Execution Set for Killer of Man Thought to Be Gay

by Tim Talley, Associated Press Writer

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) – Oklahoma’s Court of Criminal Appeals has set an Aug. 30 execution date for Mexican national Gerardo Valdez, whose request for clemency was denied by Gov. Frank Keating.

Valdez, 41, had been scheduled to die by lethal injection on June 19 for the April 1, 1989, murder of 26-year-old Juan Trinidad Barron in Valdez’s home in Midwest Oklahoma. But Keating granted a 30-day reprieve to consider a recommendation by the state Parole and Pardons Board that his death sentence be commuted.

Valdez met Barron in a bar where both men were drinking. Valdez, Barron and another man traveled to Valdez’s home, where Valdez accused Barron of being a homosexual and threatened to kill him. Valdez shot Barron twice in the forehead, then slit Barron’s throat with a large knife.

For more information, direct questions to Michael Virago, a program director at Community United Against Violence.

Hate Crimes Seem in Increase

Congress and Bush Administration Should Immediately Address This Problem, Says HRC

WASHINGTON – The Human Rights Campaign today called on Congress and the Bush administration to use their bully pulpits to publicly address this unconscionable rash of anti-Gay violence.

To remain disengaged in the face of these violent tragedies is immoral, dangerous and cowardly,” says HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch. “We urge Congress and the administration to publicly address this unconscionable rash of anti-Gay violence.

Last weekend, in what appears to be a crime caused in large-part by anti-Gay bias, Willie Houston, 38, was fatally shot in the chest in Nashville, Tenn., after the alleged gunman, Lewis Maynard Davidson III, 25, taunted him with anti-Gay epithets.

Houston had just finished a midnight riverboat cruise with his fiancee, Neda Jones, and friends when the trouble started. Houston escorted a blind man friend by the arm into a restroom while holding Jones’ purse.

Inside the restroom, the gunman allegedly hurled anti-Gay insults at the friends. He followed them out of the restroom while continuing his verbal harassment. Davidson then allegedly returned to his car where he retrieved a gun and said, “Now what you going to say?” before firing the weapon at Houston.

Police are searching for Davidson and have yet to officially call it a hate crime, saying the investigation is “still very much open.” However, a locked door hardly slowed Smith’s escape. He ran in, yelled at the clerk to call the police and barricaded himself in the restroom.

But it turned out not to be such a quiet night for Smith. Six police cars were dispatched to the store and they heard the clerk saying to the caller that the police had not shown up. After the call ended, the store clerk turned to the police, saying that the caller said he was the attacker and was just calling to see if the police had responded.

See Hate, p. 7

Same-sex Domestic Violence Seems Higher

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) – Reports of domestic violence among Gay and Lesbian couples around the nation in 2000 increased 29% from the previous year, according to a report released in July. There were 4,048 reports of domestic violence among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender couples nationally, up from 3,120 in 1999, according to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs.

With this fifth annual report, we are able to stop asking does same-sex domestic violence exist, and start answering what we’re going to do about it,” said Shawauna Virago, a program director at Community United Against Violence.

The reports were compiled by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, an association of 26 groups that advocate for victims of same-sex harassment and violence. Many of the increase in violence reports came from the domestic abuse program at the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center. That program receives funding for an outreach and education fund which generated more reports than previous years.

In Tulsa, DVIS, Domestic Violence Intervention Services provides support to Lesbian and Gay couples. Shelter services, hotlines, counseling for female and children only. DVIS has no options for men in need. For the DVIS 24-hour crisis line, call 585-3143.

Tulsa Family News, August 2001, page 1
Tulsa Clubs & Restaurants

- Polo Grill, 2038 Utica Square
- *CW's, 1737 S. Memorial
- *Bamboo Lounge, 7204 E. Pine
- *TNT's, 2114 S. Memorial
- *Schatzi's, 2619 S. Memorial
- The Yellow Brick Road Pub, 2630 E. 15th
- Body Piercing by Nicole, 2722 E. 15
- Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 5231 E. 41
- *Borders Books & Music, 8015 S. Yale
- *CD Warehouse, 3807c S. Peoria
- Community Cleaning, Kerby Baker
- *Cheap Thrills, 2640 E. 11th
- Doghouse on Brookside, 3311 S. Peoria
- Jacox Animal Clinic, 2732 E. 15th
- Encompass Travel, 13161H N. Memorial
- Ross Edward Salon
- *Elite Books & Videos, 821 S. Sheridan
- Mohawk Music, 6157 E 51 Place
- Rainbowz on the River B+B, POB 696, 74152
- *The Pride Store
- Venus Salon, 1247 S. Harvard
- Paul Tay, Car Salesman
- AIDS Walk Tulsa, POB 4337, 74101
- All Souls Unitarian Church, 2525 S. Peoria
- *Black & White, Inc. POB 14011, Tulsa 74159
- Bless The Lord at All Times Christian Center, 2207 E. B/L/G/T Alliance, Univ. of Tulsa Min. Ctr.
- Chamber of Commerce Blvd., 616 S. Boston
- *Chapman Student Cir., University of Tulsa, 5th Fl.
- Church of the Restoration UU, 1314 N.Greenwood
- Community of Hope Church, 2545 S. Yale
- *Community Unitarian-Universalist Congregation
- Council Oak B & B, Harkness, 2721 E. 11th
- *Delaware Playhouse, 1511 S. Delaware

Letters

Our House is on Fire

AIDS at 20

Where were you on June 5, 1981? Unlike Pearl Harbor, Kennedy's and King's assassinations, the Murrah Federal Building bombing, or the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, or the May 3 tornadoes, I doubt many of us can remember what we were doing the day the Centers for Disease Control reported its first article about a rare human disease at the time the Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, that had struck "5 young men, all active homosexuals." Three of the young men tested had an inexplicable depression of their immune function.

Twenty years later, 36 million people worldwide are HIV positive. HIV/AIDS has claimed the lives of the famous, the famous, the homeless, our sisters and brothers.

In a special report in the June 11 issue of Newsweek, reporter Sharon Begley writes, "The disease has changed the personal as well as the political - how we think and how we love, what we teach our children, and what words we say in public." The emergence of the disease first within the gay community in the United States drew attention to gay relationships, courage and compassion.

As HIV/AIDS ravages black America, Phillip Wilson of Los Angeles speaks to a congregation and shares a story about the time his brother accidentally set the house on fire, and how he and his siblings were afraid to call the Fire Department because they did not want people to find out, "Our fire truck arrives, but we won't come out, because we are afraid the folks from next door will see that we're in that burning house. AIDS is a fire raging in our community and it's out of control!"

