

Out in the Mountains
established in 1986

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**To Submit
Articles and
Letters**

We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make *OITM* a paper both for and by gay, lesbian, and bisexual Vermonters. Please assist us by typing your articles and letters double-spaced and including your name and phone number in case we have any questions. Your submission should be received by *OITM* no later than the 1st of the previous month. *Thank you for helping out!*

Editorial

When is support not support?

Two Vermont newspapers printed editorials supporting the civil rights bill in the last month. On March 4, just after the hearings, the *Valley News* printed a very strong editorial in favor of the bill. On April 3, following the Senate vote, *The Burlington Free Press* also printed an editorial supporting passage of the bill. Both papers "did the right thing", but one was positive and the other backhanded.

Referring to the testimony, the *Valley News* stated, "The outpouring of ignorance and outright bigotry from some opponents of the legislation makes it all too clear that this expansion of the state's anti-discrimination law is long overdue." After a description of the proposed amendment, the editorial continues, "This (protection against discrimination) should not be a hard concept to grasp or support. It is predicated on the belief that people's sexual preferences are a private matter and should not provide grounds for denying them the same rights and privileges enjoyed by others in the state....Nothing is clear about the opposition to this proposal except that a disappointingly large number of people still are not prepared to relinquish their harmful myths and prejudices about gay people."

Compare this language to the *Free Press* editorial, "Some Vermonters believe homosexuality is a sin; others are simply un-

comfortable with a sexuality different from their own. People are entitled to their private opinions. (The bill specifically exempts religious organizations from being forced to employ homosexuals if that violates the group's religious principles.)"

Again compare the closing of the two editorials. "Make no mistake: Passage of this law will do little to help people overcome their bigotry. That is something that will, we hope, disappear over time. In the meantime though, those Vermonters who must endure this prejudice need legal protection to ensure that they have some recourse against those who would deny them their rights. This law would provide it. It's high time it passed."

"Gays and lesbians are not seeking special treatment from the Vermont Legislature. They are simply seeking the same assurances society has given to other groups. In fact 'gay rights' is the wrong name for this legislation. The House is being asked to approve a new kind of 'equal rights' law."

The first quote is from the *Valley News*, the second the *Free Press*. The difference is clear; the *Valley News* clearly identifies bigotry for what it is and calls for its end. The *Free Press*, while understanding and supporting the need for legal protections, is not willing or able to understand that underlying issue. This is not a "new kind of equal rights law". It is an extension of existing laws.

Deborah Lashman ▼

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