

WILB
HQ75
.0971

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

OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Volume XV, Number 3

April 2000

www.mountainpridemedi.org

Islanders Say No to Hate

BY BARBARA DOZETOS

A group of people in northwestern Vermont demonstrated against what they saw as hate being expressed in their community last month.

On the evening of March 12, more than 250 people gathered in what organizers called it a walk "against hate and in support of political tolerance."

The demonstration arose in response to posters written, paid for and distributed earlier that week by Brian Pearl, the self-proclaimed Freeman of Grand Isle, Reform Party candidate for governor, and former Libertarian candidate for Assistant Judge.

Pearl's posters listed the names of area residents supportive of the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force under a heading that read: "This List of Names are Those of Yout Neighbors In South Hero, North Hero, Grand Isle and Isle La Mott Who have Publically Joined Governor Howard Dean in

ISLAND > P6

House Approves Civil Rights Bill

BY BARBARA DOZETOS

After two long days of debate, Vermont's House of Representatives voted on Mar. 16 to pass H847, the civil union bill drafted by the chamber's judiciary committee.

It took more than 12 hours of speeches, explanations, and proposed changes to the bill through its crucial first day of debate. Late on March 15, House members voted 79 - 68 to keep the bill alive for another reading and a final vote.

One proposed amendment would have replaced the entire text of the bill with a plan to call a constitutional convention during to address the issue of the Supreme Court decision in Baker v. Vermont. This effort was defeated soundly. Many representatives expressed a fear that such a move would open up every part of the State's constitution to change.

Another proposed amendment would have instituted a three-year process during which all of the benefits, rights and privileges of marriage would be examined separately and offered one by one, if deemed appropriate, to any two people otherwise ineligible for

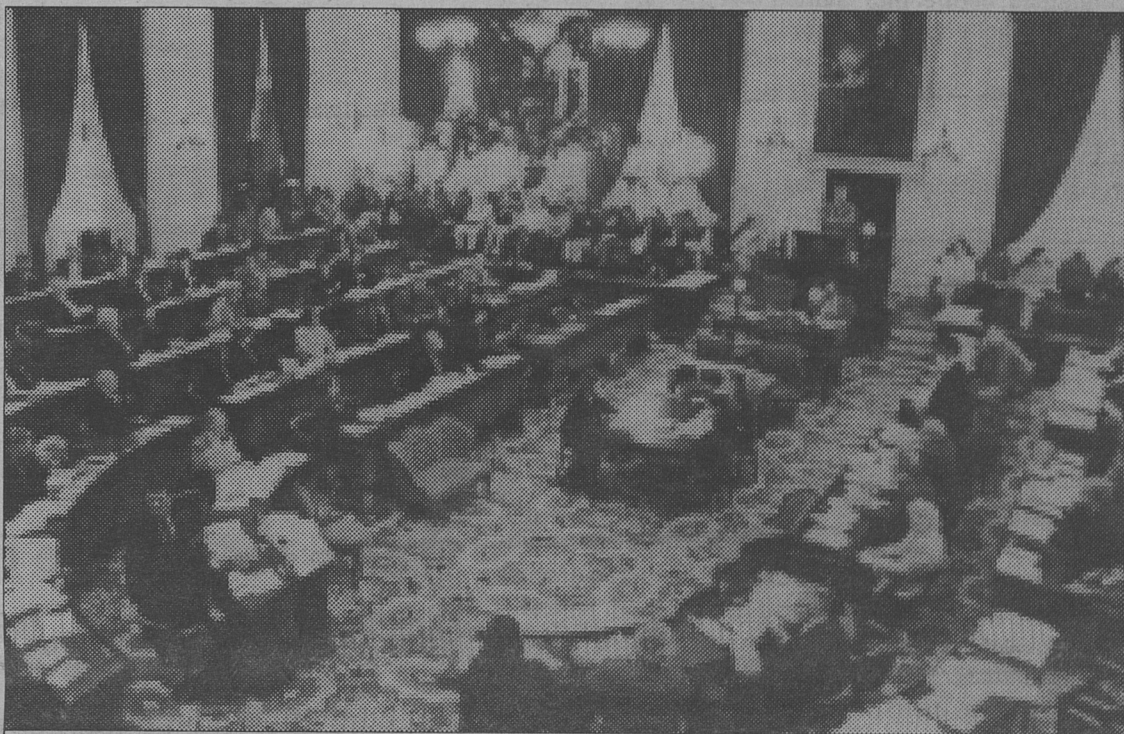


photo: Maxwell Stroud

On March 15 and 16, the House of Representatives was packed with spectators for a total of nearly 20 hours of floor debate on House Bill 847, An Act Relating to Civil Unions.

marriage.

The amendment's author, Peg Flory, R-Pittsford, addressed member of both parties during caucuses held to discuss the bill. Flory told Democrats that the legal status of marriage was originally set up to protect the state financially - to define responsibilities of parents to their children and to each other, should prob-

lems arise. Her proposal, she said, "would take sexual activity out of the equation."

Other lawmakers weren't swayed. "I'm not talking about sexual activity," said Rep. Ann Seibert, D-Norwich. She told Flory and the caucus that the issue before them was about civil rights, not sex.

During the floor debate on the amendment, Rep. John

Edwards, R-Swanton, asked Flory, "Would you propose to legalize discrimination against anyone whose lifestyle you disagree with?"

Flory's amendment failed, as opponents pointed out the unwieldy nature of the proposition and its failure to address the Supreme Court mandate.

"This amendment doesn't rec-

DEBATE > P2

Dr. Laura Pulled From Local Station

BY BARBARA DOZETOS

Dr. Laura Schlessinger's voice has been silenced in Vermont and most predict that she won't be heard from again anytime soon.

Jeff Nicholson, WKDR station manager, announced late last month that the Williston-based AM station would be dropping the controversial advice program. He said that the decision came from the management's desire to offer more local programming.

Louie Manno, whose talk show will be moving to the afternoon slot Schlessinger's had occupied, said there was more to it than that. "Dr. Laura has said some very hateful

things about homosexuals," he said, "If she had said them about any other group of people, the whole world would have been up in arms." However, Manno cited a drop in ratings as the primary reason behind canceling her show. "The show has car-accident appeal," he said. "Eventually people become desensitized to the shocking content and the crowd disperses."

In spite of falling ratings, Manno said Schlessinger recently increased the fee she charged to affiliates airing the program. That combined with the increased public pressure to drop her and the real desire of the station to air more local voices led to the decision.

Sharon Randall, host and producer of Vermont Rainbow Connection, a public access television show for the GLBT community, was a leader in the movement to have Schlessinger removed from the state's airwaves. "I'm so thrilled that she's gone," said Randall. "I'm certain that the pressure and heat played a part in this, even if they don't admit it."

Schlessinger has gained national attention recently since she signed a contract with Paramount Studios for a television show that will be broadcast on Fox television stations.

SCHLESSINGER > P5



photo: Maxwell Stroud

Rep. Francis Brooks, D-Montpelier, (left) delivered a moving speech during the first day of the debate. Virginia Renfrew (right) is one of the lobbyists working for the passage of the civil union bill.