

# National/International News

## Lesbian Judge Sworn In

Boston, MA - Linda E. Giles, was sworn in as a Boston Municipal Court judge on December 17, 1991, joining a handful of openly lesbian judges around the country, including two in San Francisco. Giles has done legal advocacy work in the gay and lesbian community, including work for Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, a Boston-based public interest law firm. (*Gay Community News*)

## Audre Lorde Named Official State Poet

Albany, NY - Audre Lorde was named the Official State Poet of New York on November 13 by Governor Mario Cuomo. Cuomo, in naming Lorde, said her appointment was on behalf of "all the poets of the oppressed, disenfranchised and silenced peoples within this state." Lorde told the *Washington Blade* that the fact a black lesbian was chosen in a state "where a black woman can be raped and sodomized and her white college student attackers be freed in court; a place where date rape and street violence against lesbians and gay men is on the increase is an inherent contradiction. We must find ways to use the best we have in ourselves to bridge these contradictions to learn the lessons they teach." (*Washington Blade* & *Gay Community News*)

## Federal Judge Upholds Steffan's Expulsion

Washington, D.C. - In the latest ruling on the expulsion of former Navy Midshipman Joseph Steffan from the U.S. Naval Academy a few weeks before he was due to graduate, Judge Oliver Gasch upheld the Defense Department policy banning openly gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Steffan was forced to resign from the school in May 1987 after he disclosed his sexual orientation to an academy chaplain.

In his latest ruling, Gasch surprised even the Defense Department by raising the issue of AIDS, an argument even the Pentagon has never used in defending its policy of exclusion. Gasch ruled that the ban on lesbians and gays was justified to prevent the spread of AIDS. Gasch's prejudice against lesbians and gays was made very clear during previous hearing on the Steffan case in the spring of 1991, when he referred to Steffan as a "homo" three times during the course of the hearings.

Senator Brock Adams (D-WA) and Representative Barbara Boxer (D-CA) have introduced resolutions in Congress to rescind the Department of Defense policy. Senators Cranston, Akaka, Inouye and Wirth have joined Adams as co-sponsors of the Senate resolution. The House resolution has 39 co-sponsors. Adams criticized Gasch's ruling, likening it to "flimsy arguments previously used to ban African-Americans and women from serving in the armed forces. Those policies had nothing to do with conduct or performance. They had everything to do with prejudice."

Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund attorneys plan an appeal. (*New York Times*, *NGLTF*)

## Patricia Ireland, NOW's New President

Washington, D.C. - In an interview in the December 17 issue of *The Advocate*, Patricia Ireland, the new president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), discussed her relationship with a woman "companion." In a wide ranging interview, Ireland said that her husband of 25 years lives in Miami and she has been living with a woman companion for the last four years in Washington, D.C. She refused to label herself as lesbian or bisexual or provide any details about her

personal life, saying, "I have not used labels most of my life." Ireland did reiterate her respect for lesbians and gays who are publically out, "I think its an very important strategy. We've had a very strong policy in NOW of respecting people's privacy, and in my own particular life, the privacy of my family and friends is really important to me." Ireland went on to discuss NOW's infamous purge of lesbians in 1970 by Betty Freidan and the strides NOW has made since then to incorporate lesbians back into its activities and concerns. NOW's lesbian rights coordinator estimates that lesbians make up 30-40% of the total membership. (*The Advocate*, *Newsweek*, *USA TODAY*)

## Gays to be Added to Canada's Human Rights Act

Ontario, Canada - The Ontario high court has ordered the federal government of Canada to add protections for lesbians and gays to the Canadian Human Rights Act. Judge Joseph McDonald ruled that the Human Rights act, by failing to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation violates the constitutional rights of lesbians and gays under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states that "every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination." The ruling came as the result of the case of an Air Force captain who disclosed he was gay and then was told that he would no longer qualify for promotion, postings, or further training. "With no career opportunity left to him, Captain Birch was released from the Armed Forces on medical grounds, and seeking some kind of redress he turned to the Canadian Human Rights Act, only to find that...(it) does not cover discrimination based on sexual orientation." (*Washington Blade*) ▼



## ROBERT W. ZEUNER ATTORNEY AT LAW

Member National  
Lesbian and  
Gay Law  
Association

**Bauer, Gravel and Watson**  
362 Main Street  
Burlington, VT 05401  
863-5538



Walter I. Zeichner, M.A., N.C.C.  
Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor ~  
Psychotherapy ~ Bodywork ~

Gay Positive Counseling ~  
for Individuals and Couples ~  
Gay Men's Therapy Group ~

Insurance Accepted ~

323 Pearl St., Burlington, VT 05401  
(802) 863-5510