

## Clintons to co-chair Quilt host committee

President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will serve as co-chairs of the Honorary Host Committee for October's display of the entire AIDS Memorial Quilt. Clinton is the first U.S. President to serve in this capacity. The Quilt will be on display in Washington, D.C., Oct. 11-13.

Other members of the Honorary Host Committee include U.S. Sens. Barbara Boxer, Dianne Feinstein, Orrin Hatch and Edward Kennedy; U.S. Reps. Nancy Pelosi, Gerry Studds, Steve Gunderson and Barney Frank; actors Ted Danson, Mary Steenburgen and Judith Light; ice skater Rudy Galindo; philanthropist James Hormel; TV producer Norman Lear; Olympic diving champion Greg Louganis; Harvard AIDS Institute leader Dr. Jonathan Mann; singer Kathy Mattea; former *New Republic* editor Andrew Sullivan; entertainer Lily Tomlin; AIDS researcher Dr. Paul Volberding; The Rt. Rev. Edmond L. Browning, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church; and the Rev. Cecil Williams of San Francisco's Glide Memorial Church.

Kristine Chatwood

## Christian Coalition accused of violating law

The bipartisan Federal Election Commission is suing the Christian Coalition. In charges filed July 30 in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., the FEC claimed that the group illegally spent more than \$1.4 million in support of Republican candidates for federal office.

The group did not give money to candidates but rather spent it on voters guides, mailings, telephone banks and other get-out-the-vote activities directed to its supporters. The illegal part of these actions, maintains the FEC, is that they were not taken independently but were coordinated with Republican organizations. Thus they should have been counted as in-kind contributions and against such campaign contribution limits.

Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson called the charges "totally baseless." Executive director Ralph Reed asserted, "The motivation is to silence people of faith and to have a dangerous chilling effect on their ability to exercise their rights as citizens and voters."

Legal action will take years to unfold and will likely go to the U.S. Supreme Court. Observers differ on what the short- and long-term impact might be as the Christian Coalition prepares to distribute 45 million voters guides before the November election.

Log Cabin spokesman David Greer believes "this was bound to come. The Christian Coalition was always walking a tight line [between its nonprofit and political organizations] and they got caught."

Hastings Wyman, publisher of the newsletter "Southern Political Report," saw it as "stirring up a hornet's nest." Short term "this will stir them up," says Wyman, but in the long run if the FEC wins its case, "it could curtail the effectiveness of their activities." It could also affect other "educational" groups—from civil rights to environmental—that try to influence voters. He believes the first group to feel the effects might be "the other major religious political activity in the South, which is black churches."

He doesn't see the case having a major impact in the North Carolina Senate race. It might "marginally assist" Jesse Helms "by giving him a talking point in the fundamentalist community.... It might create a sense of urgency among the Christian right wing that they are being picked on."

Daniel Zingale, political director of the Hu-

man Rights Campaign, thinks "it is going to slow them down some." He is even more encouraged by signs of discontent, such as the recent departure of the chief financial officer of the Christian Coalition. "Insidious infighting can just poison the effectiveness of an organization."

Zingale is running HRC's independent expenditure campaign against Helms. He finds it "frustrating" not to be able to coordinate work with Democratic challenger Harvey Gantt under FEC rules for that type of activity.

"In the last race there was close communication with Harvey and his campaign," Zingale says, "and this time I literally have not spoken with him once."

Bob Roehr

## HRC ad plays politics with same-sex marriage

Elizabeth Birch and the Human Rights Campaign held a news conference Aug. 5 to again blame Bob Dole for the facts that House Democrats voted 2-to-1 for the Defense of Marriage Act and that President Clinton will sign it. The bait which lured reporters to attend was the unveiling of two television ads that will run during the Republican National Convention in San Diego.

"When Dole and the Republican Party want to feed red meat to the extreme right of that party, it is gay Americans that are served up," claimed Birch. She also warned that we were not likely to see this "red meat" at their convention because the extremists will be "muzzled." Thus it will be



"very important for people to tune into the subterranean messages."

"I think that DOMA is one of the key indicators of where this party is and how much it has become beholden to the extreme right elements of the party," said Birch. HRC's "Marriage" spot shows a picture of Bob and Elizabeth Dole while the narrator intones, "There was a time when a divorced man would not have made an ideal candidate for marriage." The theme of interracial marriage is raised with photos of Sen. Phil Graham and his wife, and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and his wife. Then a picture of a lesbian couple appears with the voice-over: "Some still are not."

The narrator continues, "Why are Bob Dole and Congress wasting our time with new laws attacking gay relationships? They have better things to do." A chorus of voices shouts: "Medicare. Crime. Tax cuts. Education. Health care."

HRC plans to spend \$10,000 running the ads in San Diego and may consider running them elsewhere at a later time.

"The ads were created and targeted to people attending the Republican convention," said spokesman David Smith. "What we wanted to do was demonstrate that...this issue could be turned against them. [The ads] very much underscore how we in society have made mistakes in judging relations that should have been honored."

The ads are unusual in that—unlike virtually all political advertising, which is designed to sway those in the middle—they target those most firmly committed to one candidate and party.

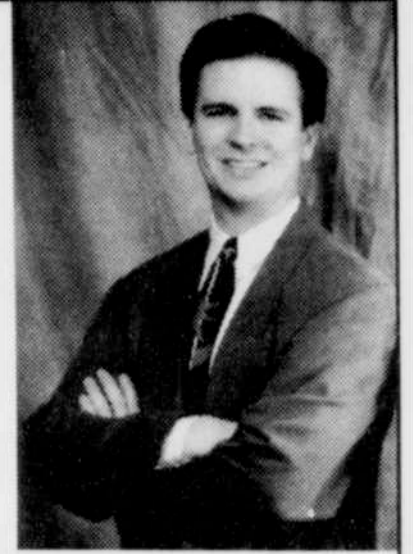
The ads also demonstrate anew a criticism some in the gay and lesbian community have made of HRC's entire strategy in the DOMA fight, that HRC carps on the partisan political aspects of the fight instead of offering a strong, positive advocacy of the reasons for same-gender marriage.

Bob Roehr

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