

Landmark House bill challenges military anti-gay bias

On May 19, U.S. Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) introduced in Congress the Military Freedom Act of 1992, which seeks for the first time to directly repeal the military policy banning gays from serving in the military. Schroeder called the Department of Defense policy "stupid," based solely on anti-gay prejudice, adding that numerous court actions and direct appeals to President George Bush or Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney have been unsuccessful.

The bill preserves rules and policies regarding sexual misconduct by military members regardless of sexual orientation. "The issue is not whether gay men and lesbians should serve," said openly gay Rep. Gerry Studds (D-Mass.); "they always have, and they always will. The question is whether they will be able to do so openly, with dignity and with pride."

Recently, active Navy pilot Lt. Tracy Thorne came out on ABC's *Nightline* program, citing a "ripe political climate," adding that he had seen "too much discrimination" in the military to remain silent any longer. Over 14,000 service personnel have been discharged since 1982 for their sexual orientation. The most noteworthy recently was of decorated Vietnam veteran and Washington National Guard Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, one of the highest ranking soldiers ever removed for homosexuality.

Human Rights Campaign Fund endorses Clinton for President

The nation's largest lesbian and gay political organization, the Human Rights Campaign Fund, has announced its support for Bill Clinton for President of the United States, the first time in its 11 year history that it has endorsed a presidential candidate. Noted Fund co-chair Laura Altschul, "After 12 years of ignorance, inaction, and indifference, the choice in 1992 is too important for our community to stand on the sidelines."

Fund executive director Tim McFeeley added that Gov. Clinton had been among the first candidates to answer a detailed questionnaire on lesbian and gay issues, and "On issues ranging from discrimination in the military to AIDS education, Bill Clinton is on the side of lesbian and gay America."

While candidates, particularly Democratic hopefuls, have met with and raised money from the gay community in the past, they have never done so as publicly as they have been recently, a trend at least partially attributed to the spread of the AIDS virus. An estimated one out of every four Americans now knows someone with AIDS.

On May 18, while addressing a large audience of lesbians and gays in front of a dozen television cameras, Clinton's eyes filled with tears when, as he later told a friend, he realized that many of these young professionals carried the HIV virus and would die before their time. Clinton has led the way in making gays, lesbians and AIDS activists part of his campaign, stating, "We can't afford to waste the capacities, the contributions, the hearts, the souls, the minds of the gay and lesbian Americans."

Republicans have been far more reticent in supporting lesbian and gay causes, refusing to

withdraw support of the military's anti-gay and lesbian bias and tiptoeing around the AIDS issue to avoid offending the far right. Independent candidate Ross Perot initially promised firm support for AIDS research, but then also said he would not appoint homosexuals to high government positions.

Quayle denounces gay and lesbian parents

Speaking to a national convention of Southern Baptists, Vice President Dan Quayle asserted that it is "wrong" for gay and lesbian couples to be parents. "The cultural elites respect neither tradition nor standards," Quayle said. "They believe moral truths are relative and that all lifestyles are equal. They seem to think that the family is an arbitrary arrangement of people who decided to live under the same roof, that fathers are dispensable, and that parents need not be married or even of opposite sexes. They are wrong!"

The 16,000 Baptists burst into vigorous applause. Earlier, the delegates overwhelmingly passed a resolution banning local churches that "affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior." The Southern Baptist Convention is America's largest Protestant convention, with 16 million members.

Perot representatives attempt to soften homophobic remarks

Gay and lesbian activists met with representatives of the H. Ross Perot campaign in Washington, D.C. following the uproar caused by Perot's "insulting and offensive" comments on gays in the military and the Cabinet. During a 20/20 interview on May 29, Perot stated that he would not hire openly gay or lesbian cabinet members and opposed lesbians and gays serving in the military. "It will distract from the work to be done," Perot told ABC's Barbara Walters, adding, "I don't think it's realistic" for gays to serve in the military.

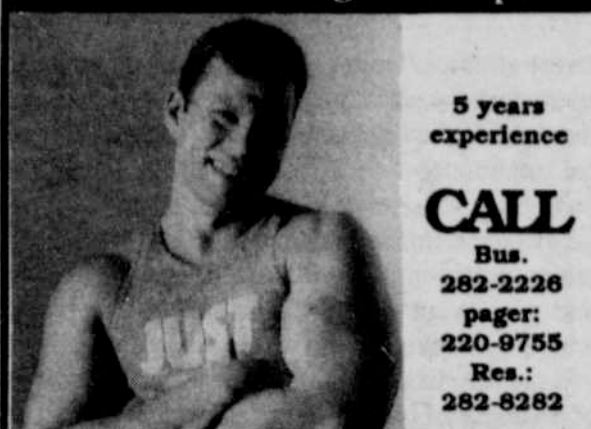
Representatives from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Queer Nation, and the Human Rights Campaign Fund met at the District of Columbia Perot petition office on June 8, but were locked out of the office by Perot staffers in the presence of the national media. During the meeting outside the office, activists called on Perot to renounce his earlier homophobic stands, to publicly condemn discrimination based on sexual orientation, and to endorse the five-point United for AIDS Action platform on AIDS leadership, care, research, education, and discrimination.