We've had hopeful moments when it appeared a vaccine was on the horizon or treatment would be able to prevent the replication of the virus while the body's immune system recovered and defeated the virus. In reality, HIV continues to spread to 1.2 million people annually worldwide are HIV positive. HIV/AIDS has costed the US $11.4 billion annually, $40,000 in the US each year and millions worldwide. The positive news about improved medical treatments for HIV/AIDS has softened the effect of earlier "AIDS = DEATH" prevention messages. Yet no one has cured HIV/AIDS, the medications required to suppress the virus are extremely expensive and have short- and long-term effects that must be weighted against their benefits, and the complexities of the illness can wear out those who are living with HIV/AIDS and those who care for them.

In our eleven years as an organization, RAIN has served 663 HIV-infected individuals, their families and caregivers. One hundred and thirty-four clients are being served currently - a greater number than at any time in RAIN's history. The past we see the number increase 10% monthly as we add new types of services to meet the needs. Thank you for helping us help others and educate about HIV/AIDS as we wait and hope for an effective vaccine and treatment that is available for everyone.

-Pam Cross
effective director Regional AIDS Interfaith Network
Faith Based Discrimination

By HRC Executive Director, Elizabeth Birch

WASHINGTON - Since George W. Bush became president, HRC has been a vigilant watchdog to see how the new administration will handle issues of concern to the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Community. The current battle over President Bush’s faith-based initiative — including the Salvation Army — is a critical test and sadly appears to be a test of the administration’s true colors.

We were stunned when we learned the administration and the Salvation Army were using our lives as bargaining chips in a secret backroom deal. And we are gravely disappointed that President Bush and Vice President Cheney sanctioned discrimination against GLBT Americans. In a vote orchestrated by the GOP leadership in the House of Representatives, they pitted important faith-based services against important civil liberties. Their actions were unnecessary, divisive and created conflict where there could have easily been consensus.

The White House’s Community Solutions Act H.R. 7 offered by Reps. J.C. Watts, R-Okla., and Tony Hall, D-Ohio passed July 19 in the House. The bill would override state and local civil rights laws by allowing religious organizations to discriminate in employment decisions and in the provision of services. The measure would effectively allow our tax dollars to be used to discriminate against us in places where state and local laws prohibit discrimination against GLBT Americans. But when it becomes law, this bill would create a situation where many GLBT Americans would be publicly subsidizing their own discrimination.

The Human Rights Campaign recognizes and supports the critical work performed by many faith-based organizations. We support the principle of religious liberty. But the bottom line is, if the country should channel tax money to groups that actively discriminate. Religious freedom and freedom from discrimination must harmoniously coexist and thrive together in a democratic society.

In letters, phone calls, appeals to the grassroots and countless hours of lobbying, HRC, coalition partners and fair-minded members of Congress gave the administration and the House Republican leadership every opportunity to fix this bill. Rep. Mark Foley, a moderate Florida Republican, and Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., both prepared amendments to H.R. 7 to fix the bill. Both were rejected by the leadership.

When the bill reached the House floor July 18, it became crystal clear that we had succeeded in lining up enough votes to send it back to the Judiciary Committee to remove the offending language. It was then that the administration and the House Republican leadership temporarily pulled the bill in order to engage in a farcical — and ultimately unsuccessful — attempt to pass the measure without some two dozen moderate Republicans to oppose any change to the bill. The hypocrisy of the administration and the House leadership on this issue is astounding. We are struck by the incongruous position of “states rights” conservatives who have long trumpeted local control, only to run roughshod over state and local civil rights laws. Their mantra of state and local control is thrown out the window when it comes to GLBT Americans. Moreover, it is clear the administration is attempting to accomplish through legislation what they were unable to accomplish through a regulatory deal with the Salvation Army.

This battle now moves to the Senate. By ignoring pleas to fix the bill’s shortcomings, the administration has made passage in the Senate demonstrably more difficult for itself. Because what happens in Washington does matter — we are calling on every GLBT American and all those who care about us to challenge the White House to support Senate version of this bill that does not discriminate against GLBT Americans. Call President Bush at 202-456-1414 and tell him: “It is wrong to use federal funds to give tax dollars to groups that actively discriminate. Religious freedom and freedom from discrimination must harmoniously coexist and thrive together in a democratic society.”

United States Senator Dick Durbin, D-Ill., has said it should be a test of the administration’s true colors whether it allows the Salvation Army to discriminate against those it says are “not our neighbors.”

We expect an administration that has paid lip service to diversity, inclusion, and tolerance to reverse course on the new administration’s faith-based initiative and reject the legislation that discriminates against GLBT Americans. If this does not happen, HRC will join with our coalition partners to ensure that the new administration’s true colors are revealed to our constituencies.
Partner of Woman Killed By Dogs Wins Ruling

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) - The Lesbian partner of a woman mauled to death by dogs earlier this year scored a stunning court victory as a judge allowed her wrongful death suit to proceed to trial. Judge A. James Robertson II agreed with the arguments of Sharon Smith's attorney that California state law has created a barrier for her by not allowing same-sex couples to marry, thus precluding them from seeking benefits available to married couples.

However, the Equal Protection provision of the state Constitution prevents such exclusions, the judge ruled. Smith's attorney, Shannon Minter of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, was elated with the ruling.

"This is a remarkable day. This is the first decision of this kind, not just in California but anywhere in the country," Minter said. "It's a tremendous victory for Lesbian and Gay people in the United States."

Smith's civil suit against the dogs' owners is under way. However, the Equal Protection provision of the state Constitution does not permit Smith, or any other class of persons, to be excluded from rights or benefits afforded to others as she pursues her wrongful death claim. Judge Robertson agreed that the case was breaking new ground. "No case has been decided under these arguments," Robertson said.

Marriage for heterosexual couples, Minter argued, is not a surviving spouse in question. Smith sued Robert Noel and Marjorie Knoller, the caretakers of two large presa canario dogs that killed her partner, Diane Whipple, Jan. 26 as she stood in her apartment hallway.

Minter argued that the Equal Protection provision of the California Constitution does not permit Smith, or any other class of persons, to be excluded from rights or benefits afforded to others as she pursues her wrongful death claim. Judge Robertson agreed that the case was breaking new ground. "No case has been decided under these arguments," Robertson said.

