

national briefs

CALIFORNIA

The Los Angeles City Council has voted to extend health insurance benefits to the unmarried domestic partners of city employees. A 10-3 vote passed the motion proposed by Councilwoman Jackie Goldberg, the council's first openly lesbian member. Employees must have lived with an unmarried partner for at least a year before they and their children can qualify for the medical and dental coverage.

ILLINOIS

Ana Castillo, a Chicago native who now resides in New Mexico, has received the 1993 Carl Sandburg Award for Fiction. Castillo, who identifies herself as a bisexual, won the prestigious literary award for her novel *So Far From God*, a story that spans twenty years in the lives of a Chicana mother and her four daughters. This is her third novel. Castillo has just finished writing *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (Chicana feminism), which is scheduled for publication in the spring of 1994.

LOUISIANA

Gov. Edwin W. Edwards has signed an executive order barring state agencies from discriminating against individuals based on sexual orientation. The order specifically bars discrimination in providing services or benefits; in any matter pertaining to employment including, but not limited to, hiring, promotion, tenure, recruitment and compensation; and in the awarding of contracts or in the practices of state contractors.

MASSACHUSETTS

Gay and lesbian activists are upset with Gov. William Weld's choice of Edward Kirby as an appeals judge in the state's Department of Industrial Accidents. Kirby, a Republican and former state senator, fought against the state's civil rights bill, which includes sexual orientation, that passed in 1989. He has also charged that gay men and lesbians "recruit" children and that gay men are responsible for the spread of AIDS. Weld, a well-known Republican advocate for the civil rights of lesbians and gay men, feels that Kirby's conservative stance is merely, "a difference of degree." Kirby has claimed that his position has been distorted. "I am not a person who detests gays," he said, "I am very tolerant and accepting." Boston's chapter of the Log Cabin Republicans reports that Kirby's new position would not give him power over civil rights issues.

NEW YORK

The Working Group on Funding Lesbian and Gay Issues has published *Funders of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Programs: A Directory for Grantseekers*. The directory, the first of its kind, provides information on potential funding sources for organizations and projects working with lesbian, gay and bisexual communities. The publication lists over 100 foundations and corporations from around the country who have supported programs for those communities. The group plans to update the directory annually. Call (212) 475-2930.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Democrat Senator Ernest "Fritz" Hollings recently criticized African diplomats who traveled to Switzerland for trade talks that finally concluded after years of negotiations. Speaking in Washington the Senator remarked, "Everybody likes to go to Geneva. I used to do it for the Law of the Sea conferences and you'd find these potentates from down in Africa, you know, rather than eating each other, they'd just come up and get a good square meal in Geneva." The remark brought condemnation from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and embarrassment from some white Democrats.

TENNESSEE

Shareholders of the Cracker Barrel chain of restaurants recently voted against a proposal for the company to adopt a non-discriminatory employment policy regarding gay men and lesbians. Seventy-seven percent of the shareholders present at a closed-door meeting voted against the proposal and 14 percent voted in favor of it. The policy was proposed by the New York City Retirement System, a Cracker Barrel shareholder. A second policy proposal, designed to expand the board of directors to "reflect the varied races, genders and sexual orientations of shareholders," was also rejected.

Cracker Barrel has been the target of boycotts since it adopted a policy in 1991 that prohibited the hiring of gay and lesbian employees and subsequently fired 12 lesbian and gay employees. Specifically, the policy stated that the company could no longer employ persons "whose sexual preferences fail to demonstrate normal heterosexual values." Although the company has since rescinded the policy, gay and lesbian activists say that since the fired gay and lesbian employees have not been rehired, the policy is still in place. SEC rules allow for shareholder's proposals to be reconsidered at future meetings if they receive at least three percent of the vote. Therefore, the issue could come up again next year.

WASHINGTON D.C.

Three national gay and lesbian civil rights groups have designated staff members to focus on the issues of lesbian health. Marci Wasserman, a lobbyist for The Human Rights Campaign Fund is now spending half of her time there working on lesbian health issues. She is concentrating on meeting with the staffs of members of Congress to educate them about lesbian health issues. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has hired Marj Plumb to work on lesbian health. Plumb is the former executive director of Lyon-Martin Women's Health Services in San Francisco and joins the staff at NGLTF as its new health policy director. She will focus on national health care reform, HIV prevention and lesbian health. Paula Ettelbrick, newly appointed head of the New York office of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, will work to stimulate more funding for lesbian health services and with the women's health community around specific issues.

Susan Hester, the president of the Mary-Helen Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer has been asked to participate in a meeting of health and policy makers working to develop a plan to deal with breast cancer as a national health emergency. Hester will join Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, government leaders, scientists, breast cancer survivors, and representatives of major corporations and organizations that educate and support breast cancer patients. Says Hester, "It is critical that lesbians have this voice at the table so that our government can begin to understand that we are a community at higher risk for breast cancer and [one] that is being quietly devastated by this disease."

Compiled by Lee Norwood

Wishing You All a Happy New Year...



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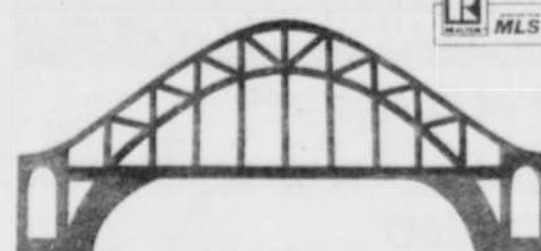


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