

added that the governor's opposition to a convention did not affect her decision.

Supporters of the convention are worried that legal challenges and other efforts by opposition groups will result in the postponement of the convention or, at the very least, a reduction in the number of delegates from 102 at the last convention in 1978.

Illinois bans discrimination in state employment

Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar, a Republican, has issued an administrative order forbidding discrimination based on sexual orientation in all employment decisions of state agencies. The offices of the treasurer, comptroller and secretary of state already have similar nondiscrimination policies.

Lana Hostetler, a lobbyist for the Illinois Federation for Human Rights, said, "Given the fact that anti-gay discrimination is perfectly legal outside of Cook County, Champaign and Urbana, this policy is especially welcomed. [It] will help us in our effort to pass a bill to make anti-gay discrimination illegal in Illinois."

Maine group submits anti-gay marriage initiative

The group Concerned Maine Families announced on Nov. 12 that it has collected more than enough signatures to qualify a referendum that would deny legal recognition of same-gender marriages whether performed in or out of state, reports the Internet news service Newsplanet. If a sufficient number of signatures prove to be valid, the initiative will appear on the ballot in 1997, unless the state legislature passes the measure before then.

Concerned Maine Families, sponsor of a failed 1995 initiative to prohibit civil rights protections for sexual minorities, says the new measure is meant to "encourage the traditional monogamous family unit as the basic building block of our society, the foundation of harmonious and enriching family life."

CMF leader Carolyn Crosby has also targeted a University of Maine policy extending spousal benefits to partners of lesbians and gay men.

Lesbian barred from Akron pacifist church

Debi Easterday, a lesbian married to a preoperative female transsexual, was escorted by police from the property of Medina Church of the Brethren in Akron, Ohio, because she "remains unrepentant and seeks to mock God," according to a statement released by church leaders. The statement explained that the church administrative board followed biblical principles in making its decision to oust Easterday, and further justified that position by saying the congregation wants to gather "without the fear of harassment, threats or general chaos."



Easterday, a mother of four who attended the church for four years but never formally joined, told the Associated Press: "I feel they are wrong... No one has the right to tell me where I can go to hear God's word."

She believes she was banned from attending church services because of her sexual orientation and because of her marriage on Oct. 3 to Paul

Smith, who is planning to undergo gender-reassignment surgery.

The Church of the Brethren, a pacifist church like the Quakers or Mennonites, has 144,000 members in 1,126 congregations nationwide. Spokesman Nevin Dulabaum said church guidelines welcome anyone who believes in Jesus, but also condone only the relationship between husband and wife.

Poll reveals support for spousal rights, not marriage

A Human Rights Campaign poll conducted Nov. 5-8 indicates that despite the prevailing sentiment against same-gender marriage there is significant support for granting inheritance, parental and other spousal rights to gay and lesbian couples, reports the Associated Press. The poll also revealed that sexual minority rights issues were not a major factor for voters' choices in the most recent presidential and congressional elections. However, lesbian and gay groups scored poorly when respondents were asked to rate various political figures and entities on a scale of one to 100.

President Clinton earned 52 out of 100 on the same scale, the mean ranking of the major parties was 54, Newt Gingrich scored 35, and sexual minority groups only 31, while religious and conservative groups that often oppose lesbian and gay rights in policy battles were placed at 48.

Fifty-five percent of respondents favored and 34 percent opposed the Defense of Marriage Act; while 82 percent supported full hospital visitation rights for same-sex partners, 62 percent endorsed inheritance rights, and 51 and 46 percent respectively were in favor of health care and social security benefits. Additionally, the poll placed support for government subsidizing of AIDS treatments for low-income people at 70 percent.

Nabozny gets justice—and a big settlement

Officials of the Ashland, Wis., School District made an out-of-court settlement of nearly \$1 million with former student Jamie Nabozny, now



21, who sued the district for failing to protect him from gay-bashers, according to a Reuter story. Nabozny claimed his constitutional right to equal protection was violated because the district failed to respond to his complaints. Before leaving high school in Ashland to earn his GED elsewhere, he was abused verbally and was once urinated on by two other students.