Marriage for heterosexual couples, Minter argued, is not proof of a legal union. "But for same-sex couples it is no test at all," Minter said. "(Marriage) is not anything available to them in the first instance. There is literally nothing Sharon and Diane could have done to formalize their relationship," Minter said.

Smith choked back tears after the hearing and said it was an emotional moment for her.

A bill addressing the issue of same-sex benefits is in motion at the state Capitol. Proposed bill AB25, sponsored by Carole Migden, D-San Francisco, passed the Assembly with a 43-21 vote, and is currently in Appropriations awaiting action. The bill would allow same-sex partners to get the same health benefits, disability and unemployment coverage and retirement pensions as married men and women.

No trial date has been set. Noel and Knoller did not appear and remain behind bars on charges related to the fatal attack. Knoller, who was present at the time of the attack, faces the more serious charge of second-degree murder.

Womens Basketball Teams Seek Lesbian Fans

DETROIT (AP) - Facing league-wide drops in attendance and television ratings, the Detroit Shock and other WNBA teams are hosting events with Gay and Lesbian groups in hopes of creating a loyal fan base.

Detroit plays the Cleveland Rockers at The Palace on Saturday for pride night, an event coordinated with Ferndale's Affirmations Lesbian and Gay Community Center. As part of the arrangement, a portion of each ticket purchase made with Affirmations' credit card will be donated back to the center, and the Shock also are providing 25 free tickets for members of Affirmations' youth group to attend the game.

A post-game tailgate party will be held at a nearby restaurant, which has promised to donate half the proceeds to the community center. "We're doing it to raise awareness, with the Shock organization, that their Lesbian fan base is huge," said Juli Sagnakis-Seymour, director of development at Affirmations. "The event is not just motivated by the league's desire to reach out to specific groups. With attendance and television ratings heading downward, teams are looking at different ways to attract and keep fans."

Other teams are getting involved as well. In May, the Los Angeles Sparks made a promotional appearance with Girl Bar, a 12,000-member Lesbian club and Sparks sponsor. The Miami Sol also have held public appearances for Lesbians.

The Sacramento Monarchs planned a Gay pride night last weekend - the first time the team has dedicated a night to the Gay community. A pre-game concert was part of the deal, along with a Gay pride T-shirt. "Just like we're reaching out to the swim community and the military community, we're reaching out to the Gay and Lesbian community," said Monarchs spokeswoman Sonja Browa. "Whatever we can do to add value to the experience of that particular group."

Along with Detroit, the Minnesota Lynx and Phoenix Mercury are advertising in Gay and Lesbian magazines.

WNBA president Val Ackerman said the league invites everyone to come be a fan. "We've tried very hard to be an inclusive league," Ackerman said. "That's the beauty of basketball and the WNBA. We're really proud of the diversity of our fans, our players and our staff. But what unifies everybody is what goes on out there (on the basketball court)."

Boston Minority Firefighters Allege Bias

BOSTON (AP) - Gay and minority firefighters claim racist, sexist and homophobic treatment in the department is going unchecked, causing some to fear doing their jobs.

Karen Miller, who is Gay and black, said harassment by both white and black male firefighters drove her to a desk job with the department. She said that when she rushed to emergency calls at her Boston fire station, she found broken glass inside her boots. Other times, her oxygen mask and gloves were missing.

"The incidents of racism, sexism and homophobia have never been properly dealt with by the Boston Fire Department, and the individuals that are creating the problem are more than just a few bad apples," Miller said at a news conference.

The Coalition for Firefighters' Civil Rights, which includes civil rights and community groups and a minority firefighters association, planned to seek the help of the City Council later.

The head of the Boston firefighters' union dismissed the group's complaints. "We've made tremendous strides in bringing everybody back together again," said Jack McKenna, president of the International Association of Firefighters Local 718, the Boston firefighters' union. "I think this is a lot of hype."

But critics say the number of complaints among the 1,600 city firefighters indicates otherwise. "If there's this much smoke there's got to be fire somewhere," said Joe Vincent, executive director of the Massachusetts Association of Retired Firefighters, including Miller, in employment discrimination suits.

The fire department has been without a commissioner since 1999 and has been embroiled in a bitter contract dispute with Mayor Thomas Menino for two years. The minority rights group also wants Menino to search for a new fire commissioner from outside the department, and to appoint a committee to deal with the department's shortcomings.

The city did not intend to reply to the complaints in advance of the City Council reply to the complaints in advance of the City Council.

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Sunday, January 25th, 7:00 PM
First Unitarian Church
1801 S Boulder, Tulsa 74104
Call 747-3987 for details

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hearing, said Carole Brennan, the mayor’s spokes-
woman. The complaints have drawn the attention of Justice
Department investigators, who interviewed minority
firefighters in March, said Dana Johnson, an associate
of Provanzo, a city-commissioned report, released
in January 2000, found the department has fallen short
in some administrative areas, including recruiting mi-
norities and women.

'Nightline' Show Stirs
Controversy

NEW YORK (AP) - A planned “Nightline” series on
homo-/sexuals’ lives has caused a furor just from its title
Life in America,” was announced, dozens of Gays
have contacted the program to complain. It prompted
“Nightline” executive producer Tom Bettag to post an
explanation on the ABC News Web site. But he’s not
changing the title of the report, tentatively scheduled
for late September.

Most activists believe that their sexual orientation is
at least partly a matter of biology, not something they
choose as a result of cultural or psychological influ-
ences. “A Matter of Choice?” is an easy title that
piques curiosity and stirs controversy, but it does so at
the expense of the people it’s profiling,” said Cathy
Renna of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defa-
mation.

Bettag, in his posted response, said that although
many Gays believe the question has been resolved,
scientific and religious arguments remain. “It is our job
to ask the questions that make society examine itself,”
he said. ABC News has gotten anti-Gay e-mails, Bettag said, including one person who wrote that if
ABC talks about homosexual life, “we hope you will
make it clear that this is evil.”

In the series, “Nightline” will examine teen-agers
struggling with their sexual identity, the experiences of people in a homosexual retirement community and
the aftermath of a Gay community’s uprising after a
hate crime in Roanoke, Va.

Renna said it’s just the sort of in-depth examination
of homosexual life that GLAAD supports, but she’s
concerned many people won’t watch it because they
don’t like the title. “It’s just really an unfortunate
decision not to reconsider this title,” she said.

City of Houston Passes
Anti-Bias Law

HOUSTON (AP) - A nondiscrimination law to protect
Gay city employees has been revived seventeen years
after it was overturned by voters in referendum. Hous-
ton City Council members passed the law, which
protects employees on the basis of sexual orientation,
race, gender, age and other factors.

