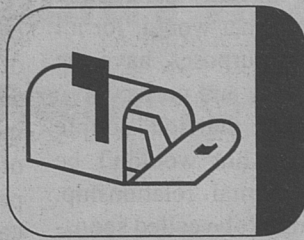


# Letters



OITM, PO Box 1078, Richmond, VT 05477-1078 or [oitm@together.net](mailto:oitm@together.net)

*Out in the Mountains* welcomes your letters. Although we will withhold names from printing upon request, the letter must be accompanied by a verifiable name and address in order to be considered for publication. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity. Letters are also subject to the editorial policy stated in the masthead.

## A PAC of Our Own

Editor,

As we celebrate the historic Vermont Supreme Court decision on December 20 and contemplate the significance of that decision for gay and lesbian civil rights in Vermont, I would like to introduce you to the sister organization to the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force, the Vermont Freedom to Marry Action Committee. Unlike the Task Force, which was established as a charitable non-profit organization dedicated to public education of Vermonters on the issue of marriage for same sex couples, the Action Committee was formed with just one major purpose in mind: to lobby the Vermont legislature, if and when that became necessary, in order to secure equal marriage rights for gay and lesbian citizens.

Until now, virtually all of our community's limited financial resources have been dedicated to the Task Force's public education efforts. Now, however, the Vermont Supreme Court has asked the Vermont legislature either to put gay and lesbian couples on an equal footing with heterosexual couples by fully including gays and lesbians in the current marriage laws, or to write some sort of alternate, separate-but-supposedly-equal law for gays and lesbians (which everyone is currently calling "domestic partnership").

Although domestic partnership sounds good, it's not "equal" to marriage. First, it won't necessarily allow access to all the benefits which third parties give based on marriage, such as employer health insurance, which many times covers only "spouses." Second, it won't be transferable to other states if the couple moves or travels out of Vermont. Third, it won't allow the couple to try to obtain the hundreds of federal benefits given to married couples, such as social security spousal benefits and immigration rights. And in addition to all these practical limitations, domestic partnership symbolically is simply "less" than full "marriage" — it really is "separate, which is unconstitutional and won't satisfy the Supreme Court's requirements that gay

couples be given the "same" rights as other married couples. We now need to focus our energies and our resources to fight the legislative battles ahead. We need to educate the legislature about this issue, and to do so, the Action Committee needs your help! We need your energy and time; we need letters and telephone calls to your legislators; most of all, we need your money!!

The battles in the legislature will be long and costly, and we need to develop and implement a comprehensive, savvy strategy to approach this issue at the State House. We need to pay for professional lobbyists. We need to organize and galvanize our grass roots supporters. We need to prepare and pay for a media relations campaign. We need legal expertise to draft and critique proposed bills. All of this takes money, and we desperately need your support if we are to convince the legislature that nothing short of amending the marriage laws will satisfy the Supreme Court's mandate that gay and lesbian couples are to be given full equality under our laws. The legislature convenes on January 4, so we need your help, and your donations, immediately. Here's what you can do: 1. Send us your check, addressed to VFMAC, P.O. Box 1038, Middlebury, VT 05753 2. Forward this letter to any and all supporters you can think of. 3. Send us the names and addresses of potential supporters, so we can contact them. 4. Call or write your legislators and Governor Dean — (802) 828-3333, (you can find out who your legislators are by calling the statehouse at (800)322-5616 or by visiting [www.state.vt.us](http://www.state.vt.us). Thank you, very much.

Susan M. Murray  
Chair, Vermont Freedom to Marry Action Committee, Inc.  
[vfmac@sover.net](mailto:vfmac@sover.net)

## Pining in Pennsylvania

Editor:

Every October I visit your state to enjoy the fall foliage and the hospitality of the people in Vermont. It's great to see and experience a rural state where diversity is everywhere. From the streets of Burlington to the

backroads of Brattleboro, I have always felt a sense of openness among Vermonters. Rainbow flags fly from houses in the smallest of villages, and coffeehouses throughout Vermont stock *OITM*.

Until I can retire to your wonderful state and make it my home, *OITM* keeps that dream alive.

