status of Lesbians and Gay Men, the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan denied gay and lesbian couples the right to rent university housing currently designated for "married couples." "The family definition is changing all over the country," Tracy Ore of the university's Lesbian and Gay Programs Office, "and it's time for the university to enter the 21st century and recognize that lesbians and gay males have families." (*Washington Blade*)

### U.S. West May Cut Scout Funding

Denver, CO - U.S. West, Inc. is considering cutting financial support for local Boy Scout groups because of the Scouts' national policy against admitting gays. Company officials began reviewing scouting membership policies after several employees raised questions about the scouts, according to Jane Prancan, executive director of U.S. West Foundation. The Boy Scouts' policies were described as "particularly troubling in light of U.S. West's values around pluralism and diversity." (*Equal Time*)

### Canadian Court Recognizes Gay Couples

Vancouver, B.C. - A British Columbia court decided in favor of a gay couple's application for joint health coverage Justice Anne Rowles of the British Columbia Supreme Court ruled that the province must consider Raymond Garneau the spouse of Timothy Knodel under the provincial health plan. The justice based her ruling on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which forbids discrimination. Justice Rowles' ruling is at least the second in Canada to state that anti-gay discrimination violates the charter. While everyone in Canada is guaranteed health coverage, some provinces charge health care taxes while others charge premiums. In British Columbia, married couples pay approximately \$84 less in premiums than two single people. (*The Advocate*)

### First Black Lesbian Elected to Office in Seattle

Seattle, WA - Sherry Harris became the first black lesbian elected official by winning a seat on the Seattle City Council by a wide margin (67% to the incumbent's 33%). (*Washington Blade*)



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