About 20 people in the audience burst into applause
after the vote. “It is something that is long overdue and
years in the making,” said Councilman Annie
Parker, a Lesbian who was instrumental in getting the
law passed.

Mayor Lee Brown voiced his approval of the vote.
“The Constitution guarantees that we all have the same
opportunities, the same rights,” he said to the Houston
Chronicle. “As mayor, I want to make sure that I do
everything in my power to make sure that that carries
out as part of city government.” Parker added, though, that she had mixed feelings.

She said by arguing against the proposal, council
members sent a message that even in 2000, the ques-
tion whether Gays should be treated equally, the City
Council voted in 1984 for a similar nondiscrimination
law, but voters overturned it in a 1985 referendum.
Shortly after taking office in 1998, Brown issued an
executive order banning discrimination against Gay
city employees. Councilman Rob Todd filed an in-
junction against it, and it was held up in court for years.

Last month, however, the Texas Supreme Court ruled
that Todd did not have the legal right to stop the
executive order, which allowed the order to stand.

Earlier this year, Brown proposed extending benefits
such as health insurance to the same-sex partners
of Gay city employees. He later withdrew the pro-
sal, saying the council should first adopt a non-
discrimination law to protect employees who want to
make use of the same-sex benefits.

Brown said that he still plans to have the council vote
on same-sex benefits, but he does not know when.

BOSTON Scout Council: Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell

BOSTON (AP) - Officials of one of Massachusetts’
largest Boy Scout councils believe that its new bylaw
allowing Gay scoutmasters under a “don’t ask-don’t
tell” policy does not violate the national ban against
homo-/sexuals.

“Discussions about sexual orientation do not have a
place in Scouting,” Brock Bigsby, Scout executive for
the Massachusetts Minuteman Council, told The Bos-
ton Globe. “The Scouts will not inquire into a person’s
sexual history, and that person will not expose their
sexual orientation one way or the other.” The Minut-
eman Council, an umbrella organization of 330 Scout
troops and 18,000 boys in Greater Boston, approved
the bylaw July 19. The policy also prohibits the exclu-
sion of anyone on the basis of race or religion.

No Longer A Gay Place

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) - Sixty years ago, resi-
dents changed the name of their street here to Gay
Place to avoid confusion with a similarly named street
nearby. Now, people living near Charleston’s downtown want to change the name of the
street because of a different type of confusion.

“The word ‘Gay’ isn’t like what it used to be. It’s not
about being happy. It’s something different now,” said
Lavinia Dash, one of four residents petitioning the city
to change Gay Place back to its original name of
Moultrie Place. The city made the name change in
1939 because Moultrie Place intersected with Moultrie
Street, causing confusion.

A Mount Pleasant couple pushing to change the
street’s name said they are doing it for historical, not
political reasons. Darla Pysh Smith and her husband,
John, are renovating two homes on the street. She said
she’s heard the chuckles when she talks about owning
a home on Gay Place. “We’re grown-ups. We can
handle that. It’s not a big deal,” she said.

“But the heritage is what we want to show. Moultrie
that’s a name that really has some meaning,” Smith
said. “It’s historical here. It has historic integrity to the
area. Isn’t that what Charleston is based on?”

The push to change Gay Place’s name saddens
Warren Gress, who serves on the board of the Alliance
For Full Equality, a group that supports Gay civil
rights. “It really is tragic that they have to feel badly
about someone presuming that because they live on
Gay Place they might be Gay,” he said. “It’s sad that
people have to change a name because of negative
connotations that are given to a group in our society.”

Anti-Bias Conference
Excludes Gays

GENEVA (AP) - Under threat of a U.S. boycott about
an anti-Israel position, delegates from more than 100
nations began a final effort to salvage the World
Conference Against Racism. Organizers had claimed
to be inclusive, but one of the first acts was to exclude
the International Gay and Lesbian Association from
the list of accredited non-governmental organizations.

The vote was 43-43 with 27 abstentions. Under con-
ference rules ties equal no votes.
Satcher Calls for Better HIV Effort

LOS ANGELES (AP) - U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher told a forum Wednesday that there should be greater community and family involvement in the treatment and prevention of HIV.

The event brought together scientists and community advocates to discuss ways for communities to address the impacts of HIV and AIDS. Satcher suggested the country take a more open view toward understanding human sexuality.

"It's so difficult to get American people to talk about sex," he said. "Parents should be the primary sex educators." Satcher said it is as important now as it was for children to be educated about HIV and AIDS. "We feel it is important that young people be armed with information," he said.

Satcher reiterated statements he made in a report on sexual health released last month, calling for increased sex education in schools and families and wider acceptance of Gays and Lesbians.

The surgeon general's report had engendered controversy when it was initially released because it supported teaching children about condom use in addition to abstinence. President Bush has called for increased federal funding of "abstinence-only" sex education programs.

But Satcher defended his report, saying the positions he advocated would help the country face the issues associated with HIV. "We as a nation have not allowed the best available public health science to affect our policy-making," he said.

Other scientists who spoke at the forum said they were excited about the opportunity to discuss prevention and other issues with community members. After Satcher's keynote address, researchers and scientists took part in small-group sessions to discuss topics like "Disparities in HIV Prevention Programs for Families." "If we did our work only at universities ... we might write some interesting papers but they would just sit on library shelves and not be of any use to people," said Dr. Steven Hyman, director of the National Institute of Mental Health. The UCLA AIDS Institute co-sponsored the event with Drew University of Medicine and NIMH.

"Those drugs and vaccines we hope for should be of any use to people," said Dr. Irvin Chen, director of the UCLA AIDS Institute.

Nigeria Using Generic HIV Drugs

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - Nigeria plans to launch the largest AIDS treatment program in Africa using cheap generic drugs on Sept. 1, a U.N. special envoy said.

The 10,000 adults and 5,000 children who will receive a drug cocktail are just a tiny fraction of the more than 2.6 million Nigerians infected with the HIV virus that causes AIDS.

But the Nigerian government's commitment demonstrates that within Africa efforts are underway to tackle the epidemic that has infected about 26.5 million people across the continent, said Stephen Lewis, special envoy of Secretary-General Kofi Annan for HIV/AIDS in Africa.

"It's a quite extraordinary intervention, a measure of the president's determination that they maintain the level of the pandemic where it is and try to turn it back," Lewis told a press conference. "They recognize that if Nigeria fails, then much of Africa will fail."