"I believe Mr. Perot is very sensitive to this issue," said Jim Brown, regional Perot representative and liaison to the Perot Dallas office. "Any effort to exclude anyone is wrong." However, Perot representatives on several occasions stated that they cannot speak for Mr. Perot.

NGLTF is notifying its 18,000 members to contact the Perot Campaign office in Dallas and urge him to support gay and lesbian civil rights. Activists are urged to contact Perot at H. Ross Perot Petition Committee, PO Box 517025, Dallas, TX 75251-7025, phone (800) 685-7777 or (800) 826-9540, fax (800) 925-1300. Act Up suggests sending gay positive material through the fax, or simply put the bite on Perot's pocketbook by calling his 800 numbers.

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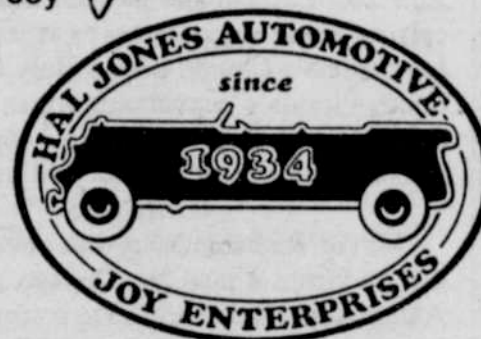


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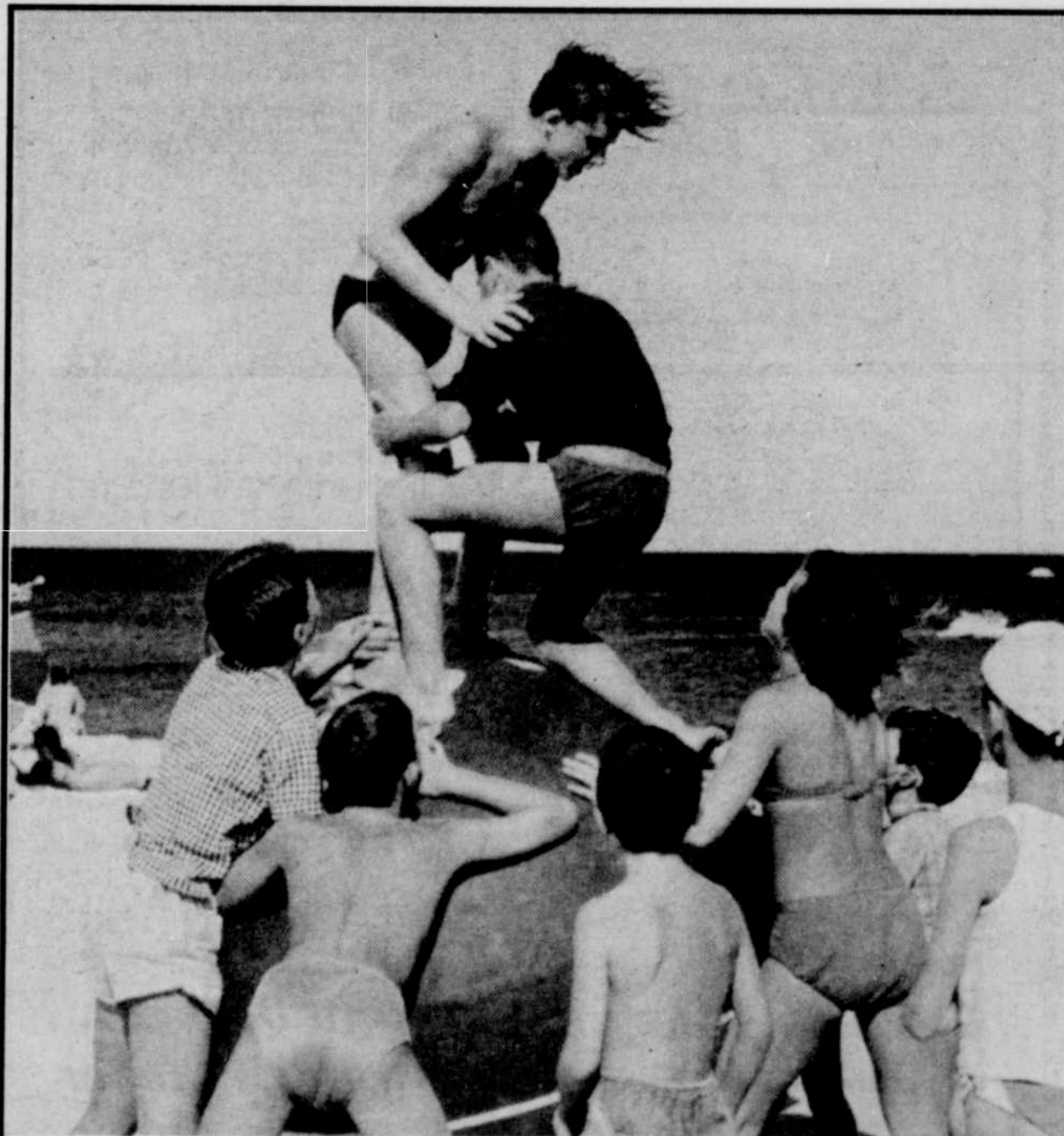


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