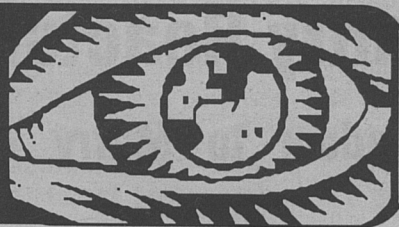


the rest of our world...



Hawaiian weddings blocked

HONOLULU – The drive for gay marriage has ended for now in the state once considered the most likely to allow it.

Hawaii's Supreme Court has said that a constitutional amendment prohibiting same-gender marriages is legal.

The court said the effort by homosexual couples was rendered moot by a 1998 amendment to the state constitution overwhelmingly approved by voters. The amendment gave lawmakers the authority to limit state-recognized marriages to opposite-sex couples.

The high court considered an appeal of a lower court ruling that the state could not justify its 1994 ban on same-sex marriages. The judge in the case had ordered the state to grant marriage licenses to gay couples, but delayed the order pending the appeal.

Lawmakers later drafted the amendment giving them the authority to pass the ban. Voters approved the proposal by a 2-to-1 margin last year.

AIDS accelerating

LONDON – The AIDS virus is spreading ever more rapidly, say the UN Program on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization.

WHO said it expected the number of infections worldwide to continue to grow, fueled by an increase in the use of injected drugs.

According to the report, 33.6 million people, including 1.2 million children, are carrying HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

That compares to 33.4 million people who were HIV positive last year. However, the agencies said this year's increase is even larger than it appears because the 1998 figures in a few heavily populated Latin American and Asian countries were "overestimated."

"With an epidemic of this scale, every new infection adds to the ripple effect, impacting families, communities, households and increasingly, businesses and economies," Dr. Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, said at a London news conference.

British activist dies

VICTORIA, BC – A writer credited with ending some of Britain's anti-gay laws has died.

Peter Wildeblood died Nov. 14 at his home in British Columbia. He was 76. No cause of death was

announced, but he had been paralyzed by a 1994 stroke.

Along with Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and Michael Pitt-Rivers, Wildeblood was convicted in 1954 of charges relating to indecency between males and sent to prison for 18 months.

His 1955 book, "Against the Law," is credited with intensifying protests over Britain's laws prohibiting homosexual sex and ushering in their demise.

The book prompted a debate in the House of Lords and the publication of a 1957 government committee report calling for the decriminalization of gay sex for people over 21. The law was changed 10 years later.

GSA fights for campus meetings

SANTA ANA, Calif. – Gay high school students are turning to federal courts again so their school groups can meet on campus.

Two students in Santa Ana sued their school district, saying it violated their right to free speech by refusing to let their Gay-Straight Alliance meet on campus.

The suit also claims the Orange Unified School District violated the federal Equal Access Act, which requires schools to treat non-curricular student groups the same regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation.

"These kids don't want anything out of the ordinary. They just want their club to be treated like the other clubs," said Carole Shields, president of People for the American Way, a legal defense fund supporting the teens.

Anthony Colin, 15, and Heather Zetin, 16, proposed the club in September as a place for students at El Modena High School in Orange to discuss issues around sexual orientation.

The school district, backed by the school board, initially refused to allow the club to meet on campus.

Denver registry

DENVER – Gay couples are among those who will have the right to register their relationships with the city.

The Denver City Council voted 10-0 to set up the registry in the city clerk's office for couples, regardless of sexual orientation.

Those who register with the city, for a fee, will not acquire specific legal rights or obligations, said assistant city attorney John Eckhardt, who drafted the bill.

But supporters of the measure call it not only symbolic, but practical, providing a method of verification for employers who offer benefits to employees' unmarried partners.

"What's important about this is a recognition of our humanity," said Councilwoman Happy Haynes. "This is about building a community and supporting families, whatever they look like."

Denver extended health benefits to the partners of gay city employees in 1996.

Adoption suit

SALT LAKE CITY – There's a lawsuit over Utah's policy prohibiting unmarried couples to adopt children who are in state custody.

