

# Out in the Mountains

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## Civil Rights Bill Signed

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## Russell to Run



Deborah Lashman

Photo Gene Barfield

"This bill is now law." With those words Governor Howard Dean signed S-131, a bill to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and added Vermont to the list of states with such legislation. In a ceremony on April 24, attended by close to 100 supporters, the six year battle came to a successful conclusion. Applause, hugs and cheers filled the Executive Chamber as the bill was signed.

Speaker Ralph Wright, Senator David Wolk, and Representative Vi Luginbuhl, all crucial supporters of the bill, joined the Governor at the table. Governor Dean also mentioned the support of former Representative Chet Ketcham, who worked on the bill in previous sessions and is now a probate judge in Addison County. (Judge Ketcham ruled in favor of a second parent adoption by a lesbian couple late last year, March '92 *OITM*). Among those standing behind the Governor during the signing were Keith Goslant and Holly Perdue of the Vermont Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men, Susan Sussman, Executive Director of the

State Office of Human Rights, and Representative Ron Squires, Vermont's only openly gay legislator.

Senator Wolk pointed to the hatermongering, threats, and attacks on members of the legislature and their families, including calls and letters to his family as even more evidence of the "compelling need for this legislation."

Several members of the Legislature found burned or defaced American flags on their doorsteps. One Senator was threatened by a constituent who came to his door, asked how he had voted on the bill and then "said she would be back with a gun."

Governor Dean thanked the members of the Legislature and also said "I want to thank everyone in this room for your courage and help in making this a reality. I've never been prouder to sign a bill publically...It's the right thing to do." He

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Howard Russell announced recently his intention to run for a Chittenden County Senate seat. Russell ran for the same office in 1990 and came up 600 votes short of winning one of Chittenden County's six seats in the Vermont Senate.

In making his announcement, Russell stressed many of the same platform issues that were the basis of his campaign in 1990: the development of a more progressive tax system, support for basic human services and child care, a strong pro-choice stance, and the maintenance of environmental programs. Russell also stressed his strong interest in taking an active part in "smart, careful" welfare reform, as well as upcoming decisions concerning universal health care.

"I want to add my voice and my perspective to these very complex issues. The welfare system is, indeed, in need of reform. However, we must be careful that changes do not create an even more ineffectual system and cause unnecessary hardships for some very vulnerable people."

Russell, who ran as an openly gay candidate in 1990, said that he again intends to speak out strongly, "with the voice that I was given."

"It is important that people know that I am gay in order to understand the depth of my commitment on many of the issues that I speak about, as well as the unique perspective that I can bring into the discussions."

Russell acknowledged the importance of the recent passage of the sexual orientation anti-discrimination bill in Vermont. However, he asserted, "much remains to be done before lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are given equal treatment and equal opportunities in Vermont. We must continue to push forward, to accept

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