

national briefs

ARIZONA

An attorney for four gay couples is challenging the constitutionality of a state law that prevents the couples from getting marriage licenses. Attorney Linda Harter of the National Lawyers Guild argues that the statute is unconstitutional because it violates a person's right to privacy. Harter contends, "The right to choose a partner, regardless of sex, is a private decision. It is not a decision for the state." Harter is hoping for a summary judgment by the Pima County Superior Court soon.

Organizers of the Traditional Values Coalition in Phoenix are ready to kick off its statewide petition drive to place a discriminatory amendment on the state's ballot for 1994. The group, an arm of the national TVC organization, filed papers with the Secretary of State's office in December. Over 105,000 signatures of registered voters are needed by July 7 to place the initiative on the 1994 general election ballot. The proposal would prohibit state or local governments, including school districts, from adopting ordinances that give gay men and lesbians protection from discrimination.

CONNECTICUT

A domestic partnership ordinance has been narrowly rejected in New Haven. The proposal would have allowed lesbians, gay men and unmarried heterosexuals to register legally as couples and gain access to benefits. The ordinance failed by a vote of 15-14 with one abstention. Opponents of the proposal said the rights of the family, as well as of those couples legally married, were not being preserved.

ILLINOIS

Researchers working on the continuing Nurses' Health Study have found that tubal sterilization significantly reduces the risk of ovarian cancer. The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, states that women who had the procedure were two-thirds less likely than other women to develop the cancer. Researchers tracked 78,000 pre-menopausal women from 1976 to 1988. The study also found that after eliminating the effects of other traits such as long-term use of contraceptives and prior pregnancies, the risk might also be altered. Ovarian cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer death among women in the United States after lung cancer, breast cancer and colon cancer.

MASSACHUSETTS

Citing a state law barring discrimination based on sexual orientation, Suffolk Superior Court Judge J. Harold Flannery has ruled that organizers of Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade cannot stop a gay and lesbian group from marching in the parade. This ruling is different than the last two years'

rulings allowing gay men and lesbians to march in the parade. The judge ordered a permanent injunction barring the South Boston Allied War Veterans Council from ever refusing marchers because of their sexual orientation. The Veterans Council has responded by appealing Flannery's decision to the State's Supreme Court and by vowing to withdraw its support of the parade if a gay and lesbian organization is allowed to march. The Veterans Council maintains that the injunction violates its First Amendment right to free speech. Boston Mayor Thomas Menino said the city administration would ensure that the parade marched on even without the Veterans Council's sponsorship.

MINNESOTA

The Court of Appeals in St. Paul has ruled that former patients of a doctor who died of AIDS can sue his estate and the clinic where he worked for emotional distress. After being diagnosed with AIDS, Dr. Phillip Benson continued to practice medicine, under the restrictions placed on him by the Board of Medical Examiners, until June 1991, when he had what the court referred to as "weeping sores on his hands and arms." The ruling overturns a lower court's ruling that said that patients had to prove they had direct contact with the doctor's blood or bodily fluids before they could seek damages. The Court of Appeals ruled that "actual exposure" is not necessary and that "plaintiffs here need show only that they...reasonably feared for their safety and consequently suffered emotional distress." The ruling sent three class action suits back to District Court for trial. Tests for HIV were negative for all 315 patients.

MISSISSIPPI

Residents in the town of Overtt who are trying to oust neighboring lesbians from their land have held another town meeting on the subject. Organized by resident James Hendry, the meeting consisted of viewing video clips from the Oprah Winfrey show that featured Hendry and the two lesbians; reading the Bible by local ministers; and viewing a clip from a right wing video that selectively highlights provocative events from last year's March on Washington. Hendry also solicited funds to establish the "Overtt Community Defense Fund," the purpose of which he did not specify beyond repeating a reference made to the group's attorney to help "protect themselves and their property." National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Robin Kane attended the meeting along with ten members of the lesbian and gay community. At the conclusion of the meeting four gay men and a lesbian were forcibly removed from the court house and harassed and yelled at by four deputy sheriffs. They report they were never given a reason for being removed. Kane says the NGLTF is continuing to work at meeting with the Justice Department to gain federal intervention in the situation. She

goes on to say that even local officials are involved in the organized attempt to drive the women from their land. She quotes U.S. House Representative for Overtt, Mike Parker, who recently, "stated in a news article that he opposes the lesbians' existence in Overtt and supports the community's attempt to oust them."

