

## Dean Interview

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garbage. The reason there is funding is because I met with gay and lesbian teenagers and they said they had a real problem and needed help. Outright Vermont only goes into schools when the schools ask them. I have nothing to do with Outright Vermont going into schools. We just give them some money because we think their support services are valuable. The connection between state funding for Outright Vermont and some sort of homosexual agenda is just political crap.

**OITM:** What role, if any, do you think homophobia played in the civil union debate?

**Dean:** I hesitate to use the word because many people confuse homophobia with bigotry. A bigot is someone who deliberately manifests mean-spirited unequal treatment of people because of who they are. It is very difficult to deal with bigotry except with the law. We live in a culture that is somewhat homophobic. Homosexuals become a lightning rod for all kinds of fears for things that have nothing to do with homosexuals. The reason for that is that, especially in men, sexuality is a terrible struggle. It takes some insight to understand that your own projections on a

group of people have to do with your concerns about sexuality. Homophobia is widespread; bigotry is not. There are a lot of people who are homophobic but are not bigots. Those people can be brought into an understanding that everybody is a member of this community regardless of their sexual orientation.

**OITM:** You've said that it is time for Vermonters to come together and heal. What specifically can the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered community do to help heal the divisions in the state?

**Dean:** Keep doing exactly what you are doing. The gay and lesbian community has comported itself with enormous dignity under terrible stress. Behave with dignity and understanding of those who are fearful. To the extent that they can reach out in a positive way to those who are fearful and willing to listen.

**OITM:** How do you feel about the decision by the plaintiffs to drop their lawsuit after the civil union bill goes into effect?

**Dean:** The legal stuff I don't know anything about, but I think it is smart politically. I certainly think it is a wonderful gesture toward healing the state.

**OITM:** How might your support for civil unions influence your prospects for national office and how might it impact your reelection bid in November?

**Dean:** You can forget about that (national office). It certainly isn't going to help it any unless someone is looking for someone who says what they think and sticks to their word. That's not as valued in Washington as it is elsewhere.

There are a number of Democrats and a number of Catholics who I have lost the support of, and I need to get that support back. The biggest problem for me (in November) is (Progressive) Anthony (Pollina). Anthony is going to take votes away from me and he's not going to take any votes away from (Republican) Ruth (Dwyer). So actually the better he does, the more likely it is that Ruth Dwyer is going to be Governor.

**OITM:** Do you plan to attend Vermont's Gay Pride celebration on June 17?

**Dean:** I've never attended Gay Pride because it always coincides with a big soccer tournament that my kids are in. They always invite me, and I always say no because it is always the day of the Tom Lawson tournament. ▼

## US Senate Primary Campaign

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will get some votes from gay and lesbian Vermonters, and Ed will get some women; there are so many issues and voting segments that overlap," said Backus.

Flanagan seems to agree with his opponent in this regard. "Democratic primary voters decide who to support based not on what but who you are," said Flanagan. "Your record and real differences in positions matter. Women versus gay is an insider self-serving game."

Backus and Flanagan

agree on many issues of importance to gay Vermonters and their allies. Both said they would support gays serving openly in the military. Both would have opposed the Defense of Marriage Act, and both said they would introduce a version of civil unions in the Senate similar to the legislation passed in the Vermont Legislature this year. Both candidates also voiced strong support for the Anti-Discrimination Act now pending in the Senate

Education and Health Committee – a committee chaired by Sen. Jeffords. ▼

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