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

# OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

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## "Civil Domestic Union" to See Action in the House This Month

BY BARBARA DOZETOS

The House Judiciary Committee may present its legislative answer to the Supreme Court's Baker decision by the end of February.

The Senate is committed to returning the domestic partnership bill to the House for final approval this session only if they have it by the time Town Meeting break ends on March 13.

To meet this deadline, the

House panel must vote the bill out of committee with time for the House Ways and Means Committee to work on the bill and have it ready to announce for floor debate no later than Feb. 25. Tentative plans for House floor debate are for Feb. 29 and Mar. 1.

House Judiciary Committee chair Tom Little addressed the House Republican caucus on Feb. 22, in preparation for the coming debate. Although he hopes to see the bill become law this session, he told the caucus, "Our allegiance is to

the quality of legislation, not an arbitrary deadline."

Although the bill being crafted is referred to as domestic partnership, Little's committee is considering other names for it. He reminded fellow Republicans of a comment made in the Feb. 1 public hearing that "domestic partnership sounds like you're asking someone to clean your house."

Current indications are that the new legal status created by this legislation will be called "civil domestic union."

Several questioned the wis-

dom of moving forward without more public input and complained the committee wasn't responding to majority opinion.

"If we made all decisions based on majority opinion," said Little, "civil rights wouldn't be where they are today."

Rep. Nancy Sheltra of Derby Line said regardless of what it is called, it is still too close to marriage for her liking.

"I was raised on a farm," said Sheltra. "When it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, I know it's a duck."

Across the hall, the

Democratic caucus, Little's reception was warmer. As he rose to offer the majority party a similar briefing, the group gave him a standing ovation; they later voiced appreciation of the work he and his committee have done on this issue.

House Judiciary Committee Vice Chair Bill Lippert of Hinesburg addressed the caucus next.

"I want to remind you all," said Lippert, "while we deliberate, gay and lesbian couples

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## Dean Makes Apology



Speaking to a small group of visitors on AIDS Awareness Day, Governor Howard Dean apologized for his now infamous "uncomfortable" comment. He said the remark was not intended as the slam many GLBT people perceived. He declined to go on record supporting inclusion of gays and lesbians in marriage statutes.

## AIDS Awareness at Capitol

BY KERRY SLORA

AIDS/HIV care and prevention advocates from across the state gathered to network, meet the governor, and voice support for HIV/AIDS legislative issues at the Statehouse on Wednesday, February 16.

Representative Bill Lippert of Hinesburg introduced the group to the House during its morning session.

Participants attended committee meetings, and Governor Dean met with the group to answer questions and hear concerns about the most immediate HIV/AIDS issues up for legislation. During the early afternoon, Dean's office filled to near capacity with members and supporters of the HIV/AIDS community, and participants touched on four primary concerns: methadone treatment, HIV testing of sex offenders, confidentiality of medical records, and fair pricing of prescription drugs.

Addressing the state's heroin problem, Dean openly supported the needle distribution program of Vermont CARES and the use of alternative drugs by drug treatment facilities. "I will never support having a methadone clinic in Vermont," said Dean, calling the negative effects of such an action too extreme. A concern that the cost of HIV prescription drugs is not being dealt with led Dean to respond quickly "on the contrary," pointing out legislation currently under consideration in the House.

One woman, who asked to remain anonymous, spoke to the governor about her experiences with breach of confidentiality and asked Dean to continue supporting efforts to protect identities of people living with the virus. ▼

## Progressive to Run For Governor

BY BARBARA DOZETOS

A Vermont political party whose goals include full civil rights for gays and lesbians has nominated its first candidate ever for the office of governor.

Anthony Pollina, a senior policy advisor for Vermont Public Interest Research Group, is the Vermont Progressive Party's gubernatorial candidate for 2000. He has been active in grassroots organizing, activism, and non-profit work for nearly 20 years.

"There's no doubt in my mind that giving gays the right to marry is the right thing to do from both the legal and the moral point of view," said Pollina, who objects to the so-called incremental approach to the granting of civil rights. "Separate but equal is completely unacceptable." He said continued public discussion and education is the key to bringing the majority of Vermonters to that same conclusion.

Although he considers the current legislative process itself and most legislators "very open," he doesn't think the executive branch can claim the same. "I don't feel as if the current governor is that kind of decision maker," he said. "If he's talking to the GLBT community 15 minutes once a year, who is he talking to? That's just unacceptable. I think the gay and lesbian community will find that I am not only open to their issues, but I'll be consistent and lead on them."

Pollina said he would support



Left to Right: Representative Dean Corren, candidate for governor Anthony Pollina, and Representative David Zuckerman, all members of the Progressive Party.

development of methadone treatment for heroin addicts in Vermont — a sticking point between current Governor Howard Dean and many health care, drug treatment, and HIV/AIDS treatment professionals for years.

"The fact that people may have to leave their families or travel out of state to get the treatment they need just exacerbates the problem," Pollina said. He disagreed with Dean that twelve-step programs are the best way to break the heroin habit.

"That's a somewhat elitist attitude: 'You've gotten yourself into a bad situation, now go get yourself out of it,'" he said.

In accepting the unanimous nomination from his party on February 13, Pollina said, "We will be doing what no party has ever done before: run a winnable race for governor without the

influence of big money."

"Mr Campaign Finance Reform" is the label given Pollina by Governor Howard Dean, acknowledging the new candidate's central role in the adoption of 1997 law Pollina called a start toward "taking the money out of politics and putting people back in."

As the founder and first director of the farm and rural advocacy organization Rural Vermont, Pollina has first-hand experience with helping people find their voices in government. In that position, Pollina said he experienced a watershed moment at a meeting between a group of farmers and then-Administration Secretary John Dooley.

"The farmers sat down and talked to Dooley," said Pollina.

"The farmers left that meeting

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