

national briefs

CALIFORNIA

In October, San Francisco industrial chemist Merlyn Starley obtained a patent for "suspenders" to hold a condom in place so that it won't slip off during use. It is made of two plastic clips and a special adhesive attached to the wearer's legs.



While admitting no wrongdoing, Denny's restaurants settled federal discrimination charges by agreeing to stop requiring African American customers in California to pay cover charges and to pay for their meals in advance, as well as other practices which reflect racial bias. The agreement came in response to a class-action lawsuit filed by a group of Denny's customers seeking an injunction against the large restaurant chain.

FLORIDA

Circuit court Judge Scott M. Brownell has struck down a Florida law which prohibited lesbians and gay men from adopting children. The law, enacted in 1977 during Anita Bryant's campaign against gays and lesbians, was challenged by two gay men as unconstitutional because it requires lesbians and gays to reveal their private affairs and doesn't define what a "homosexual" is. The second Florida judge to invalidate the law, Brownell noted in his decision that the law rewarded lying, and was vague about homosexuality or why it made a person unfit to adopt. The Department of Health and Rehabilitative Resources had defended the law by claiming that gays and lesbians were not "appropriate parental role models."

MAINE

With the support of the Maine Chamber of Commerce and the Maine Banking Association, a lesbian and gay civil rights bill was approved by an almost unanimous vote of the Joint Judiciary Committee. Maine Families, a fundamentalist Christian right-wing organization, distributed copies of the anti-gay video, *The Gay Agenda*, to members of the Judiciary Committee before the vote, and plans to circulate repeal petitions now that the bill has passed.

NEBRASKA

The Nebraska Senate Business and Labor Committee voted 4-3 on a fair employment bill, clearing the way for final action on the bill in the fall. One senator who was not expected to support the bill voted for it, saying, "The lack of action in other states can't justify doing nothing here." The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission also supported the bill.

NEW MEXICO

Although it passed in the New Mexico Senate, a lesbian and gay civil rights bill died when it was tabled by the House Judiciary Committee on March 18. Activists were disappointed after earlier elation at the bill's progress after only two years of effort. Over 3,000 letters in support of the legislation were sent to lawmakers.

PENNSYLVANIA

Because of Colorado's passage of anti-gay Amendment 2, the Executive Council of the Latin American Studies Association has voted to cancel plans to hold its 1995 International Congress in Denver. LASA took the action to show support for the gay, lesbian, and bisexual members of its organization; to join other professional and scholarly organizations in the boycott of Colorado; and to reaffirm its long-standing commitment to human rights and academic freedom. Founded in 1966, LASA is the world's largest professional association of scholars focusing on Latin American studies, with over 3,000 individual and 100 institutional members.

RHODE ISLAND

A gay and lesbian civil rights bill was passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee with the ac-

tive support of openly gay Sen. Will Fitzpatrick and the Rhode Island Alliance for Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights. Passage by the Rhode Island Senate is expected in May. Amendments to the original bill exempt owner-occupants of dwellings with three or fewer units, and release employers from any obligation to provide benefits to unmarried partners of employees. The conservative House Judiciary Committee is considered the most serious obstacle to the bill's final passage.

SOUTH CAROLINA

The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a complaint in Federal District Court against the South Carolina Insurance Risk Pool for its policy of excluding people infected with the HIV virus. The Pool, a state insurance program established in 1989 for people who cannot obtain health insurance because of pre-existing conditions, specifically denies coverage to HIV-infected people, unlike approximately 20 other similar state insurance risk pools. "South Carolina is the only state in the country that deliberately prevents people with AIDS from obtaining the medical assistance they need," commented Steven Bates, executive director of the South Carolina ACLU. "Only meanness, bigotry, and ignorance can explain such discrimination." Contrary to common perception, treating AIDS is less expensive than many other ailments, such as heart disease, cancer, or Alzheimer's disease.

TENNESSEE

A recently released report reveals that the Army began spying on African Americans more than 75 years ago, focusing in particular on churches in the southern United States. Perpetrated by the Army's Green Berets, the spying intruded on three generations of Martin Luther King Jr.'s family, beginning with his maternal grandmother. Such action was supported by the conviction among Army decision-makers that African Americans were ripe for subversion by World War I German agents, or later by communists or anti-war groups. Numerous participants in the 1960s civil rights movement were investigated, including H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Queer Nation has called on Georgia senator and Armed Services Committee chair Sam Nunn to withdraw from his responsibilities presiding over the Senate hearings on the military ban on gay men and lesbians. "Sen. Nunn has already clearly stated his position. He is opposed to the ban," said Queer Nation spokesman Steven Reichert. "Given his vociferous homophobia, we feel Nunn cannot conduct hearings that are fair, balanced and objective." Nunn has said that he favors the ban, but that his "final judgment on this issue will be affected by the testimony we receive from a wide range of witnesses."

WASHINGTON STATE

Project Aries is an AIDS telephone-counseling program offered via a toll-free number. Based at the University of Washington School of Social Work, the Aries program consists of 14 weeks of group counseling in which men who have sex with men can talk by phone with trained counselors and learn about safer-sex practices. "Though the participants already know the facts about how HIV is transmitted, the Aries counselors focus on the problems many people face when trying to get safer, and help clients learn how to overcome difficult challenges," said Dr. Roger Roffman, director of Aries. Counseling services are provided entirely free of charge, thanks to funding by the National Institute of Mental Health. Clients may participate in complete anonymity or confidentiality. For more information, contact Roger A. Roffman, Ph.D., (800) 999-7511.

compiled by Jim Hunger




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The photographs appearing in the feature story in the April 15 issue of *Just Out* about the Haitian refugees as well as the demonstration at the St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York City were from Impact Visuals in New York.

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