

# National/International News

## Southern Baptists Banish Churches

Indianapolis, IN - Two Southern Baptist congregations were banished from the church for accepting gays. The measure was approved at a convention of the church, the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. The ouster of any church that "acts to affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior," is a retreat from the Southern Baptist's tradition of allowing individual congregations autonomy.

One of the ousted churches, Pullen Memorial in Raleigh, NC, blessed a gay union while the other, Binkley Memorial in Chapel Hill, NC, licensed a gay preacher. The resolution called these actions "contrary to the teaching of the Bible on human sexuality and the sanctity of the family and offensive to Southern baptists." (*The New York Times*)

## San Francisco Police Chief Fired

San Francisco, CA - The San Francisco Police Commission voted unanimously to fire Police Chief Richard Hongisto on May 15th for his ordering the confiscation of over 2,000 copies of a local gay newspaper from newsracks around the city. The paper, *Bay Times*, contained an article critical of Hongisto's order of mass arrests during demonstrations protesting the verdict in the Rodney King case. During the mass arrests gay men were put in a holding cell labeled "HOMOS." The cover photo of the paper featured the head of Hongisto pasted on the body of lesbian activist Peggy Sue. Dressed as a police officer, Sue was depicted fondling a police baton extending from her groin.

A police officer overheard Vice Inspector Gary Delagnes discussing the confiscation with Hongisto, and reported it to his superior who in turn relayed it to the Police

Special Investigation Unit. A total of 2,132 copies of the paper were discovered in the garage of one of the officers involved.

During the 1990 International AIDS Conference in San Francisco, Delagnes had threatened to "draw my gun and shoot" if demonstrators splashed AIDS-tainted blood on him. Hongisto admitted talking to Delagnes about the *Bay Times*, but denied asking him to remove the papers, despite reports in the San Francisco press that he had recommended the confiscation of the paper. In announcing the firing, the president of the commission said, "We believe the Chief exercised poor judgment and abused his power." Mayor Frank Jordan, himself a former San Francisco Police Chief who had just appointed Hongisto six weeks earlier said, "I cannot condone his actions." (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Blade*)

## Victory in NY Domestic Partners Case

New York, NY - A five judge panel of the New York State Appellate Division unanimously ruled on May 13th that the denial of health care benefits to domestic partners of lesbian and gay employees of the New York City School system may violate civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and marital status. The ruling is the first time an appellate court has recognized that gay and lesbian employees may present legal claims of discrimination when employment benefits that are given to spouses are denied to unmarried partners.

In 1991 the trial court refused to hear the case at the request of the City of New York. Judge Karla Moskowitz said then that to adhere, "to the traditional view of people as either 'single' or 'legally married' would be rejecting the reality of 'family life' in this day and age." At that

point, the City appealed the decision. This latest victory means that unless the City takes its appeal to the state's highest court, the case will go back to the trial court for a full trial. (*Lambda Legal Defense Fund*, *Equal Times*)

## U.S. Agency Orders Gay Employee to List Others

Washington, D.C - A gay employee of the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was ordered last November to supply the agency's security chief with a list of gay FEMA employees. Testifying before a House Government Operations Subcommittee last April, Jerald Johnson said agency officials held up the security clearance he needed to participate in an international project until he identified other gay employees. Johnson was first asked for the list during questioning for a top secret classification three years ago. While being questioned he said that sexual preference should not be a consideration in security issues and that he knew of other government workers who were gay and excellent employees. Asked at that time for a list, Johnson refused and withdrew his request for clearance. Last fall he was asked to be part of a program to help Poland set up a management review system and told he would need security clearance to participate.

The list, which FEMA officials say was kept in a locked vault and not acted upon, was finally ordered destroyed on May 18, following pressure from Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) and adverse publicity and editorials in major new media. FEMA Director Wallace Stickney, who originally defended the actions of the agency now calls collecting the list "abhorrent." He has transferred the security chief out of the Washington office and announced that he would convene an outside board of review to examine FEMA's Office of Security. (*The New York Times*, *Washington Blade*) ▼

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