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national news

Religious leaders support M.O.W., end of ban on gays

Members of Interfaith Impact for Justice and Peace, a religious lobby representing more than 30 national religious organizations, have come out publicly in support of the April 25 March on Washington for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered rights, and for an end to the military ban. "As religious people, we recognize and embrace the gay and lesbian community for what they are," said Rabbi Lynne F. Landsberg, associate director of the religious action center of reform Judaism. "They are not the enemy. They are us, and we are them."

Landsberg noted that specious terms like "family values" are used to legitimize prejudices such as homophobia. "We cannot condone any of this—not as Americans, and especially not as Jews. For we have seen it all before."

Kay Dowhower, spokesperson for the governmental affairs office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, said "We look upon the upcoming March on Washington as one way in which those supportive of civil rights for all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation, can join together to support one another in that effort." The Rev. John Deckenback handed out copies of a letter from the United Church of Christ to President Clinton, praising his "courageous stand" on lifting the ban on gays and lesbians in the military service.

CFV co-founder criticizes group's tactics

Colorado for Family Values co-founder Tony Marco, who was also the primary author of Colorado's Amendment 2, has condemned the group's strategy of portraying gays as perverts, saying it costs votes and promotes violence against gays. A Colorado Springs freelance writer, Marco left the group during the campaign, for financial and philosophical reasons. In a letter to CFV chair Will Perkins, he warned that the group could self-destruct by "rubbing the faces of the state's people in repulsive, extremist homosexual behavior."

Recently a growing number of former CFV members and Amendment 2 supporters have expressed disenchantment with CFV's increasingly strident reliance on gay-bashing. Its original campaign pledge was to deny "special rights" to homosexuals. CFV officials claim they are only trying to protect their Amendment 2 victory by strengthening their organization. In addition to distributing a graphic, anti-gay propaganda video, CFV has continued to promulgate the myth of gays as child molesters and spreaders of disease.

Idaho attorney general calls anti-gay initiative unconstitutional

Idaho Attorney General Larry EchoHawk has declared the Idaho Citizens Alliance's anti-gay initiative unconstitutional and "contrary to its stated purpose." In a detailed analysis of the measure, EchoHawk cited numerous examples of flawed language, and reasoning which flouts basic constitutional guarantees. The initiative deceptively claims to support "equal protection for all citizens," while preventing homosexuals from "receiving special rights through minority status."

Section by section, EchoHawk noted: "Since Idaho law does not use the term 'legal minority status,' singling out gays to be denied redress of grievances would deny them their 14th amendment constitutional right to equal protection under the law; by prohibiting the 'sanctioning of homosexual behavior by public educational insti-

tutions,' the measure would violate first amendment rights to free speech, allowing only one side of an ongoing political and moral debate, and denying a public forum for opposing beliefs; the restrictions placed upon public expenditures are based strictly on the content of expressions and ideas held by a particular group of individuals; vague terms like 'adult materials which address homosexuality,' in limiting access to literature in public libraries, would infringe on first amendment rights and could even be interpreted to deny minors access to widely accepted works of literature, including the Bible, numerous philosophers and biographies; clauses incorporated into the measure to cure its constitutional defects only serve to render the measure contradictory within itself."

EchoHawk concludes: "This initiative is not merely an innocuous effort to ensure that homosexuals do not receive 'special status.' Rather, it targets a class of citizens for denial of basic constitutional rights. However, those who stand to lose because of this proposed initiative are not just homosexuals singled out for government-condoned discrimination. . Rather, all Idahoans will suffer an abridgment of our most deeply held and cherished constitutional rights—the right of freedom of speech, the right to academic freedom in our universities, the right to free political debate in our governmental bodies, and the right to live in a society where all members are protected equally under the law."

GLAAD presents media awards

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation/Los Angeles held its Media Awards, attended by over 900 celebrities and other Hollywood bigwigs, on March 20 at the Beverly Hilton. "Roseanne" was named the Outstanding Television Series for the second year in a row. Roseanne and Tom Arnold were also given a special award for their continued support of the gay, lesbian and bisexual community. Roseanne Arnold dedicated her award to the 35 lesbians from a Denver feminist collective who supported her when she was under fire for the anti-patriarchal tenor of her comedy. "I owe all of [my success] to these women," she said. She also thanked her friend Sandra Bernhard, who plays a lesbian on the show.

Actor Ian McKellon was presented with the Stephen F. Kolzak Award, GLAAD/LA's highest honor for an openly gay media person, for his outstanding contribution to fighting homophobia. GLAD/LA's Visibility Award was presented to openly gay and lesbian members of the U.S. military, represented by Col. Margarethe Cammemeyer, the Rev. Capt. Dusty Pruitt, Sgt. Perry Wilkins, and Staff Sgt. Tom Paniccia. This presentation drew a standing ovation.

House to consider HIV Prevention Act

Congressman Gerry Studds has agreed to cosponsor the Comprehensive HIV Prevention Act of 1993. This act will expand and improve on the effectiveness of federal, state, and local HIV prevention efforts by authorizing the Asst. Sec. of Health to develop a strategic plan for HIV prevention activities at the Department of Health and Human Services. It will also establish offices at the Centers for Disease Control and other public health agencies.

"It is an unspeakable tragedy that citizens from every walk of life are continuing to contract what is now so clearly a preventable disease," said Studds, whose membership on the House Subcommittee on Health will be helpful in securing passage of the bill. The principal author of the bill is Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Ca).