

# Out in the Mountains

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## Mr. Anderson Goes to Washington: Vermonter appointed to President's AIDS Council



Chris Tebbetts

**BURLINGTON** -- Early this summer, Vermont Department of Health AIDS Program Chief Terje Anderson was named to President Clinton's Advisory Council on AIDS/HIV. With 23 of its 30 slots filled, the council had its first meetings on July 26 and 27 in Washington, D.C. Including

(Photo: Bennett Law) VT Dept. of Health AIDS Program Chief Terje Anderson

Anderson, roughly one third of those seats are filled by openly gay men, a first for any federal commission. Its mission is to push for an AIDS agenda which is a true reflection of the epidemic as it looks today.

The two forerunners to this commission were initiated in previous administrations, one under Ronald Reagan, authorized by Congress, the other authorized independently by Congress during the Bush administration. Both of those commissions, according to Anderson, did invaluable work, researching and highlighting AIDS-related issues, but had no role in the implementation of recommendations made to the President. The aim of the new commission is to do just that: specifically recommend to President Clinton how he can address the HIV/AIDS agenda in the country. "Everything the council is going to be looking at is the question of what the President can do personally," says Anderson, "Even though he has certainly talked about AIDS more than any previous president, there's a lot more he can do." Anderson pointed to "the gloves incident," in which the Secret Service agents donned latex gloves for a White House visit by gay and lesbian community representatives, as an example of both Clinton's ability to exhibit a strong response, as well as for the need to ensure continued and preemptive leadership on AIDS related issues.

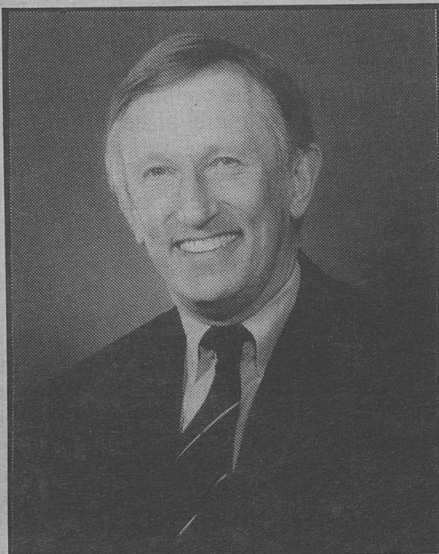
When asked about the council's relationship to the gay community, Anderson's response was in turns both passionate and diplomatic: "There's never been a federal commission that one third of the members have been openly gay before. It's a recognition that AIDS has had a huge disproportionate impact on our community and that the gay community has been at the front of the leadership in it ... [but] this isn't a council about gay civil rights, it's a council about AIDS. We need to be able to talk about AIDS in this country without being afraid to talk about gay men, and gay men's lives, and I think we've been afraid to do that to a large extent. As a result, our prevention efforts have suffered. As a result, people get a false impression sometimes of what the epidemic is about. We spend more time talking about babies and AIDS than we spend talking about gay men and AIDS. Well, babies deserve a lot of attention. It's a tragedy when a baby is born with HIV and gets sick. It's also a tragedy when a gay man becomes infected with HIV, and we need to look at exactly how we respond differently as a society to the different groups of people who get it. We have to be unashamed about talking about what's going on in the gay community with AIDS. We have to be willing to highlight the

Continued on page 2

## Jeffords Introduces ENDA

Paul Olsen

**WASHINGTON, DC/COLCHESTER** -- Surrounded by representatives of the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF), Cher's daughter Chastity Bono, Newt's sister Candace Gingrich, and Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy, Vermont Senator James Jeffords recently introduced the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) in the United States Senate.



(OITM file photo) Sen. James Jeffords, (R) Vermont

As introduced, ENDA would "prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation." In an attempt to make the bill politically palatable, ENDA prohibits the use of quotas and preferential treatment based on sexual orientation and does not apply to the Armed Forces or religious organizations. As a member of both the Republican majority and the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, Jeffords' sponsorship of ENDA is significant. "It is real important in showing that fairness for gay men and lesbians is not a partisan issue" said Human Rights Campaign Fund spokesman Doug Hattaway. "It shows that this bill can progress in advancement in a Republican controlled Congress."

In calling for passage of the bill, Senator Jeffords said "people who work hard and perform well should not be kept from leading productive and responsible lives, from paying their taxes, meeting their mortgage payments and otherwise contributing to the economic health of the nation because of irrational, non work-related prejudice." In a letter written in 1994 outlining his original decision to cosponsor ENDA, Jeffords wrote "like all other Americans, gays and lesbians deserve to be judged at work by their ability to do the job. The principles of equality and opportunity should apply to all Americans."

Given the current makeup of the U.S. Senate, the prospects for passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act remain slim. According to HRCF's Doug Hattaway, "These sorts of things take time. The bill will pass the day enough Senators and Representatives hear from enough people at home that it is important."

In a related story, on June 13 Vermont Representative Bernard Sanders became the second cosponsor of the Civil Rights Amendment Act in the U.S. House of Representatives. More comprehensive than the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, the Civil Rights Amendment Act would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, education, housing, public accommodations, and commerce. ▼

## NGA Not NGAY: Vermont hosts National Governors' Association Conference

Paul Olsen

**SOUTH BURLINGTON** -- President Bill Clinton's lunch at Burlington's Oasis Diner, forty-two governors, electric vehicles, syndicated columnist David Broder, *TV Nation's* Michael Moore (who came to hug each governor), IBM CEO Louis Gerstner, children's issues, and hundreds of journalists are some of what you may have already read about the National Governors' Association (NGA) conference held July 29 through August 1.

Hosted by Governor Howard Dean, the NGA conference included both political and social events. Working meetings addressed children's issues including school-to-work programs, welfare, education, and block grants. In separate addresses to the NGA, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and President Bill Clinton discussed their proposed changes to welfare. NGA social events were held at Burlington's Community Boathouse, Ethan Allen Homestead, Shelburne Museum, and Shelburne Farms.

Protests were staged throughout the Burlington area during the course of the NGA conference. The largest protest was the People's Conference for Economic Democracy featuring the Bread and Puppet Theater and speeches by Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle and U.S. Representative Bernard Sanders. Protest themes included the Republican "Contract with America," the death sentence of Pennsylvania journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, social

Continued on page 8



(Photo: Paul Olsen) Changing of the NGA Guard: Gov. Howard Dean, (D) Vermont, with Gov. Tommy Thompson, (R) Wisconsin

## OITM HISTORY: September Through The Years

**1990 ... Hate Crime in Burlington** Following a late-night attack on a Burlington man on August 15, Vermont's new hate crimes law may have its first test in court since it was enacted by the state legislature on April 16. According to the victim, two brothers, Dominic (28) and Richard (16) LaDue, accosted him a short time after he had left Pearl's, Burlington's gay bar.

**1993 ... Vermont Supreme Court Upholds Hate Crime Law** In a long-awaited ruling, the Vermont Supreme Court rejected a constitutional challenge to Vermont's hate crimes law brought by a man convicted of assaulting a gay man near Pearl's in 1990.

**1994 ... Vermont Becomes First State to Extend Benefits** "Effective August 1, 1994, medical and dental benefits coverage for dependents of state employees shall be extended to domestic partners and the children of domestic partners ..." These words begin the letter from the Vermont Department of Personnel that makes Vermont the first state in the nation to extend health care benefits to the domestic partners of its employees. ▼