

national briefs

CALIFORNIA

After years of negotiation, the California State Bar and Blue Cross of California have reached an agreement that will provide domestic partners benefits to attorneys who are members of the State Bar. The 146,000 attorneys belonging to the California State Bar will become eligible for those benefits Oct. 1, reports *The Recorder*, a legal publication.

According to the *Recorder* story, Susan Gelmis, chair of the California State Bar's Committee on Sexual Orientation Discrimination, said, "The same coverage that is already—and continues to be—provided to State Bar members for spouses will now be provided to domestic partners. And it's not limited to cities where they have domestic partnership registration. And this is not restricted to gay couples. This is for any domestic partnership arrangement."



The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed an earlier decision and ruled that the FBI discriminated against a San Francisco doctor because of a physical handicap. According to the Associated Press, the court ordered the FBI to pay damages to the estate of Dr. James Cullen, who died of AIDS complications in 1992.

Cullen, who performed physical examinations on FBI agents and applicants under a contract the FBI had with Davies Medical Center, refused, when questioned by the FBI, to confirm that he had AIDS. He and other hospital staff members did assure the FBI that an AIDS-infected staff member would not pose a risk to patients because of the hospital's infection-control procedures.

The court's 2-1 decision reversed two previous rulings in this case by the same panel.

GEORGIA

A liberal radio talk show host in Atlanta is back on the air after assembling a group of backers and buying air time on station WQXI-AM. Mike Malloy, whose frequent pro-sexual minority programs resulted in death threats, was dumped from another Atlanta station last March, reports Atlanta's *Southern Voice*.

Stating that a number of AM stations are beginning to sell time, Malloy noted that these slots are being bought up by the radical right. His backers, he said, range from "conservative Republicans to liberal Democrats," all "committed to having diversity on the air."

ILLINOIS

An Illinois state appellate court issued a ruling July 18 that allowed two lesbian couples to adopt their children jointly. Each couple petitioned for recognition of the children's relationship with both parents, in what is commonly called a "second-parent adoption." The decision applies to all unmarried couples and covers trial courts across Illinois.

This decision is the fourth by an appellate court in the United States to grant second-parent adoptions to lesbian and gay couples. Three state supreme courts have ruled on this issue: Vermont and Massachusetts permitted the adoptions, Wisconsin did not. A similar case is currently pending before New York's highest court.

MISSISSIPPI

Jones County Chancellor Frank McKenzie ruled July 5 that Camp Sister Spirit, a feminist retreat founded in Ovett by a lesbian couple, Wanda and Brenda Henson, does not pose a nuisance to neighbors, reports *Southern Voice*. Claiming the camp's presence disrupted their lives, eleven neighbors filed the nuisance lawsuit in March 1994. Six residents dropped out of the suit before it was heard by the judge.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

The school board in the small town of Merrimack has been torn apart by an anti-gay and -lesbian proposal presented by board chair Chris

Ager. If passed, Ager's policy would ban any "program or activity that has either the purpose or effect of encouraging or supporting homosexuality as a positive lifestyle alternative." The policy would prohibit any neutral discussion of homosexuality, as well as "counseling, or other services on school grounds, or referral of a pupil to an organization that affirms a homosexual lifestyle." There is fear that this would not only prohibit schools from counseling gay and lesbian students, but prohibit referring students to outside counseling services, even for students contemplating suicide.

Ager and fellow board member Shelly Uscinski, also county co-chair for Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign, are thought to be testing issues for the religious right in an effort to set the stage for the 1996 presidential campaign. Uscinski has spoken at a Christian Coalition National School Board Training Seminar on techniques for gaining control of local school boards.

NEW YORK

An Iranian gay man who has been living in New York since 1984 was granted political asylum in July by an officer of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. The asylum application was granted after it was determined that the man, known as "A.T.," had a "well-founded fear of persecution" if he were to be deported to Iran. The punishment for sodomy, under Islamic penal law, is death.

U.S. immigration and asylum rules provide that individuals from other countries are eligible for political asylum if they can prove that they have experienced persecution or have a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of several factors, including political opinion or membership in a particular social group. An order issued in June 1994 by U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno designated a 1990 Board of Immigration Appeals ruling as precedent, thereby allowing lesbians and gay men to be considered a social group for purposes of determining eligibility for political asylum. Approximately a dozen people have been granted political asylum because of their sexual orientation since that ruling.



NORTH CAROLINA

White Rabbit Books & Things, a Charlotte gay and lesbian bookstore destroyed last April in an arson fire, reopened July 1 in a new location. The third in the three-store White Rabbit chain, the store opened in late 1992 in the historic Dilworth section of the city. The April fire displaced White Rabbit and several other businesses that shared the building. No one has been arrested in connection with the fire, which caused about \$20,000 worth of damage to the bookstore.



Human trials of RG-201, a compound that may improve treatment of people with AIDS-related pneumonia, have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The trials are set to begin later this summer at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, according to an AP story. Dr. Richard Tidwell, associate professor of pathology at UNC-Chapel Hill and the drug's chief developer, said he hoped the drug would control pneumonia better than drugs currently available and avoid the side effects often associated with the other drugs.

Although it is not yet understood exactly how RG-201 works, it has been effective in rats. Phase one clinical trials will determine the drug's safety. Future trials will determine its effectiveness.

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