Nigeria, which is an unlikely country, was patched together by British colonialists. The most populous nation in Africa with 123 million people, Nigeria combines hundreds of ethnicities and languages in West Africa.

Botswana in southern Africa, which has a population of only 1.6 million, has the world's highest rate of AIDS infections. It will launch a treatment program using anti-retroviral drugs in early 2002, he said.

At the first U.N. conference on AIDS last month, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo warned that "the prospect of extinction of the entire population of a continent looms larger and larger." He called for cancellation of Africa's debts and international help. But he also took action himself.

Obasanjo sent his health minister to India a few weeks ago to negotiate with the pharmaceutical company Cipla Ltd., which makes generic AIDS drugs.

In February, Cipla offered to sell a three-drug AIDS cocktail to nonprofit agencies for $350 a year per African patient - provided the patients weren't charged. The company said at the time that African governments could purchase the same drugs for $600 per patient.

But the Nigerian health minister was able to negotiate a $350 a year per patient deal with Cipla, Lewis said.

The Nigerian government will subsidize about 80% of the cost, but patients who receive treatment still will have to pay between $7 and $8 a month, Lewis said.

Nigeria intends to use a six-drug regimen for 60% of the patients and a two-drug regimen for the other 40%, he said.

The drugs are expected to have similar results, but the government will monitor and evaluate how patients cope with the different programs, which will be administered by Nigeria's teaching hospitals, he said.

"It's the government's intention on Sept. 1 to begin a process of anti-retroviral treatment in Nigeria which will be at least initially larger than anywhere else on the continent," he said.

Lewis, who just returned from visits to Zambia, Kenya, Rwanda and Nigeria, said governments are anxiously awaiting help from the global AIDS fund which Annan proposed. It has received $1.4 billion, but the secretory-general says it needs $7 billion to $9 billion annually.

Despite financial and other obstacles, Lewis said he was "even more confident" that Africa could turn the tide on AIDS than he was before the trip. He cited "the extraordinary" degree of public awareness of the disease and "the quite profound determination" of leaders to tackle it.

In Kenya, parliament unanimously passed a law last month allowing the government to suspend patent rights in times of emergency, which clears the way for cheaper, generic AIDS drugs. The East African nation, which has 2 million adults...
Living with the HIV virus, is expected to start importing or manufacturing anti-retroviral drugs shortly, Lewis said.

In Rwanda, only 300 people are receiving AIDS drugs because the $140 per month cost is half the average income for an entire year, Lewis said. But the Rwandan government through testing, counseling and provision of some drugs to HIV-infected patients appears to have significantly cut transmission of the virus to their children.

The U.N. Children's Program tested 33 children born to mothers who took part in the program and only two were HIV positive, which is just 6%, "much, much lower than the anticipated rate," he said.

Canadians Gripe About Bad Dope

TORONTO (AP) - New regulations took effect in July expanding the number of Canadians allowed to use medical marijuana, but those eligible say the system resembles a bureaucratic maze likely to delay hundreds more from participating.

The rules are part of the first system in the world that includes a government-approved, paid-for supply of marijuana by the government for terminal illnesses and chronic conditions such as multiple sclerosis or severe arthritis.

Patients can grow their own pot, or designate someone to grow it for them. In addition, the health department is paying a Saskatchewan company to grow government marijuana for eligible patients and use in research.

While medical marijuana advocates in the United States look with envy, some users north of the border complain hurdles remain in place.

"I still have to fend for myself," said Jim Bridges, 37, who already has government permission to use marijuana for the pain and nausea of AIDS. He automatically comes under the new regulations, but is awaiting word on how to submit a photo for the identification card legal pot smokers will have to carry.

Almost 300 Canadians such as Bridges previously were exempted from federal drug laws that make it a criminal offense to grow and possess marijuana. Health department officials say hundreds more have applied, and the figure could reach the thousands.

Roslyn Tremblay, a Health Canada spokeswoman, said Monday that application forms under the new regulations would be available "very soon," but she was unable to provide a specific date.

To join up, applicants must submit verifiable medical records and have a doctor's endorsement. Cases except for critically ill patients appear to have significant cut transmission of the virus to their children.

The new rules permit drug possession for the terminally ill with a diagnosis of death within one year, those with symptoms associated with specific serious medical conditions, and those with other medical conditions who have statements from two doctors saying conventional treatments have not worked. Eligible patients include those with severe arthritis, cancer, HIV/AIDS and multiple sclerosis.

The government regulations meet a court-ordered deadline for Canada to create a system for terminally ill patients previously exempted from criminal marijuana laws to have a legal way to obtain the drug.

The Canadian Medical Association, which represents tens of thousands of doctors, opposes the new regulations because they make physicians responsible for prescribing a substance that lacks significant clinical research on its effects. Without the cooperation of doctors, patients cannot get medical marijuana exemptions.

Medical marijuana advocates say the real reason for the doctors' hesitation is prejudice. Bridges mentioned one physician who said he doesn't want to be known as a pot doctor.

In Top Florence, Manitoba, a mining town hundreds of miles (kilometers) north of the U.S. border, Prairie Plant Systems is growing marijuana in a former copper mine under a government contract worth more than $3.5 million. It expects the first harvest this fall of marijuana that will be supplied by the government to eligible patients and used for research on therapeutic effects. Company head Brent Zettl employs the same techniques that were used to grow berries and roses in the tapped-out mine near the town's Trout Lake.

Medical marijuana advocates complain the government marijuana will only have a 6% content of THC, the primary active ingredient. They say marijuana with such a low THC percentage would be virtually equivalent to the 15% to 18% THC street pot.

South of the border, eight U.S. states have some kind of step toward permitting the medical use of marijuana: California, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada and Colorado. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, ruled earlier this year that there is no exception in federal law for people to use marijuana, so even those with tolerant state laws could face arrest if they do.

"We're kind of envious of Canadians having the luxury of complaining about the minutiae of the program," said Chuck Thomas of the Washington-based Marijuana Policy Project.

Ugandan Appointed to Run AIDS Fund

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed an Ugandan, Catherine Nakalembe, Monday to head the new agency that will establish the global fund to fight AIDS and other infectious diseases.

Kalembe, currently a Cabinet minister and acting national political adviser, will work between now and December to start up the fund that Annam proposed to combat the AIDS epidemic, according to Annan's spokeswoman Marie Okabe.

