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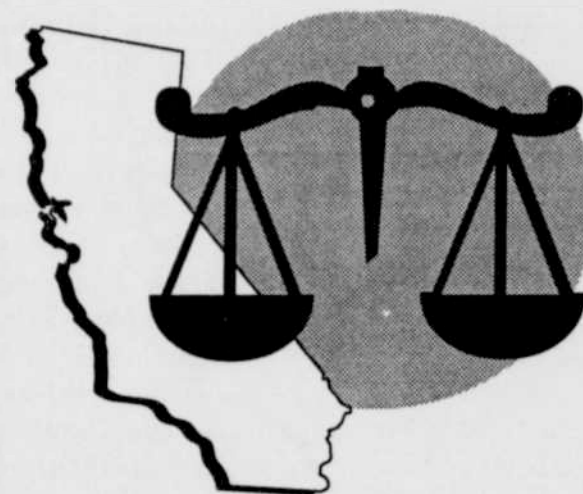


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national news

California on track to ban gay marriage

If Republican Assemblyman William Knight has his way, same-sex marriages performed in other states will not be legally recognized in California. According to a Reuter report, Knight's bill sailed over the first legislative hurdle at the end of January, when the Assembly Judiciary Committee voted 8-4 in support of the ban. The bill now goes to the full Assembly.



Knight's action was prompted by his fear that Hawaii will legalize marriage between same-sex couples. Current California law recognizes marriages legally performed in other states. In fact, until Hawaii raised the specter of same-sex marriage, all states recognized marriages contracted in any other state. This simple legal courtesy allowed people to move freely throughout the United States without jeopardizing their families.

California Assembly battling 1,000 with anti-gay bill

A bill which would have made it illegal to discriminate against students in the Golden State's public schools based on sexual orientation was shot down by the Education Committee of the State Assembly in late January. The vote, which fell according to party lines, was 8-7 against the bill.

The Dignity for All Students Act, AB 1001, had been targeted for defeat by the Republican Assembly Caucus, which now controls the Assembly.

In her closing remarks to the committee, Assemblywoman Sheila Kuehl, the bill's author, said, "Let's agree with opponents today, just for the moment, and say that homosexuality is a choice. Well, one may also consider religion a choice. In the last millennium, Jews were told 'Being Jewish is a choice. Become a Christian and we won't kill you. Go kneel—go kiss the cross,' but they would not. Why? Because the way we choose to love the divine is part of our very essence, part of who we are. Just as who we choose to love is part of our very essence, our humanness."

"Today, we look back in horror at that time, at the treatment of people because of their religion. In this millennium, we are learning to look back in horror at racism and discrimination based on gender. And even though we lose this bill, today, I believe in my heart that in the next millennium we will look back in horror at this smug failure to do what is right on behalf of all people."

D.C. fire department reopens Hunter case

Bowing to pressure from queer activists and the group Gay Men and Lesbians Opposing Violence, District of Columbia Fire Chief Otis Latin announced that he is reopening the investigation surrounding the death of Tyra Hunter, a local

transsexual woman.

Hunter was seriously injured Aug. 7 in a hit-and-run auto accident. EMS technicians arrived on the scene and began administering emergency treatment. An EMS technician cut open Hunter's pants and discovered she had a penis. According to witnesses, the technician then began laughing, referred to Hunter as a "bitch," and refused to continue providing her with medical care. Hunter lay on the pavement for the next three to five minutes until an EMS supervisor finally resumed her treatment. A short time later, Hunter died at a local hospital.

The fire chief insisted that the identity of the EMS technician who stopped treating Hunter was unknown. He also claimed the fire department had questioned all the witnesses during its investigation. Eight people who were present at the scene of the accident informed GLOV that they could identify the technician in question.

Following a meeting of Mayor Marion Berry, Chief Latin and members of Transgendered Officers Protect and Serve, a national organization for transgendered peace officers, Latin announced the reopening of the investigation.

Insurer refuses to pay clients with HIV

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund filed a lawsuit Jan. 23 against a life insurance company that has been denying benefits to holders of its disability income insurance policies if it is learned the policyholders were HIV positive when the company sold them the insurance.



The suit was brought on behalf of Mark Galanty of Los Angeles. In 1989, Galanty purchased a disability policy from Paul Revere Life Insurance Company. He paid the premiums for more than five years before he became disabled from his job as a court reporter because of pain in his hands. Paul Revere has refused to honor the policy, claiming that because Galanty tested positive for HIV before purchasing the policy he is not entitled to the disability payments. The company contends that HIV is a "manifestation" of AIDS and its policies only cover disabilities that first "manifest" themselves after a policy goes into effect.

"HIV infection is no more a manifestation of AIDS than elevated blood pressure is a manifestation of a heart attack," said Jon W. Davidson, supervising attorney for Lambda and counsel for Galanty. "Mark Galanty had no symptoms of illness and continued to work for years after Paul Revere sold him this policy. In addition, we now know that not everyone infected with HIV necessarily will get AIDS."

The lawsuit was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court. It includes claims for breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty, and violation of California civil rights, insurance and unfair business practice laws against Paul Revere and the insurance agents who sold Galanty the policy.

Compiled by Kristine Chatwood