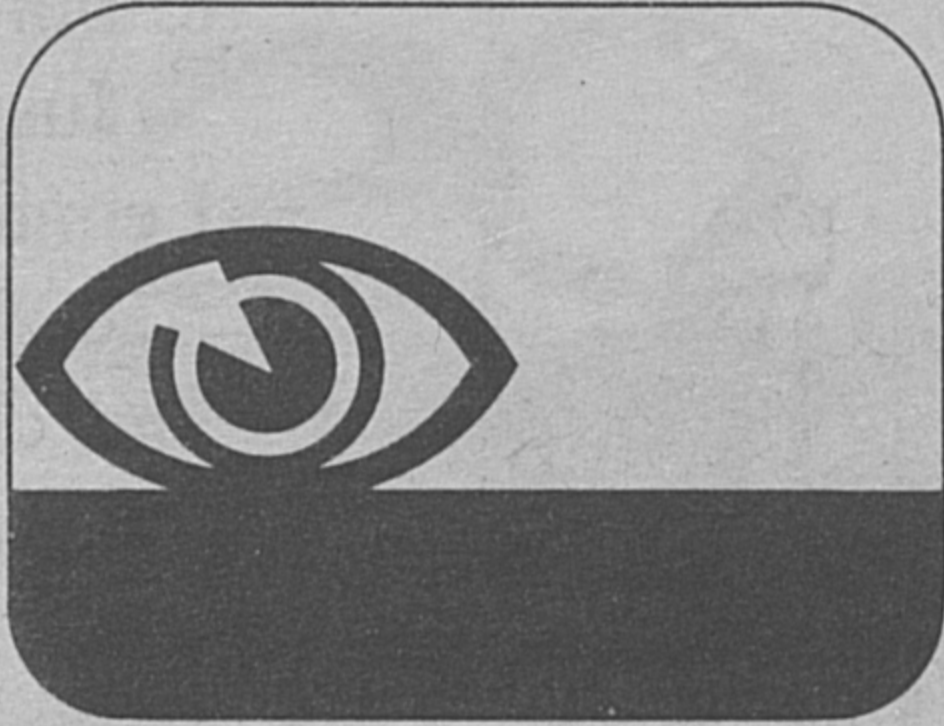


**opinion**

**POLITICAL VIEWS  
FROM THE KINGDOM**  
by **brendan hadash**



# Presidential Primary Pregame Show

**D**on't vote for George Bush. Don't even think of it! Not now. Not ever.

Now that I have made myself clear, let's discuss the Vermont presidential primary to be held on March 7. It will help decide who becomes president, which is vital to the interests of gays and lesbians – which means that all gays and lesbians should be prepared to vote.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has just published "What's at Stake," a guide for the gay lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community to the choices and issues in the 2000 presidential election. This 50-page document includes a comparison of presidential candidates, and I will base most of my remarks on this study.

When you vote, you will be asked to declare yourself a Democrat or Republican for this primary. If you choose the Republican ballot, you have two major choices: George Bush and John McCain. If you choose the Democratic ballot, you can vote for Al Gore or Bill Bradley.

**From the GOP, weighing in at...**

Texas Governor George W. Bush opposed including sexual orientation in Texas's hate crimes statute. Arizona Senator John McCain opposes the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, though he did support the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, which told the Attorney General to collect data on violent crimes motivated by bias.

Bush opposed a sexual orientation anti-discrimination statute in Texas. He said he would appoint gays and lesbians to his administration "as long as their political agenda was the same as mine," but later said he would not knowingly appoint a homosexual. McCain voted against Employment

Non-Discrimination Act in 1996 when it lost by one vote in the senate, and still opposes anti-discrimination legislation.

Bush has said he will abolish the position of White House

liaison to the gay and lesbian community. He has refused to even meet with gay and lesbian Republicans.

McCain met with gay Log Cabin Republicans and accepted a \$40,000 donation from them.

Bush supported a Texas bill to ban gays and lesbians from being foster parents and he opposes gay adoptions. McCain has also made his position clear: "I am opposed to legalization of gay adoption."

"I am against gay marriage because I believe marriage is for men and women," Bush has said. McCain voted for the Defense of Marriage Act – legislation that removes obligations for the federal government to recognize same-gender marriages – in 1996, and opposes domestic partnership legislation. He objected to the Vermont Supreme Court decision on gay marriage in *Baker v. State*.

Bush opposes HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. In Texas, he implemented a statewide names-reporting system for all people with HIV. He supports abstinence-only education.

On the up side, McCain co-sponsored the Ryan White Care Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, he also supported requiring spousal notification, requiring health care professionals to disclose their HIV status, banning HIV-positive immigrants, banning federal funds paying for needle exchange programs, and cutting funds to gay community centers.

On the issue of gays and military service Bush and McCain both support the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy.

**Republican bottom line**

Bush opposes basically all issues important to gays and lesbians. McCain at least will talk with us, accept our money, and on a rare occasion, has supported an issue important to us. Although McCain's record on GLBT issues is dreadful, if you want to vote Republican in the primary and want to pick

the most supportive candidate, my recommendation is to vote for McCain.

**And in the Democrat corner**

Former Senator Bill Bradley and Vice-President Al Gore share similar views on a number of issues. Both support the Hate Crimes Prevention Act; both oppose Don't Ask, Don't Tell and think gays and lesbians be able to serve openly in the military.

Both men have a long and basically supportive voting record on AIDS and HIV issues. Each has had small lapses along the way in which they voted against our health interests.

Both men support the ENDA. Bradley voted for it in 1996; meanwhile, the Clinton-Gore administration has appointed many open gay and lesbian appointees and issued an executive order banning sexual discrimination in the federal workplace.

Also on the issue of non-discrimination, Bradley has supported amending the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include gays and lesbians. Many, including some gay activists, have labelled such a move a poor idea because, among other things, opening up the Act for amendment leaves it vulnerable to dilution. Gore opposes amending the Civil Rights Act.

Bradley supports allowing gay men and lesbians to adopt. Gore would leave gay adoption to adoption professionals on an individual basis.

In 1996, Bradley voted in support of DOMA. Both Bradley and Gore oppose same-gender marriage, but support legal protection for gay and lesbian couples in the form of domestic partnerships. Both men oppose the Knight initiative in California, a ballot question that would ban gay marriage in that state.

**Democratic bottom line**

Both Bradley and Gore support almost all our issues. For the most part, their records are hard to tell apart, but there is

one major difference. Gore has been working with and for gays and lesbians for the last eight years. Where has Bradley been lately?

One example of how Bradley is not in touch with recent issues is his support of changing the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That Act includes affirmative action. Several years ago, gays and lesbians were indeed trying to get added to the Act, but realized their efforts could be more successful if they clarified that gays and lesbians were not looking for special rights (such as affirmative action is perceived) but

equal rights. The prevailing strategy then switched to support of a separate bill – ENDA.

Recently, both the Human Rights Campaign and The Empire State Pride Agenda, New York's largest lesbian and gay political organization, have endorsed Gore because of his constant support for us. I also recommend that Vermonters vote for Al Gore in the Vermont primary. ▼

*Brendan Hadash is minister of the St. Johnsbury UU church.*

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