

1995 in Review

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friends. "It sounds real pedestrian almost to say, but it really is an important message ... We're the first line of defense in this epidemic."

9. Dean speaks out



(OITM file photo)
OITM scooped Gov. Dean's reelection plans

Quite possibly, 1995 was the year of Governor Howard Dean. He not only served as chair of the National Governor's Association but also as host to the nation's governors when Burlington was the site for the association's annual conference. In an exclusive interview with *OITM*, Dean spoke out on same-sex adoption, outing, and his future political plans. With regard to same-sex adoption, Dean said that the "bill has to come out (of the legislature) with only one criterion for adoption and that is what's in the best interest of the child." He said that he would not sign a bill that prohibits same-sex adoption. On the topic of outing, Dean said, "I don't like outing because I think people need to make their own decisions about when or if they want to disclose if they are gay." Finally, when asked if he plans to run for governor in 1996, Dean replied "Yes, and you're the first newspaper in the state to know."

8. Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights

VCLGR continued to reach out to the g/l/b community in 1995. The Coalition held its 3rd annual conference at Montpelier High School

in October. VCLGR lobbied the Vermont legislature strongly on the adoption reform bill, working effectively to keep adoption open to same-sex couples. The Coalition also fought censorship at the Rutland Free Library, voicing opposition to the removal or relocation of gay-themed materials. Lastly, VCLGR sponsored an informative series of workshops on interactive television. As a champion of gay rights in Vermont, the Coalition deserves a heartfelt thanks for being the voice of our community.

7. Human Rights Commission targeted

Created by the legislature in 1988, with strong support by then-governor Madeleine Kunin, the Commission has been a highly visible "watchdog" for a profusion of alleged civil right violations. The Commission has since been targeted for an overhaul or complete elimination with civil rights issues to be handled by the Attorney General's office. Many public hearings were conducted where comments ranged from those of Jim Breer, an alleged violator of civil rights, who said, "I will be in the toilets if necessary to eliminate Susan Sussman and the Human Rights Commission membership," to the words of Susan Aranoff, a VCLGR spokesperson, who testified, "Vermont is not yet a discrimination-free state. And until it is, we need the Human Rights Commission to continue its vital mission unfettered by mean-spirited political attacks." The fate of the Commission remains in the balance although an internal evaluation has resulted in many suggested improvements to basic operations.

6. Jeffords introduces ENDA

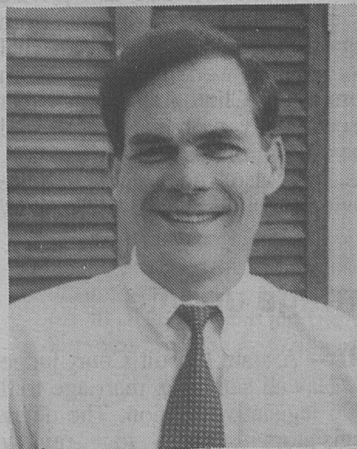
Surrounded by representatives of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), Cher's daughter Chastity Bono, Newt's sister Candace Gingrich, and Senator Edward Kennedy, Vermont Senator James Jeffords introduced the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) in the United States Senate. As introduced, ENDA would "prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation." In calling for the 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 mortgage payments and otherwise contributing to the economic health of the nation because of irrational, non work-related prejudice." Given the current composition of the U.S. Senate, the prospects for passage of ENDA remain slim. According to HRC'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."

5. A grave amendment

The rights of Vermonters to consummate second-parent adoptions were threatened by amendments to the Adoption Reform Bill considered during the 1995 Vermont legislative session. In an unanticipated move, Sen. Judy Bloomer, Sen. Jim Greenwood, and Sen. Leon Graves introduced an amendment, the Graves Amendment, which imposed restrictions on the rights of individuals to adopt, limiting this privilege to "a husband and wife together, or a person alone." This language eliminated the option of second-parent adoption for either heterosexual or homosexual parents. Citing the well prepared and focused testimony orchestrated by the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR), the Senate Judiciary

Committee, by a 4-2 vote, killed the Graves Amendment. Discussion of adoption reform continues and the 1996 legislative session will see an early resubmission of a new adoption reform bill.

4. Ed Flanagan comes out



(Photo: Bennett Law)
State Auditor Ed Flanagan came out

With one bold step, Vermont's Auditor of Accounts Ed Flanagan, has become the national 'coming out' poster child. By publicly disclosing his sexual orientation, Flanagan has become the only openly gay statewide elected official in the United States.


Flanagan said (of his coming out), "It was a combination of personal growth and maturity together with the degradation of the public dialogue and debate in Washington. I think that the bigotry and prejudices that have been explicitly expressed in Congress called for a very blunt response." His disclosure has been greeted with enthusiasm by many leaders within the gay and lesbian community. According to Human Rights Campaign spokesperson Doug Hattaway, "Coming out is the most important thing any person can do in the equal rights movement. It is especially important for powerful public officials who can educate non-gay people and serve as role models."

3. Who's evicting Daddy's Roommate?



(Photo: Susan Aranoff)
Rutland parent Karol Raiche supporting eviction

In an often heated debate, the residents of Rutland were confronted with Karol Raiche's campaign to have the Rutland Free Library restrict access to the children's picture book *Daddy's Roommate* and the periodicals *Art Forum*, *Out*, and even *Out in the Mountains*. In a battle waged in the library board room, public forums, parking lots, the opinion pages of local newspapers, broadcast media, and even the pulpit, the discussion focused on "parental rights" and intellectual freedom. Article V of the Library Bill of Rights states that "a person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." Raiche urged the library to segregate certain materials from the general collection as a precautionary measure in an effort to protect the innocence of those who are "age impressionable." The library board voted to keep *Daddy's Roommate* on the shelves of the children's room where access is open to all.



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