The settlement was agreed upon by lawyers for both sides after the district was found liable in a U.S. district court, but before the jury had begun deliberations on damages. The sum represents \$900,000 in damages and \$62,000 in medical expenses, according to Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund communication director Peg Byron.

"This is the first time a federal jury has had a chance to judge a school for its response to anti-gay violence. The entire country should learn a lesson from the results," said Patricia Logue of Lambda's Chicago office.

For his part, Nabozny told reporters, "I feel like I have justice, and that this means justice for all other kids out there who aren't sure if they should stay in school or stay alive."

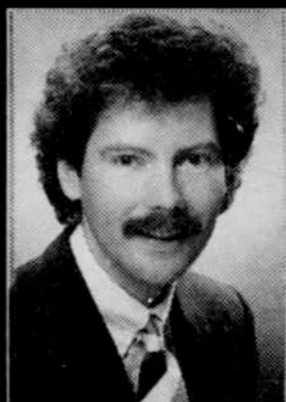
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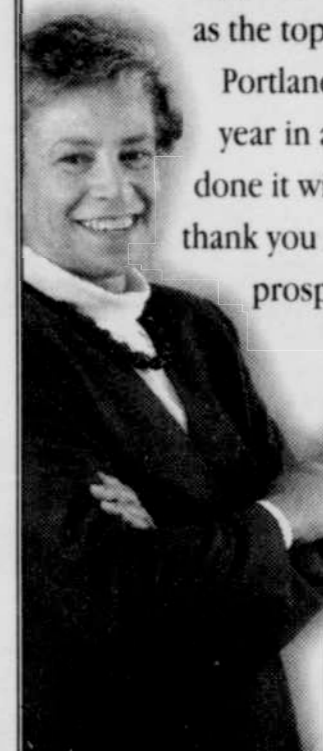
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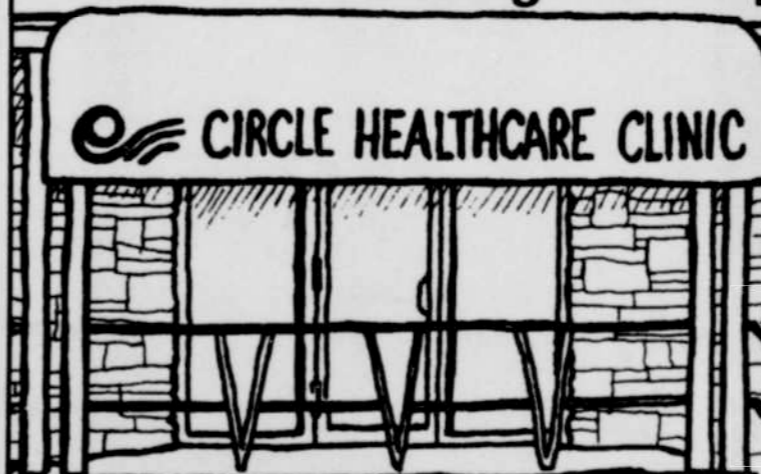


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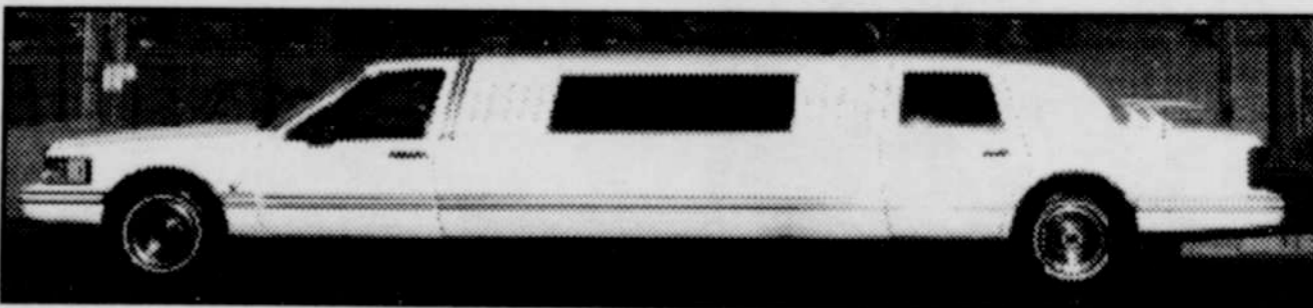


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