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NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY...

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OITM Roundup: State, National and World News Briefs

compiled by Kip M. Roberson

No on 1: Maine won't discriminate

PORTLAND, ME -- After failing to pass statewide anti-gay measures last year in Idaho and Oregon, radical right groups this year have targeted the first state east of the Mississippi. Question #1 will appear on ballots throughout Maine on November 7, 1995.

The measure seeks to deny basic rights to lesbians, gays and other people by keeping them off the list of groups protected under Maine's anti-discrimination laws. The wording of the question is as follows: "Do you favor the changes in Maine law limiting protected classifications in future state and local laws to race, color, sex, physical or mental disability, religion, age, ancestry, national origin, familial status, and marital status, and repealing existing laws which expand these classifications as proposed by citizen petition?"

"This flawed and intentionally confusing question targets gays and lesbians for discrimination but would adversely impact all sorts of people," says Pat Peard, Chair of the Maine Won't Discriminate Executive Board. Maine Won't Discriminate is a coalition of individuals and groups opposing the measure. The Maine Council of Churches, the Maine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Independent Governor Angus King and the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance have joined more than 70 groups throughout the state working to defeat Question 1.

The measure was written by Virginia lawyer Bruce Fein, an operative of radical right groups that have pushed similar measures in other states. Fein once dismissed the Bill of Rights as "vastly overrated." Question 1 is being pushed by "Concerned Maine Families" and the "Coalition to End Special Rights." The latter is a newly formed group which has vowed to bring in money from Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America, and other national extremist groups.

"Maine Won't Discriminate has created the best grassroots organization that this state has ever seen, but it will take a lot to defeat the radical right groups descending on Maine," says Peard.

For further information contact Maine Won't Discriminate via mail at P.O. Box 11061; Portland, ME 04104; by phone at (800)761-1788 or (207)761-1788; or by e-mail at mecampaign@aol.com.

D'Amato decries Powell for backing gay ban

NEW YORK -- Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, who questions the courage and leadership ability of retired Gen. Colin Powell in his new book, has broadened his attack on the possible presidential contender, equating the Persian Gulf war hero's opposition to homosexuals in the military to the same arguments used to segregate black servicemen 50 years ago.

Sen. D'Amato described the general as "a disappointment" and charged that he was applying a double standard in his support for the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces.

"He was a young black second lieutenant who had not attended West Point and yet rose through the ranks to become head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," said the New York Republican. "But now

he wants to deny gays the same equal rights that enable him to succeed. I thought he would have had a certain sensitivity and say we judge people on the basis of their ability," D'Amato said in an interview with *The Washington Times*.

The Senator is backing the candidacy of Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas for the GOP presidential nomination. Gen. Powell has long been rumored as a "dream candidate" for a national ticket, although on which party's ticket is not clear.

When D'Amato supported the Clinton administration's crusade to lift the ban against homosexuals in the military, he was chastised by other Republicans, including his conservative constituency.

The first round fired at the general appeared in D'Amato's new book, *Power, Pasta and Politics: The World According to Senator Al D'Amato*. "I wonder whether Colin Powell has either the courage or the convictions needed to lead the country," he wrote. (*The Washington Times*)

Northampton gearing up for ballot measure

NORTHAMPTON, MA -- Depending on whom one talks to, the domestic partnership registry in Northampton either does almost nothing or it foreshadows rampant lesbian nakedness in the local public park.

Some say the hoopla started when the City Council approved a bill in May which allows unmarried couples -- heterosexual or same-sex -- to pay \$10 to register their love with the city clerk. Others suggest it started when ABC-TV's profiled Northampton as a booming lesbian mecca.

The difference of opinion on all this is gaping enough that the tiny town of 29,242 is going to vote on it November 7. As one longtime lesbian activist from Massachusetts put it, "It's a referendum on Lesbianville."

A group called Northampton Traditional Values gathered enough signatures to put the partnership law up for a vote unless the City Council voluntarily rescinded it. On June 15, the Council, in a unanimous vote, refused to rescind the law. With all nine councilmembers up for re-election, the Northampton Traditional Values group hopes to unseat them and the partners law in one fell swoop.

The Northampton Domestic Partnership Coalition has formed to oppose the ballot measure. Elizabeth Silver, co-president of the Coalition, said the partnership ordinance provides for three benefits but really "doesn't add anything that doesn't already exist."

Ever since the October 1992 feature on *20/20*, which profiled Northampton as a town where a large percentage of the population is lesbian, the right-wing Christian Coalition has been "spoiling for a big fight," says Sue Hyde, a Boston-based official of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "This is their big fight," said Hyde. "If they succeed in repealing this ordinance, I can just imagine the kind of media mileage the Christian Coalition is going to get out of defeating 'Shack up insurance in Lesbianville.'" (*Washington Blade*)

Montpelier 229-5220 Burlington 860-6360

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Lic. Psychologist - Master

LYNN GOYETTE, M.S., M.A.
Lic. Clinical Mental Health Counselor

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Saturday, October 28th, 8:30am-6pm • Montpelier High School

More than 40 fun and educational workshops, plus vendors, related evening events and keynote speech by Keith St. John, first openly gay African-American elected official in the country.

Registration: \$20-30 before Oct. 21; \$30 on-site (No one will be turned away for lack of funds.)

More info or registration forms: Write to: VCLGR, P.O. Box 1125, Montpelier, VT 05601.
Or call Laurie at 223-8962, Dudley at 889-9413; or e-mail us at VCLGR@aol.com.

Event will be ASL interpreted. Childcare is available if pre-registered.