

Just news

Congress sees purple, cuts funds

The House of Representatives on July 12 cut the National Endowment for the Arts budget by \$45,000, the exact amount of money the agency spent for two controversial exhibits, including one by openly gay artist Robert Mapplethorpe. Senate action on the NEA budget is pending.

The budget cut was proposed as a compromise to divert Congressmembers stampeding to slash the NEA budget by 5 percent, or 10 percent, or 100 percent. NEA came under harsh Congressional criticism last month when the Corcoran, a Washington, DC art gallery, cancelled a showing of one of the two NEA-funded exhibits, a retrospective of the homoerotic work of gay artist Robert Mapplethorpe. Administrators at the Corcoran defended the highly publicized Mapplethorpe cancellation, claiming that to show Mapplethorpe's homoerotic pictures would endanger the NEA budget during its reauthorization hearings in July, which occur at four-year intervals.

Gay and lesbian activists and members of the arts community charged the Corcoran and members of Congress with acts of blatant censorship, rooted in homophobia.

Gay and lesbian activists are urged to contact their Senators and ask that Senators reject any Helms-led attacks on the NEA budget.

—National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

Ed. note: The Mapplethorpe exhibition opened at the Washington Project for the Arts on July 22, where it will remain until August 13. "Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment" will then travel to Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, the University Art Museum in Berkeley, California, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston.

Critic Michael Brenson said of the show (New York Times, July 22, 1989), "Mapplethorpe had the imagination to find the edge between lucidity and pathology, seductiveness and cruelty, submission and domination...This show must be seen."

Marine's discharge reversed

In a stunning reversal of a discharge recommendation, a Marine Corps Board of Review on July 6 reinstated a female Marine Corps Captain who had been court-martialed for her friendship with a civilian lesbian.

Captain Judy Meade, stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, was notified that the Board determined the evidence against her was "insufficient to justify an involuntary separation from the Marine Corps."

Meade was court-martialed in February on charges that she had engaged in conduct unbecoming an officer. Prior allegations that she had engaged in homosexual conduct evaporated when military prosecutors were unable to present evidence supporting that charge. Nevertheless, the Marine Corps proceeded with its prosecution on charges that Meade had a "long-term personal relationship with a known lesbian," that she on one occasion had slept "in the same bed with a known lesbian," and that she was on one occasion "in the presence" of persons suspected to be lesbians. Meade's court-martial resulted in a recommendation for other than honorable discharge.

Meade was one of scores of women investigated by the Naval Investigative Service in connection with alleged lesbian activities at the Parris Island, South Carolina Marine base.

—Gay and Lesbian Military Freedom Project

Kowalski case successful; committee closes down

"Everything is set in place for a secure future for Sharon," said Tacie Dejanikus, co-chair of the National Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski. "With Sharon's move, we have substantially completed the agenda around which we organized in 1987. Sharon is getting good rehabilitation; she has contact with Karen Thompson and her other friends; she has returned to the Minneapolis area, where she had made her home; we've promoted the book Karen wrote with Julie Andrzejewski, *Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home?*, to get the facts of the case out to the public; and as a bonus, Donald Kowalski will be replaced as guardian. We're proud of what we've accomplished."

On June 12, Sharon Kowalski moved to Trevilla of Robbinsdale, an extended care facility near Minneapolis that provides rehabilitation and transition to less structured care for brain-injured persons. The move is the first step in the rehabilitation plan recommended by Kowalski's therapists at the Miller-Dwan Medical Center in Duluth, as reported to St. Louis County District Court

Judge Robert V. Campbell. Meanwhile, Kowalski's father, Donald Kowalski, has requested that he be removed as her guardian.

Kowalski, 32, had been moved to Miller-Dwan by Campbell's order in January for a period of rehabilitation and further evaluation. Prior to that time, she had been kept since 1985 in a nursing home in Hibbing by Donald Kowalski. While there she received little rehabilitation and was prevented from seeing any visitors not approved by her father. Although he became her guardian in 1984, following her 1983 automobile accident, only in September 1988 did she receive full competency tests, which are required at least annually by Minnesota guardianship law.

The National Committee reiterates that the story of Sharon Kowalski represents a powerful lesson about the need for all couples who choose not to marry or do not have legal access to marriage to create durable power of attorney documents for their own protection.

Sharon Kowalski may receive cards, flowers, etc., at Trevilla of Robbinsdale, 3130 Grimes Ave. N., Robbinsdale, MN 55422.

—National Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski

Gay Pride cancellation irks Helms

At the request of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), the U.S. Post Office issued a special stamp cancellation (featuring artwork designed by prominent artist Keith Haring for Heritage of Pride, and reproduced below) that was available at the June 25 Lesbian and Gay Pride march in New York City. The cancellation was issued in conjunction with the 20th Anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, when patrons of a gay bar fought back against police harassment and launched the modern lesbian and gay liberation movement.

When apprised of the cancellation, Senator Jesse Helms, R-N.C., castigated the Post Office on the Senate floor for celebrating "perversion." He attacked the lesbian and gay movement for trying to subvert "American values." He also submitted into the Congressional Record similar remarks — attacking GLAAD by name — by Rep. Robert Dornan, R-Calif.

Craig Davidson, Executive Director of GLADD, responded "The nastiness of Sen. Helms' remarks reveals the desperation of

one who knows he is losing his battle to deny Americans the truth that lesbian and gay people are decent, loving and proud."

"The Post Office regularly celebrates the cultural diversity of America with special stamps and stamp cancellations, and that is exactly what they have done here. While Sen. Helms wishes a pox on postal officials who approved our cancellation, we thank them for their fairness — the most fundamental of American values," Davidson added.

Founded in 1985, GLAAD discourages stereotypes and misinformation about lesbians and gay men by sponsoring visibility projects such as the Stonewall stamp cancellation and organizing grass roots response to public anti-gay bigotry, particularly in the media.

Massachusetts gay rights bill jumps ahead

On July 11, the Massachusetts Senate voted 22 to 13 for initial approval of H5427, the Gay Civil Rights Bill. The Massachusetts House passed the bill by a margin of 80 to 68 on April 3. The Senate will vote on the bill again in October.

First filed in 1973, H5427 would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, employment, credit, insurance, and public accommodation. The law would also direct the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination to investigate and prosecute cases of anti-gay and -lesbian discrimination.

"Never before has the climate seemed so favorable for passage of this bill," commented David LaFontaine, lobbyist for the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights. "Passage will be a milestone in the history of the gay rights movement. Massachusetts will set a precedent for states across the nation and the movement to advance federal gay rights legislation will receive a boost."

Two years ago, the bill was defeated in the Massachusetts legislature although it had attained a majority in both the House and the Senate. The bill died in the Committee on Bills in the Third Reading when Arthur Lewis, a Boston Democrat, held the bill through the end of the legislative year. On January 3, 1988, fourteen people were arrested when more than 600 men and women gathered inside the State House to protest Lewis's action and the death of the bill.

A poll conducted by the Boston Globe in July showed that Massachusetts residents strongly support passage of gay rights legislation. The poll revealed that nearly 70 percent favor the bill while 23 percent are opposed.

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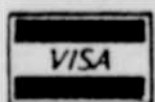


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