

motion, a discharge, or treatment on the job, would be able to file charges of discrimination with the Commission. We would be able to investigate those as we would any other charge under our jurisdiction, attempt conciliation, and possibly take cases to court if that was necessary."

Passage of the bill will increase the Human Rights Commission's workload, since the Commission, with its shrinking staff, will have to enforce the laws for a new group. Nevertheless, it is eager to meet this challenge. "We do not turn away any charge of discrimination. We investigate every charge that comes before us. What it means is there will be a longer processing time from beginning to end. It doesn't mean that we won't do it."

Sussman believes that Vermont has not been exempt from the conservative trend in the United States in the 1980s, as seen in the rise of hate-motivated crimes and the erosion of civil rights under the U.S. Supreme Court. Nevertheless, she believes that the climate toward full civil rights for gay men and lesbians has become more favorable, both in Vermont and in the country as a whole. "I heard a (Vermont) politician say that ten years ago it would not have been politically safe to support gay rights legislation. This politician said that they didn't think it was the case any more. That is now is much more 'acceptable' to support gay rights. And I think that clearly has been caused by the long years of advocacy by gay and lesbian groups."

The mission of the Vermont Human Rights Commission reflects the will of the Legislature which created it that most (but not all) Vermonters not be subject to discrimination on the basis of gender or membership in a minority group. Its accomplishments in the three short years of its existence reflect the dedication and hard work of its commissioners and staff. Its de-

termination to include gays and lesbians as much as possible under its umbrella is in part a reflection of the strong commitment of its Executive Director, Susan Sussman, who says, "I personally think that the situation for gays and lesbians in terms of legal rights is very similar to what it was for people of color prior to 1964, when the first significant federal civil rights act was passed that protected people from discrimination in employment on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin and sex...And as unconscionable as it was in my view for there to be discrimination on what are now considered to be the traditional protected categories, it is just as unconscionable when it comes to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

"I think it is the next step in terms of expansion of civil rights laws, recognizing the existence of discrimination that must be remedied...I strongly believe that the legislation is necessary, and I'm personally committed to its passage. I've heard other people make the connection between the 1964 movement in civil rights and what is going on now. And really, any person who is committed to anti-discrimination and to a pluralistic society has to be in support of the passage of the gay civil rights law. It's not anything special in my view. It just should be part of anybody's commitment to civil rights."

If you believe that you have been the victim of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, call the Vermont Human Rights Commission at 828-2480. Your call can be treated anonymously. You will get a sympathetic hearing and suggestions on the legal remedies you can pursue, if any. More importantly, perhaps, your complaint will be used to help document the need for full legal protection for gay men and lesbians in this issue. ▼

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, support and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities.

Editorial Policy

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of the staff. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates and actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals.

We will not publish any material which is overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, or homophobic.

All materials submitted must be signed so we can contact the author should we need to consider editorial revisions. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously, upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

We welcome and encourage all readers to submit materials for publication and to share your comments, criticisms, and positive feelings with us. This paper is here for you. The deadline for submitting material for each issue is the 1st of the month prior to publication.

Materials should be sent to:
Out in the Mountains
PO Box 177
Burlington, VT 05402

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How to Advertise

If you would like to run an ad in *OITM*, please contact us for rates, sizes, and information. Ad copy must be received by the 1st of the month to be included in the next month's issue. Copy can be mailed to: *OITM*, P.O. Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402, or call Ellen at (802) 860-1922.