

Litter program trashes P/FLAG

Rather than allow the local chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) to adopt a section of a freeway in its "Adopt-a-Roadway" program, the St. Louis, Mo., highway department is considering trashing the whole program.

Organizations that adopt a stretch of road and commit to keep it free from litter are honored with a permanent sign along the adopted stretch. The department doesn't want to allow the words "gay" and "lesbian" to be placed on a sign on the highway. Highway director Jan Payton said the group's name had certain connotations that some people wouldn't approve of. Currently, 270 organizations have adopted a length of roadway. At a commission meeting, the P/FLAG group was likened to the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis and a commissioner said if P/FLAG were allowed to have its name on a sign, the highway department would have to provide a sign for the Nazis.

Group wants visual identification of gays

A group of Catholic parents in Townsville, Australia, have recommended that gay men and lesbians be required by law to wear identification that is visible to the public. The group cited "modern minimum health precautions" to fight AIDS as the reason to institute the policy.

The Queensland Association of Catholic Parents presented to the Criminal Justice Commission a 10-point plan to "stop the spread of AIDS." Other proposals outlined in the plan included quarantining people with AIDS and HIV and compulsory HIV testing of all male flight attendants and "known homosexuals." The group would also like to ban gays and lesbians from teaching and holding jobs

which require food handling. The Roman Catholic church has not given its official support to the group. AIDS activists in Townsville likened the proposal to Nazism.

Western Union issues non-discrimination policy

Western Union Corporation, which earlier this year was sharply criticized by lesbian and gay rights advocates for their attempts to overturn the San Francisco lesbian and gay rights ordinance, has issued a revised non-discrimination policy for its employees which specifically includes sexual orientation.

In a statement signed by Western Union's president and chief executive officer, Robert J. Amman, the company states that its policy of equal opportunity "is founded on sound business judgment and our belief in respect for the individual. We depend on the full and effective employment and development of qualified persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, physical or mental handicap or veteran status."

"Western Union is sending a clear message that discrimination against gay and lesbian Americans is counterproductive and wrong. I hope many other companies follow this example of responsible corporate citizenship," stated Tim McFeeley, executive director of the Human Rights Campaign Fund.

New Jersey Supreme Court prohibits anti-gay discrimination

The New Jersey Supreme Court has announced changes to the state's judicial and professional codes to prohibit lawyers and

judges from discriminating against people because of their sexual orientation.

The changes, which were originally proposed by the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, make the state's judiciary the first in the country to adopt anti-gay discrimination clauses for lawyers and judges.

"The Supreme Court of New Jersey has declared that bias in the state's legal system against gay, lesbian or bisexual people will not be tolerated," said Ruth E. Harlow, a staff attorney with the ACLU-NJ. "These new rules send a very important signal to all New Jersey judges and lawyers that all forms of discrimination—including that against gay people and the poor—will not be accepted."

The amended portion of the Code of Judicial Conduct now says that "a judge should be impartial, and should not discriminate because of race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, socioeconomic status, or handicap."

Sodomy laws fall in two states

New York—A trial court in Wayne County, Michigan has become the second court in a month to strike down a state sodomy statute on state constitutional grounds. In reasoning similar to that used by a Kentucky court in early June, the Michigan court recognized in July 6 that the state sodomy law and related so-called "gross indecency" laws violate every citizen's right to privacy under the state constitution.

"The Michigan ruling is a good example of the growing trend around the country to challenge and overturn these antiquated, oppressive laws," said David Piontkowsky, lead attorney for the Michigan Organization for

Human Rights (MOHR), one of the plaintiffs in the suit, along with 11 diverse individuals. MOHR brought the lawsuit together with Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the national lesbian and gay rights advocacy group, and the ACLU of Michigan.

"The right to privacy victories in Michigan and Kentucky within a month are extremely significant, because they show that state courts and state constitutions can do what the federal courts used to do: protect minorities and basic American freedoms against government intrusion," said Paula Ettelbrick, one of two Lambda attorneys on the case.

Excerpted from Gay & Lesbian Nation.

Dukakis vetoes gay foster care restrictions

Gay activists claimed a major victory with Mass. Governor Michael Dukakis vetoed a budget amendment which could have restricted the rights of gays and lesbians to adopt or be guardians or foster parents of children.

Dukakis created an explosion of controversy in 1985 when he ordered the removal of two foster children from the home of two gay men. The Massachusetts legislature followed Dukakis' example by attaching even more restrictive language to the budget each year. 1990 is the first year since 1985 that lesbians and gays have managed to defeat this restrictive language.

Gay activists in Massachusetts believe that this positive turn of events has national significance. The restrictive foster care policies adopted in Massachusetts were imitated by several other states. Activists believe that this Massachusetts victory has the potential to turn the tide nationally through the adoption of unbiased parenting policies.

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