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national briefs

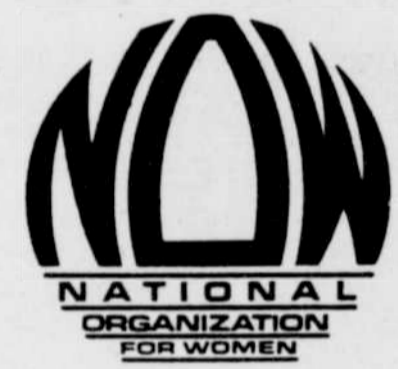
CALIFORNIA

The Professional Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Related Employee Support Summit (PROGRESS) will bring the leaders of more than 70 gay and lesbian employee support groups throughout California to San Diego from Oct. 14 to 15. It is the first statewide gathering of such groups in the country.

Many of the sexual orientation/nondiscrimination policies enacted by U.S. corporations have been the result of work done by employee support groups. The summit is a grass-roots effort to forge a coalition of ESGs in California to strive to make the workplace safe for gay, lesbian and bisexual employees. It is sponsored primarily by the educational arm of the Human Rights Campaign Fund. Following the summit, PROGRESS will continue to serve California-based ESGs as an information network and resource. It will also work toward planning a nationwide gathering of ESGs and labor-related groups in 1996.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

At its annual conference in July, the National Organization for Women's membership revised its formal strategy on passage of a constitutional Equal Rights Amendment to include the words "sexual orientation."



The resolution revised NOW's strategy on passing a constitutional amendment that guarantees equal treatment on the basis of "sex, race, sexual orientation, marital status, ethnicity, national origin, color and indigence," reports *The Washington Blade*.

A draft of wording for the amendment states, "All persons shall have equal rights and privileges without discrimination." Rosemary Dempsey, NOW vice president, said the wording deliberately says "persons" instead of "men and women" to be inclusive of transgendered individuals.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has been certified as a participating agency in the annual Combined Federal Campaign. The CFC is the authorized fund-raising drive of federal employees, which takes place every fall. Federal employees may designate payroll deductions to be directed to specific participating agencies. NGLTF's number for this year's campaign is CFC No. 2622.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has announced that its media director, Robin Kane, resigned as of Sept. 29. Kane is moving to San Francisco with her spouse, who has accepted a job in the Bay Area.

Prior to coming to NGLTF in 1990, Kane worked as a reporter for *The Washington Blade*, the Washington, D.C., gay and lesbian newspaper.

THE INTERNET

The Deaf Queer Resource Center now has a page on the World Wide Web. This is the first WWW site that offers resource information to the lesbian, gay and bisexual deaf community. The

web page can be found at <http://www.hooked.net/users/dqrc/>.

MAINE

A coalition of Maine community organizations, businesses and officeholders, joined by Gov. Angus King, launched its statewide campaign on Sept. 12 to defeat a homophobic measure that will appear on the Nov. 7 ballot. The group, Maine Won't Discriminate, has brought together Maine's top political and business leaders and more than 70 community groups.

Question One is the first anti-gay and -lesbian measure to appear on a state ballot in the eastern United States. The measure was written by Bruce Fein, a right-wing lawyer from Virginia who has worked with the radical right to pass similar measures in other states.

"Question One is an extreme and flawed measure, written by outsiders, that will embroil Maine in a costly legal disaster," said Pat Peard, co-chair of Maine Won't Discriminate. "Question One targets gay and lesbian people in our community, but it will invite interference in all our lives and cost Maine taxpayers millions of dollars."

Among the Maine leaders and organizations opposing Question One are U.S. Sen. Bill Cohen (R); former U.S. Sen. George Mitchell (D); Buzz Fitzgerald, CEO of Bath Iron Works, the state's largest employer; the Maine Education Association; the Maine Bar Association; the Maine Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Maine Council of Churches; the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance; and the Catholic Diocese of Maine.

NORTH CAROLINA

Beginning next year, pharmaceutical company Glaxo Wellcome, the maker of AZT, will provide medical and dental coverage to the domestic partners of its lesbian and gay employees. The company is headquartered in Research Triangle Park, N.C.

Company spokeswoman Nancy Pekarek said the company is making the change in response to employee requests, reports the Associated Press.

"This is just one more element in our benefits package that [recognizes] diversity in the work force and will help us attract and retain quality people," Pekarek said.

Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) is already running for re-election to his senate seat in 1996. No friend to the lesbian and gay community, Helms was quoted by *The New York Times* as saying the government should spend less money on people with AIDS because they got sick as a result of "deliberate, disgusting, revolting conduct."

The Hatcher Center for Human Rights has launched a campaign to defeat Helms by educating the voters of North Carolina about the real Jesse Helms. The center's plans include airing radio ads targeting rural voters. Money is needed to wage this battle. Organizations and individuals nationwide who want to see Helms defeated are asked to contribute.

For more information, or to make a donation, contact The Hatcher Center for Human Rights, 120 Amber Road, Hamlet, NC 28345, (910) 582-5076, fax: (910) 582-8113.

Compiled by Kristine Chatwood

