

# just briefs

**BALTIMORE**—A man who is suing the Southland Corporation, which owns 7-11 convenience stores, for forcing him to take an HIV test and then failing to keep his positive result confidential, has been ordered by St. Mary's County Judge Clark Raleigh to tell the court how many people he has slept with, how many times he has slept with them and whether any of the sex occurred inside the county.

Deborah Weimer, attorney for plaintiff John Buler, says that Southland plans to argue that the corporation cannot be held responsible for publicizing Buler's HIV status if he also shared his test result with sexual partners, according to the Baltimore Gaypaper.

**BERKELEY**—About 300 students brought the University of California administration to a halt for two days in late March with protests, sit-ins, building take overs and window smashing. They demanded tenure for two minority professors, broader involvement of minority students in admissions and the creation of a gay studies department.

**BOSTON**—Governor Michael Dukakis announced last month that marital status will no longer be a consideration in foster care placement. The change lifts an effective ban on gays and lesbians as foster parents. Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights lobbying director David LaFontaine called the change "an extraordinary victory for direct action groups and legal advocacy groups alike who have protested this discriminatory policy since 1985."

**WASHINGTON**—President Bush's first major speech on AIDS March 29 was twice interrupted by Urvashi Vaid, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Bush was speaking to 400 business and labor leaders in Virginia at a conference sponsored by the National Leadership Coalition on AIDS. Seated directly in front of the president, Vaid twice stood up to address him, holding aloft a sign reading: "Talk is Cheap—AIDS Funding Is Not," and "Remember Gay People With AIDS."

After the second interruption, Vaid was led from the room by Secret Service agents.

—Rex Wockner

## Bias in nation's newsrooms

A study released last month by the American Society of Newspaper Editors finds that newspapers are largely hospitable to gay and lesbian journalists, although there is an undercurrent of bias in the newsroom. The gay and lesbian journalists, responding to the first survey of its kind, give their papers low marks for their coverage of gay issues and concerns.

The report offered these major findings:

- On coverage of gay issues and concerns, the 205 persons responding overwhelmingly give their newspapers a grade of mediocre.

- A communication gap may exist between newspaper editors and their openly gay staff members.

- Although 59 percent of the sample say they are "out," the issue of coming out remains a difficult one, complicated by perceptions of indifference or even career risks by many gay and lesbian journalists.

- Respondents say most of their gay and lesbian colleagues are closeted, contributing to a conclusion that despite the survey, many such journalists remain to be heard from.

- Respondents show a surprising ignorance of official workplace policies that have potentially serious consequences for them.

## Partnership case goes to court

National Gay Rights Advocates has filed suit against the Wisconsin Personnel Commission for denying Jerri Lynn Phillips, an employee of the Department of Health and Social Services, the right to get health insurance for her partner, Lorri J. Tommerup.

Wisconsin is one of the few states with a statute banning employment discrimination based on marital status and sexual orientation.

In October 1986, Phillips filed an application to change her health insurance from individual to family coverage. In November

her application was denied on the rationale that she had no "eligible dependents." The decision was upheld by the Wisconsin Personnel Commission.

Paul Di Donato, NGRA's incoming staff attorney, said, "The importance of this case is clear. Family partnerships in the gay and lesbian community must be legally protected and recognized for us to truly obtain equality."

## Court blocks phone sex amendment

In a court order issued last month in response to a suit challenging the government's most recent attempt to control dial-a-porn companies, U.S. District Judge Fern Smith declared that phone sex is constitutionally protected speech.

The suit, filed by three California companies offering sexually oriented telephone services, seeks a preliminary injunction against the Helms Amendment to the Communications Act of 1934.

The Helms Amendment calls for FCC regulations that would require users of phone sex services to be subscribers of the services. Because of billing technicalities, such an arrangement would effectively eliminate dial-a-porn companies.

Leonard Graff, former legal director for National Gay Rights Advocates, argued in a brief that "sexually explicit telephone communications may play a positive role in curbing the AIDS epidemic. Sexually explicit telephone communications deserve First Amendment protection if they may help save lives by deterring or replacing life-threatening behavior."

## ACT/UP wants to douse Marlboros

Members of ACT UP/DC last month launched a boycott of Marlboro cigarettes, owned by Philip Morris, Inc., to protest the company's donation to the campaign war chest of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), the Senate's most venomous opponent of effective responses to stem the AIDS epidemic.

According to Federal Election Commission records, Philip Morris is Helms' single largest corporate donor. Philip Morris is also the largest corporate contributor to the Jesse Helms Museum, scheduled to open in Monroe, North Carolina, in 1992.

According to FEC records, Philip Morris also has supported pro-gay and lesbian politicians. "This is a form of corporate schizophrenia akin to donating to both the NAACP and the Ku Klux Klan," said Michael Petrelis, and organizer of the boycott. "By its support and funding, Philip Morris is endorsing Helms' political agenda, which is annihilation of the gay, lesbian and AIDS communities."

## Newsletter details campus violence

Campus sidewalks at the University of Delaware were scrawled with graffiti that read, "Step Here, Kill a Queer," "Stay in the Closet, Fag" and other obscene and threatening messages.

Several lesbian students at Boston University were called "fucking dykes" by a male student in a dorm lounge. The perpetrator then pushed one of the women against a glass wall and, when the woman's lover intervened, threatened to kill her.

At the close of Michigan State University's Gay and Lesbian Pride week, vandals covered a campus bridge with more than 50 anti-gay messages, including "Death to Gays" and "Your Kind Will Die of AIDS."

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Campus Project has published a newsletter that, in detailing such incidents, addresses the pervasive problem of anti-gay and lesbian violence, harassment and defamation at U.S. colleges and universities.

The newsletter provides a background on campus violence and harassment and itemizes attacks, graffiti, arson and death threats against lesbian and gay students. The newsletter also provides strategies for stopping anti-gay violence and profiles organizing efforts at select campuses.

Copies of the newsletter are available for \$1 from NGLTF, 1517 U Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20009.



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