She said the chairman of the working group "will be crucial in bringing together the widest range of stakeholders in support of the fund." Kyongi, a medical doctor, was Uganda's health minister until last March and previously served as finance minister.

Annam has called for a global fund of $7 billion to $10 billion annually to halt and reverse the AIDS epidemic and fight malaria and tuberculosis. So far, $1.4 billion has been pledged to the fund by governments, foundations and the private sector.

Catholic Bishops & Condoms

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP) - Roman Catholic bishops in southern Africa denounced condoms on as an "immoral and misguided weapon" in the fight against HIV infection but said married couples with the AIDS condition could use them in limited circumstances.

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference said "condoms may even be one of the main reasons for the spread of HIV/AIDS," according to a document released at the end of the bishops' annual assembly.

"Apart from the possibility of condoms being faulty or wrongly used, they contribute to the breaking down of self-control and mutual respect," according to the statement, read by Cardinal Wilfrid Napier at a news conference.

Prevention programs should replace the condom programs with efforts to promote abstinence, Napier said. "This is God's way. Choose life. Don't choose the way of sin or destruction," he said.

However, married couples could use condoms if one or both was infected and otherwise healthy, the automatic infertility of condoms if one or both was infected and otherwise healthy, the automatic infertility of condoms if one or both was infected and otherwise healthy, the automatic infertility of condoms if one or both was infected and otherwise healthy.

Medical experts have condemned the bishops' comments as "highly irresponsible" and "highly irresponsible," and said condoms remain an important cornerstone of HIV prevention. The "Catholic Church is confounding its religious morals with science," said Mark Heywood, secretary of the group. The bishops argued condoms promoted promiscuity and hurt prevention efforts.

Hate

Police had been told that Murphy had bragged to a friend that "he had beat up a fag.

HRC, along with the Four Corners Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community, is closely monitoring the case to ensure justice, says HRC. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) sent a representative to Colorado to help work with local media on the intricacies of this case.

"This escalation in brutal attacks comes at a time when Congress can pass the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act and commit this nation to stopping hate violence," said HRC Political Director Winnie Stachelberg. The 33-year-old federal statute currently used to prosecute hate violence is in need of updating with the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act. The law now does not cover hate violence based on sexual orientation, gender or disability and has an overly restrictive element that requires that the victim be chosen because he or she was engaged in a legally protected activity.

The bill now before Congress offers a sensible approach to help combat these violent crimes. It would extend basic hate crime protections to all Americans in all communities by adding real or perceived sexual orientation, gender and disability to the categories covered and by removing the federally-protected activity requirement. The bill would also provide federal technical and financial assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute hate crimes.

In addition to the recent upswing in hate violence, a new report of alleged anti-Gay police misconduct in Texas was brought to the attention of federal authorities. Last week, FBI officials, at HRC's request, began an investigation of San Antonio Park Rangers for allegedly harassing and physically abusing two Canadian tourists who they referred to as "faggots" while they were allegedly beaten. "When the cop saw the Ontario license, he looked to the other three officers present and said he had "two Canadian faggots," one of the victims, Joey Abbenzere, told the Texas Triangle. "The officer asked, 'What are you fags doing in our city?'"

The article reports that the Rangers then put the friends through a traumatic episode of extreme physical and verbal abuse, using anti-Gay slurs during repeated beatings before hauling them off to jail.

In 1999, the last year for which the FBI has statistics, there were more than 4,000 reported hate crimes based on race, more than 1,400 based on religion, 1,300 based on ethnicity and 300 based on sexual orientation, 830 based on sexual orientation, 1,300 based on ethnicity and 300 based on sexual orientation, 1,300 based on ethnicity and 300 based on sexual orientation.

"The Southern African Catholic Bishops' debate was provoked by a proposal for the conference to sanction condom use as part of a wider program to stop the spread of HIV in Africa, where more than 25 million are infected and 1 million new cases that causes AIDS. However, the conference, which includes bishops from South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland, rejected that measure. Bishop Kevin Dowling, who strongly backed the proposal, left the conference early. He did not return a call from The Associated Press.

The Vatican had no immediate comment. The bishops' views carry little weight without Vatican approval.

In his 1968 encyclical "Humanae Vitae," "Of Human Life," Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the church's ban on contraception, a position that some governments and AIDS activists say has hindered efforts to contain the AIDS pandemic.

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' debate was provoked by a proposal for the conference to sanction condom use as part of a wider program to stop the spread of HIV in Africa, where more than 25 million are infected and 1 million new cases that causes AIDS. However, the conference, which includes bishops from South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland, rejected that measure. Bishop Kevin Dowling, who strongly backed the proposal, left the conference early. He did not return a call from The Associated Press.

Most HIV prevention programs preach abstinence and monogamy, but they promote condoms - proven effective for helping stop HIV transmission - for those unwilling to abstain from sex.

The Treatment Action Campaign, an advocacy group working to get treatment for people infected with HIV, has condemned the bishops' comments as "highly irresponsible" and "highly irresponsible," and said condoms remained an important cornerstone of HIV prevention. "The Catholic Church is confounding its religious morals with science," said Mark Heywood, secretary of the group. The bishops argued condoms promoted promiscuity and hurt prevention efforts.

To report hate speech or violence, call the LGBT Community Center: 743-4297

TULSA FAMILY NEWS, August 2001, page 7
by Jim Christjohn, entertainment dude

Hey, kiddies, it's the height of summer. Lughnasa, and stiflingly hot. And yet, your intrepid columnist is going on a pilgrimage in the midst of this heat to Texas, to an outdoor venue, to experience a visitation of the Goddess, in the guise of Stevie Nicks. Talk about dedication! What the hell decided she should play outdoor venues in the midst of this heat wave? I would like to make a sacrifice of them. Unfortunately, good pagans eschew such behavior.

And in other Stevie related news, her dance single (available at Borders, CDNow.com, and amazon.com), “Planets of the Universe” is number 4 on the Billboard dance charts.

Now, isn’t it odd that I can and would bet money that none of the DJs here even know that? Much less play it? If there is a DJ in town that is in touch with the rest of the world and playing it, please, let me know. There’s a free dinner in it for you upon my return from the holier than thou city. Oh, no, wait, that’s Tulsa. No city can be holier than thou than Tulsa, and it’s even got the preying hands to prove it! At any rate, faithful readers (and I know of at least 2), please request it at your favorite dancing establishment and help get Tulsa caught up with the rest of the world.