The American Civil Liberties Union says the ban, which took effect in September, is "grounded in irrational fear and prejudice toward same-sex couples," and violates the state constitution. The civil rights group sued on behalf of two gay couples.

Advocacy group Utah Children sued the division and its board last month, saying the rule goes against the best interest of children and contradicts the state's own push to expand the pool of adoptive parents.

The state Division of Child and Family Services says the rule is designed to protect children from potential abuse at the hands of unrelated adults.

The rule, an administrative policy with the same effect as law, requires all adults in an adoptive home to be related by blood, adoption or marriage. It adopted a similar rule regarding state-sponsored foster care in August.

Scout troop refused

PETALUMA, Calif. – The Boy Scouts of America's rejection of a new troop is being blamed on a fear that the troop leader would buck the policy against gays.

In a letter to the United Church of Christ in Petaluma, officials from the Boy Scouts' Redwood Empire Council in Santa Rosa said the Scouts were "not prepared to charter a troop led by Scott Cozza or adult leadership recruited by him."

The letter did not elaborate on the reason. A call to the council was not immediately returned.

Cozza is vice president of Scouting for All, a group pushing to end Scouting's ban on gays. Since he and his son Steven co-founded the group two years ago, he has been stripped of leadership of a troop in

which Steven earned Scouting's highest rank, Eagle Scout.

South African rights

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa – Gay rights have been extended again in South Africa.

The Constitutional Court says gay partners who are applying from abroad to become South African residents must be given the same consideration as married spouses.

The court's decision amended the 1991 Aliens Control Act, which allows only foreign husbands or wives of South African citizens to apply to become permanent residents.

The country's Department of Home Affairs has used the law to turn away partners of gay South Africans who come to the country and seek permission to stay.

British military ban lifted

LONDON – Britain's ban on gays in the military is being replaced with a code of conduct.

"Someone's sexuality is a private matter. People are entitled to a private life," Defense Secretary Geoff Hoon said in an interview with the Times of London.

"A new code of conduct is, therefore, the right way of dealing with this question, but I want to make sure that any solution to this problem does not jeopardize the effectiveness of the armed forces," he added.

Under the new code, to be published next month, "inappropriate" sexual behavior between personnel on duty is a disciplinary offense, but a person's sexual orientation is not.

Britain's Labour government promised to lift the ban after the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of four gay people dismissed from the military. The judges said the ban was a grave interference in private lives.

No ask, no tell, no more?

WASHINGTON -- National politicians are finally realizing that the "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the military, well, don't work.

Presidential candidate Bill Bradley was the first to advocate scrapping the policy and has stuck to his position for months.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, campaigning for the U.S. Senate from New York, has now taken the same position, at first putting her at odds with the White House.

But then President Clinton him-

self said the policy was not implemented as intended and was never supposed to facilitate rooting out people who are gay or allow for harassment.

Now Vice President Al Gore is also calling for the policy to be eliminated.

NYC gay vote

NEW YORK – Winning the gay vote is important in winning New York City, and Democratic presidential candidates are already courting.

Former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley has begun to make some inroads, winning the endorsement of two gay New York City Council members.

Margarita Lopez and Phil Reed, both first-term Democrats, said Bradley's positions on social issues, as well as gay and lesbian concerns, made the former senator from New Jersey superior to Vice President Al Gore as a candidate.

The council members said Bradley's call to abolish "don't ask, don't tell" and his support of federal domestic partner benefits helped tip the scale in his favor.

Bradley voted in 1993 for a Senate amendment that would have lifted the military's ban on gays. It lost out to "don't ask, don't tell."

Brown re-elected in SF

SAN FRANCISCO – It was quite a race for mayor, but the incumbent's millions of dollars were enough to crush the insurgent's army of volunteers.

Mayor Willie Brown won reelection to a second term with 60 percent of the vote, defeating Tom Ammiano, the liberal president of the city Board of Supervisors.

But Ammiano made a real race out of it. He forced Brown, the powerful former speaker of the California Assembly, into a runoff by staging a surprise write-in campaign.

He campaigned on a platform of focusing on the city's housing and other problems, stands that frightened many in the business community.

Ammiano would have become the first openly gay mayor of a major US city. ▼