Leon D. Auerbach  
Elkins Park, PA

## Kudos from Kentucky

Editor:

Let me be the first from Kentucky to congratulate you and everyone in the Green Mountain State for a stunning victory! This isn't just a legal milestone, it's a cultural turning point in our nation's history.

My only worry now is: does Vermont have enough airports to accommodate the crowd that's going to be descending on you in the new millennium? Congratulations!

David Williams, Editor  
*The Letter*, Kentucky's gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender newspaper

## Praise From Providence

Editor,

I can't tell you how happy I am to have just read the AP story regarding the three couples who went to Vermont's Supreme Court over the issue of their civil right to same-sex marriage.

I am a Franciscan and a Priest in the Holy Catholic Church, which is an autocephalous Catholic denomination. Our denomination welcomes the LGBT community with open arms. We extend all seven sacraments to all of our members regardless of sexual orientation. This includes the Sacrament of Marriage and of Holy Orders. While we respect and celebrate the validity and sanctity of same gender marriages, we are overjoyed to see that Vermont is closer than any other State to establishing lawfully recognized same gender marriages. I have little doubt that there will be those who will now work overtime to find ways to reverse this ruling, but

I pray that God, in God's infinite wisdom, will prevail here and that all of our sisters and brothers will finally have the same rights and protections under the law that heterosexual couples have always enjoyed.

I'm sure that there is going to be so much more that LGBT Vermonters have to do to make the court's decision become a reality, but I just know in my heart that somehow you will do it. Vermont has become a home-away-from-home for me as that I visit your beautiful State as often as I can.

I always think how lucky you all are to have been born and raised in Vermont and to have such a beautiful place to live. I wish I had been born and raised there. No place gives me such a sense of inner peace as Vermont does. On my first trip to Vermont many years ago to visit a Dignity Chapter in Burlington, I bought one of those "I love Vermont" bumper stickers. After reading this article today, I can say from the heart that I not only love Vermont, but I love you all very much too and I admire you for your courage and tenacity.

To the three couples, Stacey Jolles, Nina Beck, Peter Harrigan, Stan Baker, Lois Farnham and Holly Puterbaugh, I want to extend a special blessing to each of you on behalf of myself, His Excellency, the Most Reverend Dennis J. Finnegan, Presiding Bishop of the Holy Catholic Church, and the Priests and Brothers of the Franciscan Friars of Providence. May God love you in abundance and bless you very kindly! And may the blessings and peace of this Holy time of the year be upon be upon all of our LGBT sisters and brothers as we move into the New Year. Peace and Love to you all,

Rev. Fr. Russell F. Coates, Jr.,  
Franciscan Friars of Providence

## Weighing in from Wisconsin

Editor:

Hey Vermont, Way to go!

Deb Morgan-Meckelberg  
Madison, WI

## OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Established in 1986

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
Barbara Dozetos

ART DIRECTOR  
Donald Eggert

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT  
Tina Giangrande

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
Mack Roark

OFFICE MANAGER  
Carolyn Ashby

CLASSIFIED/CALENDAR  
Sandy Reeks

SOURCE EDITOR  
Pam Kinniburgh

ADVERTISING SALES  
Mary Bouvier & Barbara Dozetos

COLUMNISTS: Crow Cohen, Charles Emond, Brendan Hadash, Thomas Henning, Rev. Christine Leslie, Susan Murray, Beth Robinson, Esther Rothblum, Miki Thomas

CONTRIBUTORS: Mickey Carter, Greg Kubiak, Ernie McLeod, Carlos Nakamura, Roland Palmer, Jen Ponder, Larry Rudiger, Max Stroud

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Kendra Henson, Maxwell Stroud

CARTOONISTS: Alison Bechdel, Robert Kirby, Eric Orner

## MOUNTAIN PRIDE MEDIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Judy Beaulac, Cheryl Carmi, Sarah Harrington, Thomas Henning, Bennett Law, Jim Petrie, Kevin McAleer, Roland Palmer, Carrie Rampp, Joseph Ryan, Richard Slappey

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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of *Out in the Mountains*. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic.

Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and a contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

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*Out in the Mountains*  
PO Box 1078  
Richmond VT 05477-1078  
TEL (802) 434-OITM  
FAX (802) 434-7046  
[oitm@together.net](mailto:oitm@together.net)