And now, since yours truly has been fighting battles, such as unauthorized charges on his bank account, bank charges resulting from same, and surly customer service can you oysmorum supervisiors at Target, not to mention preparing for the journey to the altar of the Goddess (OK, so it’s a stage – whatever. Religion got its start as Theatre); I will now turn what’s left of the column over to the “staff” writer at TFN.

By the way, I won those various battles. I usually do...

Lesbian Poet Finds Voice

FORT WAYNE, Ind. – The crowd at the Mad Anthony Brewing Co. grows quiet as Bernadette Gleeson continues her poem. Around her, there are microphone stands, stools and speakers. A bass, banjo and guitar are lined up. It is open-mike night, a forum usually reserved for musicians practicing their craft or testing out new songs. But Gleeson does not sing or play an instrument. Her music come from the words she speaks.

The piece is called “Peep Through My Blues,” a poem she wrote while in London as an exchange student two years ago. Unlike a steady reading for a poetry class, Gleeson performs her poem with the gusto of rapper Eminem. But there is none of the controversy Eminem is notorious for in her words: Gleeson expressed her “inner truths” in a poetry form she calls “flow-etry.” “Flow-etry is expressing truths, enlightening minds, awareness, understanding the tight, flight rhymes,” Gleeson, 23, says.

Some may call it spoken word; others may say it’s rapping. But Gleeson describes her art as a form of expression that just comes naturally, “It’s almost like I can feel it in my soul,” she says. “It’s almost like a self-revelation type of thing. That’s how all my flows work.” Words have always been a passion for her. At 5, she was writing Mother’s and Father’s day poems in her first-grade class. At 11, Gleeson wrote poems of gratitude to the woman who inspired her to write poetry: her sixth-grade teacher.

“She taught me that the English language is there to play with,” she says.

Despite her love for the English language, it was not her main concern growing up: Gleeson wanted to be the next Michael Jordan.

“I wanted to be the first woman in the NBA,” she says. “I played every day and every summer. It was everything for me.”

Gleeson pursued her hoop dreams during junior high and high school, playing so often she would keep a basketball in her car. But it didn’t stop her from writing poetry. During games, she would write rhymes on her shoes. And when it came time to say goodbye to the high school basketball coach, there was only one way she could express her emotions – with poetry.

Still focusing on a basketball career, Gleeson moved to Fort Wayne in 1996 with a basketball scholarship to Indiana University-Purdue University. The transition was hard. She was homesick and didn’t get along with the coach.

When Gleeson was dismissed from the team and lost her scholarship, she sought solace in poetry.

“I was looking for a way to escape from that reality. It was somewhere I had control in my life,” she says.

For a change of scenery, she traveled abroad to study in London. There she focused on her poetry, writing about her “inner truths.” She realized she was a Lesbian. “I came to terms with my sexuality,” she says.

And then, Gleeson found the flow. She had never stopped writing poetry, but now her words had a different purpose. Her verses were inspired by truths she found in people and in herself. She knew “poetry” couldn’t aptly describe her spoken-word form. As she was falling asleep one night, a name for her art came to her: flow-etry. “It kind of flashed at me, almost like I can feel it in my soul,” she says.

Returning home, Gleeson started performing her art. She performed her favorite flow, “We Are One,” for the first time at the Some Like It Black Cafe in Chicago. The flow describes the chain reaction of how one good deed does good to another person. The experience left a lasting mark on her.

“It was an incredible feeling – I was speaking my truths and they were listening to me,” she says. “This is my purpose; this is what I really love to do.”
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Rebel Yell:
Stories by Contemporary Southern Gay Authors
Edited by Jay Quinn
reviewed by Barry Hensley
Tulsa City-County Library

The rural South is certainly not the easiest place to grow up Gay. Many people leave their small towns as soon as possible and move to whatever metropolis is closest, but their stories remain.

Rebel Yell is a wonderful compilation of short stories about school, church, race, love, murder, family dynamics and all of the other things that make the American South so unique. It reminds us of all of those "yard-fighting, teeth-gnashing, biscuit-eating, ugly-dog-raising, television praying, never forgiving, hard-headed people" back home.

Among the better entries: "Happy Birthday" by David Jaffe, is a heartwrenching letter written by a young man to himself, as if his estranged mother were writing him an birthday note. Recall her cherished childhood memories, "she" progresses to the infamou day that the boy came out to his parents. "She" reminisces: "Your old room at home's the same. We haven't changed a thing. Still that royal blue carpet I always called 'hideous!' Remember? I exaggerated a bit, I know, to make my point. That's me. You know not to take all my exaggerated reactions seriously, don't you, son? And that bright blue burpulb bulletin board I sewed for you still hangs over your desk. And all those maps you used to sit and draw and color, all those maps of all those foreign places—Rhodeis and Ceylon and Zanzibar and Manchukuo. I never understood why you couldn't draw maps of America. Dad and I were always suspicious of people from those sorts of foreign countries. How can you trust someone who's so different? Lord knows what to expect."

"The Preacher's Son" by George Singer, includes all of the drama imaginable: young love, gossip, religion, drugs and murder. The handsome young scoundrel, Taylor, beds just about anyone in town and finally wins up in a deadly encounter with the preacher's son. We all remember a Taylor type in school, a sexy troublemaker who almost always manages to come out on top.

"Entertainer of the Year" by J. E. Robinson, recalls fun dinner conversation between a conservative young black man and his blind date, who turns out to be a flamboyant drag queen.

Perhaps the best is "465 Acres" by Jay Quinn. Acreage can become such an important and emotional issue in the South! A matriarch and her reluctant son team up to buy the adjacent acreage from longtime neighbors. The sons of both families, who have a history together, become the negotiators. Full of grand Southern family squabbles, it has an unsettling, surprise ending.

The stories in Rebel Yell remind me of the recent death of legendary Mississippi author Eudora Welty. When she spoke at Tulsa's Central Library a decade ago, I was mesmerized by her readings. She spoke of Southern towns and their steamy, sometimes romantic and often abusive settings. And all those maps you used to sit and draw and color, all those maps of all those foreign places—Rhodeis and Ceylon and Zanzibar and Manchukuo. I never understood why you couldn't draw maps of America. Dad and I were always suspicious of people from those sorts of foreign countries. How can you trust someone who's so different? Lord knows what to expect."

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Center
from p. 1

Among the attributes mentioned were a large meetings space, a performance space, all the space 100% accessible to all regardless of ability, a courtyard/protected outdoor space, kitchen, library, food bank offices for community organizations, coffee house, gift shop, elderly services, youth services, kids area, lounge, archives, community museum, and maybe even emergency housing, perhaps for young adults who have been kicked out by their families because they came out or for victims of domestic violence.

