

Letters to the Editor

Dear OITM:

I would like to share with you and other members of *Out in the Mountains* information about the provision included in a recently enacted law that will require the discharge of soldiers from the armed services who test positive for the HIV virus. I strongly oppose this provision that was included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996 and have enclosed several statements about this issue for you to share.

I voted against the Senate passage of this bill because it contained this discriminatory change and authorized \$7 billion more in defense spending than the Pentagon requested. On February 9, this bill was signed by President Clinton and the discharge of HIV-positive personnel became mandatory law. I am working with other concerned Senators and the Administration to pass legislation that would repeal this offensive new requirement. In this effort, President Clinton has declared this provision discriminatory and unconstitutional and has directed the Attorney General not to defend it in court.

If you have any further questions or concerns as this issue develops, please contact Maggie Whitney of my staff at 202-224-4242.

Sincerely,
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Leahy spoke in the Senate on January 26 and said the following about the policy concerning HIV-positive military personnel: "This is a provision built on fear and ignorance and will undermine the strength of our military ... Singling out the 1,050 service members who are HIV-positive for early separation is discriminatory and highly inappropriate.

"HIV-positive service members are still capable of making many contributions to the armed services. Anyone who believes that HIV-positive individuals are no longer valuable, vibrant individuals: I suggest that you think back to the 1992 Olympic games. Magic Johnson, who is publicly HIV-positive, led our country to a gold medal in basketball.

"We must utilize all of our resources if we are to remain the strongest, most powerful nation the world has ever known. We simply cannot afford to close the door on service members because of their status as HIV-positive. This provision will set a dangerous precedent. It is built on fear and ignorance, not facts."

The Power of the Press

Dear OITM,

I read with great interest your January 1996 Editorial, "Anatomy of Our GL/B Press." I was especially struck by the synchronicity of issues faced by your publication and mine that month.

In particular, I want to extend my support for your stance that it is important to report on our communities and issues as they are — not just as we would like them to be or as some kind of whitewashed image of reality. As I mentioned in my own editorial, it is through honest dialogue — and

sometimes disagreement — that we discover our common vision, our real unity, and our paths to reconciliation.

Just as I heralded controversy over the way *Toward Freedom* reports on issues of interest to its audience as a significant and healthy way of working toward social change through constructive criticism of ourselves as well as the "other," I hope that the on-going discussion in *OITM* proves fruitful and strengthens rather than divides the g/l/b/t community.

Yours in the struggle,
Greg Guma
Editor, *Toward Freedom*
Burlington, Vermont

It is worth quoting from Greg's editorial even further: "Sometimes our best friends are those who confront us with the hardest truths about ourselves. Because they love and support us, they won't let us off the hook. Politically, this sometimes means that criticizing allies, even as we support them, can be a greater act of solidarity than ignoring their missteps."

OITM's new editorial staff agrees with this philosophy, particularly as it serves truth over deception, voice over silence, and, perhaps most relevantly, freedom of expression over the censorship of the closet. We in the "alternative" press have only now begun to address the implications and consequences of this provocative topic as it applies to our communities. OITM hopes to continue such dialogue in a respectful, positive, and ultimately forward-looking manner. -- Ed.

Clerical Clarification

Dear OITM:

In response to your informative article in the February issue of *OITM* concerning the Right Reverend Mary Adelia McLeod and Reverend LaCava, there was only one error I wish to correct.

During the three month leave of absence taken by LaCava for therapeutic reasons, he was replaced by interim Pastor Father Al Cammer. After Mr. LaCava was relieved of his responsibilities at Church of Our Saviour, he was replaced by Cannon Pastor Don Morris.

Although it should make no difference, neither are or were women. I am a member of the Episcopal Church of Vermont, and proud to have the first woman lead a diocese in the Northern Continent, where no one should be judged on their gender or preferences, but rather on their capacity to love and lead.

Thank you for your time, and God Bless,

Pamela A. McQuate
Killington, Vermont

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Out in the Mountains

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