

National/International News

Canadian Immigration Grants Lesbian Status

Canada - Canadian Immigration officials granted immigrant status to an Irish lesbian, Bridget Coll, whose application they had earlier rejected. Coll's lover, Canadian citizen Christine Morrisey sued the Immigration Department in February when she was told she could not sponsor Coll's request. Lawyer for the couple, Rob Hughes, speculated that the granting of immigrant status was an attempt to "subvert the litigation"; expecting the government to move to have the lawsuit dismissed now that Coll's request has been granted.

The Immigration Department has refused to comment on the case, the first in which immigrant status like Coll's has been granted to "legal family members" of Canadian citizens. In response to the precedent set by the decision in Coll's case, The Lesbian and Gay Immigration Task force plans to test the ruling by filing complaints with the Canadian Human Rights Commission on behalf of 12 binational couples whose immigration petitions have been denied. (*The Advocate*)

Weld Signs Partner Benefits Orders

Boston, MA - Massachusetts Governor William Weld signed two executive orders in October, granting domestic partner benefits. One executive order allows gay state employees to take bereavement leave or personal leave for the death or serious illness of a partner or family member. The other order allows visitation rights at state institutions (including hospitals, and prisons) for partners of gays or lesbians who are inmates, residents or patients. Partner relationships are defined as caring, mutual support between two competent unmarried adults who share living space and expenses and have "a mutual expectation that the relationship is exclusive and will endure overtime." (*The Washington Blade*)

D.C. Allows Domestic Partner Registration

Washington, D.C. - Despite action by the U.S. House of Representatives to kill the D.C. domestic partnership law in late September, the city has found a way to allow registration by

having couples pay for and perform the paperwork themselves. The House voted 235-173 to ban the D.C. government from using any of its funds to implement the measure approved by the city council in July. Under orders from D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt-Kelly, district officials implemented the partnership registration by requiring couples to prepare their own declarations of domestic partnership, obtain signatures from notaries public, and mail their declarations to the D.C. government with a request for a return receipt. (*Outlines, The Advocate, The Washington Blade*)

Marines Threaten Suit Over Tattoo

Washington, D.C. - The U.S. Marine Corps has threatened to sue an AIDS service group over its use of an ad for safe sex in which two men are hugging and one has a Marine Corps emblem tattooed on his arm. Marine Major K.H. Winters, a legal official for the Marines wrote the San Francisco AIDS Foundation threatening to sue for copyright infringement if the group continued to run the ad. Winters said the ad could "create the inference that the Marine Corps is somehow partially responsible for the spread of AIDS in the San Francisco area." and that people viewing the ad could infer that the Marines have given "tacit approval of homosexuality." AIDS Foundation director Pat Christen has refused to pull the ad. (*The Washington Blade*)

Lesbians May be at Especially High Risk for Breast Cancer

Washington, D.C. - As many as one in three lesbians may develop breast cancer, according to a report by Dr. Suzanne Haynes an epidemiologist at the National Cancer Institute (NCI). (The NCI estimates that about one in eight of all women in America eventually develop breast cancer.) Haynes found that lesbians have a high tendency to fall into several of the high risk factors for breast cancer. These include the following:

Childlessness: Women who never bear children have a higher incidence of breast cancer than women who do. Haynes said that as more lesbians decide to have children through alternative insemination, their risk may decrease.

High Body Mass and Alcoholism: Consumption of a high-fat diet and alcoholism have been tied to increased risk for breast cancer in a number of studies. The National Lesbian Health Care Survey and other studies have found a higher incidence of both these factors among lesbians than among heterosexual women.

Lack of Regular Gynecologic Care: A number of studies, including the National Lesbian Health Survey, have found that lesbians are far less likely than heterosexual women to seek regular gynecologic care. Unlike lesbians, many heterosexual women receive Pap-smear tests and breast exams when they visit health care providers to get oral contraceptives.

Haynes said her report synthesizes several previously conducted studies and is the first to link risk factors for breast cancer to an increased incidence among lesbians. The report was prepared independently and received no funding from the NCI (part of the National Institutes of Health). While National Institutes of Health Director Dr. Bernadine Healy initiated the first ever federal study of women's health issues, the program has been criticized for not including studies of lesbian health issues. (*The Advocate, The Washington Blade*)

Navy Ordered to Reinstate Gay Sailor

Los Angeles, CA - A Federal district judge issued an injunction in mid November, ordering the Navy to temporarily reinstate a petty officer who disclosed his homosexuality on national television and was discharged three months later. Following his discharge, Keith Meinhold sued in Federal court contending that the discharge violated the Constitution's equal protection guarantee and that the Navy had acted unfairly by refusing to tell him at the hearing by what standard he was being judged; for acknowledging his homosexuality or for having engaged in homosexual acts, something Meinhold has never acknowledged. Unless the governments successful in an appeal against the injunction it will remain in effect, allowing Meinhold to return to active duty, until his suit is resolved. (*The New York Times*) ▼

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