Organizers also discussed whether the center could be located so that it could anchor the creation of a Gay neighborhood as is found in many cities around the US.

Organizers said ultimately the goal is to create a permanent Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (and family and friends) community center where, in the words of Kerry Lewis, TOHR (Tulsa Oklahomans for Human Rights) president, we can be "proud to be from Tulsa and to be Gay."

To date, a fundraising campaign fund has over $65,000 and looks to raise more to purchase and renovate as needed, a building for the Center.

A current campaign effort says let President Bush contribute to a Tulsa Gay community center; specifically, people are encouraged to contribute part or all of the income tax refund (which Bush got the Congress to pass) scheduled to be received this late summer to the building fund.

For more information, call the LGBT Community Center at 743-4297.
Gay Studies: That Voice
by Lamont Lindstrom

Who hasn’t been in a bar, or a bus, or a supermarket and overheard someone whose voice immediately shouted out “Gay!” That voice. You know, the wissy Harvey Firestein accent that actors mimic when they want to play heavy-handed and over-the-top Gay.

But does anyone actually speak like this? Normally, I mean? I have playful friends who can switch in and out of Gay-talk to tell a joke or to make a point. The accent disappears, however, if you ask them about something serious or mundane—fixing the back porch, maybe, or their trip to the dentist. But on the other hand, there’s my buddy Errol. Errol is a local Harvey. He seems to have got his needle permanently stuck in the Gay-talk groove.

Sociolinguistics (the study of language as behavior) has gone far to map out various “speech communities” of which share a number of language features and styles. Some of these communities are ethnic (e.g., the speakers of Black English, a.k.a. African American Vernacular English or Ebonics); some are geographic (regional dialects where Californian’s “father” becomes New York’s “dad”); some are occupational (lawyers’ legalese); some are age-linked (youth styles such as the dearly-departed Valley Girl whine). And sociolinguistic Deborah Tannen has compiled a heap of money writing books about “genderflect.” She claims that American men and women employ different speech styles and, as a consequence, often misunderstand one another.

But how about Gay? Is there a Gay speech community that is solid enough to possess in common the same ways of speaking? A community the members of which share knowledge and use of certain speech forms and their implications? Does Lesbians exist? Or how about Gayese? Zweicky has suggested that any deviation from normal American masculine speaking style—in whichever direction—may be heard as “Gay.” This presumes that there is, in fact, one standardized Gay accent—a common Gay way of talking.

Yet, how about my buddy Errol? He’s latched onto something recognizable. Ever time he opens his mouth his speech says Gay. Or some telemarketer calls one day and you say “That boy is Gay!” There must be a fixed set of phonetic features and intonational qualities out there that Gays, and Straights alike recognize as homosexual, or at least gay-ish.

No linguist, however, as far as I know, has provided an adequate phonetic and prosodic description of this style. Yet, we all know It well when we hear it. The folk are ahead of linguists here: They describe the style as “lispin’” or “sissy” or “you talk like a girl!” Here’s one folk description of Gay-talk that I’ve lifted off the Internet: “It’s a certain melody or lilt to the voice...some syllables are drawn out longer than usual. You could compare it (in its exaggerated form) to the Bette Davis rendition of the word “Daaaahling!” I’d say that about 75% of open gays show some sign of ‘the accent.’” I’ve heard it all over this country and in Europe—I’m beginning to think it’s genetic.

Of course it’s not genetic. My suspicion is that Gay-talk consists of a fairly small set of stereotypical, mostly intonational patterns. Actors and jokesters shift into the style to cue Gayness, just as they shift into similarly limited and convention styles to cue Chinese, or Boston Brahman, or Trailer Trash Okie. A few of us (Errol) have borrowed these linguistic conventions and made them our own—it is a way of talking that definitely says Gay. Most of us, however, either ignore this hackneyed style or merely shift into it occasionally when messiing about.

Daaahling my Aaaahss!
Lamont Lindstrom teaches anthropology at the University of Tulsa, and can be reached at lamont10@yahoo.com

Kelly Kirby, CPA, PC
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WASHINGTON, DC—A packed hearing room was the setting for the reintroduction of the Employment Non Discrimination Act (ENDA) on July 31. All eight lead cosponsors of ENDA — Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Arlen Specter (R-PA), Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), and Jim Jeffords (I-VT) and Representatives Christopher Shays (R-CT), Barney Frank (D-MA), Mark Foley (R-FL) and Ellen Tauscher (D-CA) — were on hand to demonstrate their strong support for this legislation.

Joining the congressional champions to discuss the importance of this measure for the business community was Gary Fazzino, the Vice President of Hewlett-Packard, one of the leaders of corporate America who have endorsed ENDA.

Despite some hard fought gains on the local and state level, it remains perfectly legal to fire a person based on their real or perceived sexual orientation in 38 states. ENDA would enact a federal standard of non-discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation. Far too often, it is said incorrectly that discrimination does not exist in the workplace for Gays and Lesbians. To combat this misconception, HRC has published Documenting Discrimination, which outlines many cases from across the country of anti-Gay discrimination.

Support for this legislation continues to grow with 181 cosponsors in the House and 42 cosponsors in the Senate — more than ever before. For a complete list of cosponsors, please click on http://www.hrc.org/issues/federal_leg/enda/cosponsors107.asp. This level of congressional support is due in part to the nearly 30,000 faxes that were sent by constituents through HRC’s Online Action Center.

Kirsten Kingdon, PFLAG Executive Director, said, "Today marks another year of job opportunities. The PFLAG Board of Directors recently passed a Public Policy Statement which supports ENDA, but advocates for the inclusion of Transgender protections in the legislation. The statement reads, "Many employees are discriminated against because of their gender presentation in the workplace, not necessarily their sexual orientation. Any and all discrimination is immoral and unconscionable, and we look to our elected officials to set the example and the law so all people are treated with dignity and opportunity."

A Gallup Poll in June showed that 85% of Americans support equal rights in terms of job opportunities. The PFLAG Board of Directors recently passed a Public Policy Statement which supports ENDA, but advocates for the inclusion of Transgender protections in the legislation. The statement reads, "Many employees are discriminated against because of their gender presentation in the workplace, not necessarily their sexual orientation. Any and all discrimination is immoral and unconscionable, and we look to our elected officials to set the example and the law so all people are treated with dignity and opportunity."
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