MISSOURI

The Baptist Student Union at the University of Missouri-Rolla proposed a resolution to remove all references of support for gay men and lesbians from the university's cultural diversity regulations. The proposal was subsequently defeated by a vote of 40-18. The resolution said that one of the responsibilities of the university is to "produce law-abiding citizens" and that acceptance of gay men and lesbians conflicts with that goal. The student council members who proposed the defeated resolution said they intend to introduce another measure that will ask for the removal of all protected categories in the university's protection policies, including gender and race. "What group will want to be protected next?" said one of the resolutions' proposers. "[People with] long hair?"

NEW YORK

A group which calls itself the "Barbie Liberation Organization" did a swap with the voice-simulated computer chips of some 300 G.I. Joe and Barbie dolls bought this past Christmas. The result of this "unabashed publicity stunt" by the BLO was that kids found G.I. Joe dolls exclaiming in the voice of a teenage girl, "Let's go to the beach," and Barbie's snarling out, "Eat lead, Cobra!" The BLO reports that this was an attempt to attack the "gender based stereotyping in kids toys." It proved to be a success since no one has accepted Mattel's offer to exchange any of the butch Barbie's computer chips.

NOSTALGIC



NORTH CAROLINA

Homeowners who live near a New Life Metropolitan Community Church are asking a court to order the church to move out of their neighborhood. While the church waits for a court date, its pastor, the Rev. Robert Darst, said they have been experiencing harassment, disturbances and a death threat from the surrounding neighbors. Still, Darst says, the church won't leave the 2.6 acre site recently purchased for \$50,000. "If they want to buy it from us, we'll sell it to them," said Darst. "At a profit, of course. We'll make money off their homophobia." Neighbors say they object to lesbians and gay men worshipping in their community. "Homosexuals are entitled to go wherever they

want to go," said Paul Whitfield, the lawyer representing the families. "But I don't want one in my neighborhood." Superior Court Judge Zoro Guice, Jr. said the town failed to notify surrounding owners about the zoning variance that allowed the church to locate there. Guice is set to decide soon whether area homeowners have the right to drive the church out.

PENNSYLVANIA

The Philadelphia Board of Education is scheduled to vote on a multicultural, multiracial and gender-equitable education policy. The policy includes a philosophy statement that says the educational program will "facilitate the practices necessary to assist all children to become effective and successful leaders regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, gender, disability or sexual orientation." The president and vice president of the city's Board of Education have pledged their support for the program.

A U.S. District Judge has found that federal laws protecting men and women from sex discrimination do not apply to transgendered individuals. Judge Herbert Hutton threw out a case brought by a transgender woman, Andria Adams Dobre, against Amtrak. Adams claims her supervisors harassed her after she told them she was undergoing hormone treatments to become a woman. She was forced to resign in March 1990. The case is being appealed to a Federal Appeals Court panel in Philadelphia.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Not long after a Reserve Officer Training Corp. cadet at the University of South Carolina declared he was gay, he was brought up on charges of not maintaining good grades and not participating in drills. After coming out, cadet Jay Belangia was so harassed by his fellow students that he was unable to function well as a student or a cadet. As a result of the charges he not only lost his ROTC scholarship but was told he must repay an estimated \$3,000 in ROTC scholarship money, Belangia said. He is appealing that ruling. Despite it all, Belangia said, he feels good about coming out and plans on attending a college in a larger city and still would like to serve as an officer in the military.

TENNESSEE

Thirty five country music stars will be seen in public service announcements on radio, TV and print media to talk about AIDS awareness. Some of the stars featured in the "Break the Silence" ads are Garth Brooks, Clint Black, Johnny Cash, Tammy Wynette, Wynonna Judd, Dolly Parton and Willie Nelson.

Compiled by Lee Norwood

cathartic comics | featuring The Brown Bomber and Diva Touché Flambé by Prof. I.B. Gittendowne

