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# Out in the Mountains

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## Ron Squires Dies at Age 41



Ron Squires at the signing of Vermont's civil rights bill.

Photo Gene Barfield

## Burlington Passes Domestic Partner Benefits

In a 9-4 vote January 11, as *OITM* went to press, the Burlington City Council passed a proposal to provide health care benefits for domestic partners of city employees. With the vote, Burlington joins the ranks of a number of municipalities around the country recognizing the rights of domestic partners. It is the first city in Vermont to enact such coverage. Voting for the proposal were Councilors Maurice Mahoney, D-Ward 1; Sharon Bushor, I-Ward 1; Donna Bailey, PC-Ward 1; Dana Clark, PC-Ward 2; Barbara Nolfi, PC-Ward 3; Brian Pine, PC-Ward 3; Richard Frothingham, D-Ward 4; Mark Kornbluh, PC-Ward 5; and Paul Lafayette, D-Ward 5. Voting against were William Aswad, D-Ward 4; Dianne DeForge, R-Ward 4; Peter Brownell, R-Ward 6; and Ann Hallowell, D-Ward 6. *Read next month's OITM for further coverage of the vote and what it means.* ▼

Deborah Lashman

Rep. Ron Squires, Vermont's first openly gay legislator, died January 7th, two days after being sworn in to his second term in the legislature from his hospital bed. His mother Shirley Squires said Ron had hoped to be strong enough to go to Montpelier for the swearing in. When that wasn't possible, the Vermont House changed its rules to allow House Clerk Robert Picher and Speaker Ralph Wright to give the oath at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. Squires' mother, two brothers, three sisters, partner and close friends were with him for the swearing in. Windham County Democratic Chair, Anne Rider, said Squires had planned to publicly reveal his diagnosis but had not decided when to do so.

Squires, who was a leader in the fight for Vermont's civil rights bill last year, also worked hard on local issues, including relocating a welcome center on I-91 and trying to bring sewerage service to a section of Guilford. In an interview with *OITM* shortly after election to his first term, Squires said, "Clearly my first allegiance has to be to the constituents that elected me, but that doesn't mean I can't be true to myself and the community that I come from. It just means that at times I'll have to work on a bridge when I'd rather be getting funding for the Health Department." Testimony to his constituency commitment was Squires' easy re-election last November, when he was the top vote getter in every town in his district.

He served as vice-chair of the Government Operations Committee in the last session of the legislature and Speaker Wright appointed Squires chair the day before his death. Squires held a number of local and state elective and party offices in his 20 years in politics, including five years as vice-chair of Vermont's Democratic Party (the first openly gay person to be a presiding officer of a state party). He led the Vermont Delegation to the Democratic National Convention in 1988 and served as a member of the delegation and as a member of the National Platform Committee at last year's convention in New York. President Elect Bill Clinton spoke with Shirley Squires the night before Squires' death.

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