

Out in the Mountains

VERMONT'S FORUM FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER ISSUES

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FREE

Anti-Gay Marriage Bill Introduced in Vermont House

H. 182 Seeks Narrow Definition of Marriage

What the Bill Says

H.182

Introduced by Representatives Sheltra of Derby, Brunelle of Winooski, Clark of St. Johnsbury, Helm of Castleton, Hoag of Woodford and Robb of Swanton

Subject: Domestic relations; marriage; same-sex marriage

Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to prohibit same-sex marriages, define marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and prohibit this state from recognizing a same-sex marriage that took place in another state.

AN ACT RELATING TO PROHIBITING SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 15 V.S.A. § 8 is added to read:

§ 8. SAME-SEX MARRIAGE PROHIBITED; DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE; SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN ANOTHER STATE NOT RECOGNIZED IN THIS STATE

(a) A person shall not marry another person of the same sex.

(b) In the construction of laws in this state "marriage" means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.

(c) This state shall not give effect to any public act, record, or judicial proceeding of any other state, territory, possession, or tribe respecting a relationship between persons of the same sex that is treated as a marriage under the laws of such other state, territory, possession, or tribe, or a right or claim arising from such relationship. ▼

by Paul Olsen

A bill that, if passed, would make Vermont the 18th state to ban same-sex marriages has been introduced in the Vermont House of Representatives by Nancy Sheltra (R-Derby).

The purpose of H.182 is to "prohibit same sex marriages, define marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and prohibit this state from recognizing a same-sex marriage that took place in another state." The bill, co-sponsored by Donald Brunelle (R-Winooski), David Clark (R-St. Johnsbury), Robert Helm (R-Castleton), Neil Hoag (D-Woodford), and John Robb (R-Swanton), has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

Cosponsors of H.182 indicated that the bill was introduced in response to the gay marriage debate in Hawaii. "We know what's going on in Hawaii and other states. This bill has to do with social degradation," Donald Brunelle said. In spite of his support for H.182, Brunelle expressed pessimism regarding the bill's future. "It probably won't even clear the committee. Vermont is a very liberal state."

The bill's chief sponsor, Nancy Sheltra, indicated that she introduced H.182 "because there is sanctity in a marriage between a man and a woman and I'd like to keep that definition. God created Adam and a helpmate, Eve...that's how he wanted us to see relationships develop and grow. Two males and two females is not a normal situation to raise children in," she said.

In response to questions whether H.182 is anti-gay, cosponsor Robert Helm replied "It's not targeting gays... It's targeting saving traditional family values. I see society getting shattered as I've known it in my lifetime."

Freedom to Marry Task Force co-chair Beth Robinson was not surprised with the bill's introduction and remains optimistic that the bill will die this session. "We're hopeful that if they turn their attention to it

that it won't pass" Robinson said. "Vermonters won't support a bill designed to undermine gay and lesbian families."

Openly gay State Representative Bill Lippert (D-Hinesburg) also expressed cautious optimism regarding the future of H.182. "I do not sense broad support for it in the Legislature or in the Judiciary Committee. We've got much more important things to deal with" he said. "We'll deal with it appropriately," Lippert, a Judiciary Committee member, added.

Vermont Governor Howard Dean's spokesperson, Stephanie Carter, indicated that Dean opposes H.182. "He does not support the bill introduced by Nancy Sheltra, nor does he believe that it will receive any serious hearing during the 1997 legislative session. He believes the issue of gay marriage is still in the courts, that we need to get some direction from the courts, and that's where the decisions ought to be made."

"Governor Dean is no Kirk Fordice," Carter added in a reference to Mississippi's governor, who hailed his state's recent decision to ban gay marriages referred to them as "perverse."

With the introduction of H.182, Vermont joins a number of states in the national debate over the recognition of gay marriages. With a friendly legislature and Governor and dedicated people prepared to mobilize, members of Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities and the bill's cosponsors both conclude that the bill is not likely to proceed very far this legislative session.

Author's note: I told you so. ▼

"God created Adam and a helpmate, Eve...that's how he wanted us to see relationships develop and grow."
-- Nancy Sheltra

Pride Day Planning Underway

BURLINGTON — The date for Pride Day '97 has been set: Saturday, June 21. Again this year, Burlington will be the place. The Pride organizers have been meeting and planning and hope that this year, more and more individuals, groups and businesses will take part not only in the day itself, but in hosting and organizing events leading up to June 21st.

"As a committee we're providing the blueprint or basic plan of the day. It's up to all members of our community to come in and build on those plans and to create the day as they want it to be," says Bob Bolyard, one of the committee organizers. "We'd love to see organizations plan events for the entire month of June all over the state. Pride is not just a Saturday in June, and not just for the people who can make it to Burlington that day."

Anyone wanting to help with the Pride Committee in any way is encouraged to write to Vermont Pride '97, PO Box 5113, Burlington VT 05402-5113. ▼

O.I.T.M. celebrates National Women's Herstory Month!

OITM Marks Anniversary

This issue marks the start of our twelfth year of publishing *Out in the Mountains*. We remain thankful to our devoted readers (and particularly to our subscribers), our supportive advertisers, and the dedicated unpaid staff which works hard to make sure the paper gets out there each month. This paper remains a testament to the strength of our belief in a fair and just society, as well as a means of celebrating the goodness and richness of our lives. Though many challenges remain, we continue to persevere. Our greatest appreciation to those who have given of their time, talents, and finances to bring us this far. Cheers! ▼