

national briefs

ARIZONA

The Maricopa County Republican Party canceled a performance by the Grand Canyon Men's Chorale because the party chair, Bernice Roberts, objected to the lyrics of one of the Chorale's songs.

The Chorale was scheduled to perform at the GOP's annual Lincoln Day Dinner, according to a story in the *Arizona Republic*. One of the songs on the program, "Diversity," contains the lyrics, "We're gay men, and we're here to sing for you."

Roberts told the Chorale's director, Kerry Bedwell, to drop the song because she didn't want the program "turned into a special-interest agenda."

Bedwell refused and the Chorale was cut from the program.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has joined other civil rights groups opposing an "English only" bill now before the U.S. Senate. Other groups in the coalition include the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund and other groups.

S 356, the "Official English Bill," which is sponsored by Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), seeks to make English the "official language" of the U.S. government. The Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, chaired by Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), held a hearing on the bill March 7.

According to the LCCR, if the bill passes, it will prohibit the availability of bilingual ballots, deny non-English speaking litigants the right to have court interpreters, and prohibit the availability of emergency services in languages other than English.

FLORIDA

Tom Cunningham became the second openly gay mayor in Florida when he was sworn into office in February in South Miami. The 51-year-old shop owner and Vietnam veteran won 57 percent of the vote in this upscale town near Coral Gables. Cunningham had previously served as a city commissioner.

KENTUCKY

A 29-year-old Louisville man who was shackled to a bed and forced to lie in his own waste while being held in the Jefferson County Jail has been awarded more than \$1 million by a U.S. District Court jury.

Pedro Sosa was charged with public intoxication and jailed in September 1994. That charge was later dismissed. Sosa, who has AIDS, claimed he was denied water and the use of a toilet, even though he had severe cramps and diarrhea, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported. He was unable to reach the toilet in his cell because he was chained hand and foot to a bench.

Corrections officials admitted shackling Sosa, but claimed they did so because he was causing a disturbance and they feared he would hurt himself.

MARYLAND

The Commerce and Government Matters Committee of the Maryland House of Delegates has defeated two separate bills that would have extended anti-discrimination protections to lesbians and gay men. The committee voted 14-9 against the bills.

Free State Justice Campaign, a Maryland activist group, had hoped to get a bill out of committee and to the floor of the House for a vote. In addition to the FSJC bill, a gay rights bill was also introduced by Gov. Parris Glendening.

This was the fifth time FSJC has sought passage of a gay rights bill. Activists vowed to try again next year.

NEW MEXICO

Patti Bushee, an out lesbian, defeated three other candidates to win a full term on the Santa Fe City Council. Bushee won 62 percent of the vote.

Two years ago she was appointed to fill out the

term of Debbie Jaramillo when Jaramillo was elected mayor.

Bushee was endorsed by the Human Rights Election Fund, the police union, the firefighters union, the Sierra Club, the home builders association and all the local newspapers.

NEW YORK

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of the Catholic diocese of Albany has attacked the Christian Coalition's new Catholic Alliance. In an article in the *Evangelist*, Hubbard criticized many issues discussed in Catholic Alliance literature, according to a story in Colorado Springs' *Ground Zero*.

Pointing out that the official positions of the Roman Catholic Church are communicated in the name of the bishops, and not through Pat Robertson's Catholic Alliance, Hubbard said, "I am particularly concerned about the organization's stated purpose of representing the Catholic community before Congress, state legislatures and other governmental bodies. I believe that this Alliance will create massive confusion, not only among lawmakers in local, state and federal government, but also among the Catholic faithful, as to who it is that speaks legitimately on matters of public policy for the Church in the United States."

Hubbard added that although there are issues on the Christian Coalition's agenda about which the Catholic Bishops agree, such as abortion, there are many issues about which the bishops disagree, such as welfare reform and the death penalty.

"What is interesting, too," Hubbard said, "is what is not on the agenda of the Coalition; for example, legislation to protect poor children or immigrants."

NORTH CAROLINA

If some North Carolina legislators get their way, state prison inmates who are HIV positive will be housed in a separate prison facility. Segregating prisoners based on HIV status would reduce the spread of HIV through sexual contact, state prison officials claim. Those same officials also said it would be easier to deal with infected inmates if they were housed in separate facilities.

However, establishing separate prison facilities would violate confidentiality laws.

PENNSYLVANIA

The Wilkes-Barre *Times Leader* is now publishing same-sex engagement notices. The first notice was published in the Dec. 31, 1995, edition

of the paper. Vice President and Editor Allison Walzer told the Associated Press that publishing the notice was one of the ways the *Times Leader* makes itself accessible to its readers.

"If it does no harm to other people, I bend over backward to make this paper available to the community," she said. "I do realize that reasonable people can disagree about this issue."

SOUTH DAKOTA

Despite the efforts of two legislators to bully battered women's and child abuse shelters into resigning from the South Dakota Advocacy Network for Women, as a condition of continued state funding, the South Dakota House approved another year of funding for the shelters.

The shelters had refused to capitulate to the threats of Rep. Hal Wick (R-Sioux Falls), and Rep. Helena Hassard (R-Hot Springs). The two legislators objected to the SDANW's support of pro-choice and gay rights issues.

When the final vote was taken, eight of the 70 House members voted to discontinue the \$250,000 appropriation for the shelters. Both Wick and Hassard voted with the majority.

Compiled by Kristine Chatwood

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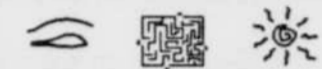


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