

national briefs

CALIFORNIA

California State University at Sacramento surrendered Jan. 31 to the U.S. military, retreating from an order that banned ROTC recruitment on campus because the Pentagon discriminates against gay men and lesbians, reports the *Sacramento Bee*. CSUS President Donald R. Gerth, a former Air Force officer, decided in 1994 to expel ROTC because the Defense Department's "don't ask, don't tell" rule violates the school's antidiscrimination policy, but reversed the decision after federal officials threatened to cut off \$50 million in student aid and research funds.

Last fall, Congress approved and President Clinton signed budget restrictions that withhold federal funds from schools with anti-ROTC policies. With \$37 million in financial aid for some 10,000 CSUS students and \$13 million in research grants at stake, Gerth and members of the Academic Senate unwillingly rescinded the ROTC ban.

IOWA

Donald McCloskey, 54, a University of Iowa professor of economics and history, left the school to teach for a year in the Netherlands. In January, Deirdre McCloskey, 54, a highly regarded Harvard-educated economist and historian, returned to Iowa City to resume teaching at the start of the spring semester.

The *Des Moines Register* reports that McCloskey had been taking female hormones and living as a woman in the Netherlands since 1995, and then underwent sex-reassignment surgery in Australia in June 1996.

"The position the university is taking is this is an extraordinarily fine faculty member and we're glad she's back," said Ann Rhodes, vice president for university relations.

KANSAS

The U.S. Supreme Court said Jan. 21 it will not review a state judge's decision to set up a protest-buffer zone around a church in Topeka, Kan. The Westboro Baptist Church tried to appeal the decision, claiming the buffer zone prevents it from continuing its "God Hates Fags" campaign and that picketing against homosexuality is a religious practice.



Interestingly, according to a United Press International story, legal counsel for Westboro insists the word "fag" used in the Topeka campaign is not a slur, but is based on Amos 4:11 and conveys the sense of "firebrand."

According to St. David's Episcopal Church, plaintiff in the case that won the restraining order, Westboro picketers have been involved in at least 20 physical altercations with the public in Topeka.

The buffer zone prohibits picketers from shouting or demonstrating within 36 feet of St. David's property during any religious event, including services, weddings or funerals.

MASSACHUSETTS

Leaders of one of the largest AIDS drug studies are considering halting the project because some volunteers may be faring worse than others, reports United Press International. The directors of the 1,200-patient, \$5 million Boston-based study have ethical concerns about volunteers receiving a two-drug treatment who perhaps should be switched to a more beneficial three-drug regimen.

A decision on the future of the study is expected before the end of February.

MICHIGAN

The state Supreme Court is being asked to decide if a Michigan city must create a handicapped parking space in front of the home of an HIV-positive man. According to United Press International, Richard Biggs says local officials in his hometown of Jackson are fighting his request and waiting for him to die. He claims the city is violating the



Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination against people with AIDS or HIV. A circuit judge ruled against Biggs, but the state Court of Appeals overturned that ruling, so the city appealed to the state's highest court.

City attorney Anthony Raduazo contends that the street in question is too narrow and too busy for a safe parking space. Jackson officials had offered Biggs a rental apartment in the city's public housing for the disabled, but he refused. The high court is expected to announce whether it will hear the case this summer.

NATIONWIDE

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) introduced a bill Jan. 21 seeking to overturn President Clinton's policy banning employment discrimination against queer federal workers, according to a story in the *Washington Blade*. Helms' so-called Freedom of Speech Act of 1997 would prevent the president and federal agencies and departments from adopting policies to protect any class of individuals not already protected under existing federal law. Although the bill does not specifically mention sexual orientation, Helms made it clear in his remarks while introducing the bill that he is targeting "special protections for homosexuals."

Helms has yet to obtain a cosponsor for any of his proposed anti-Clinton legislation, which includes proposals to overturn other administration policies on abortion, affirmative action and the like.

Agencies and departments covering about 76 percent of the federal workforce have adopted sexual orientation nondiscrimination policies during the past four years.

NEW MEXICO

Despite use of the terms "bride" and "groom," and "male" and "female applicant" on the marriage license application form, nothing in New Mexico law specifies that a married couple must be a woman and a man. That may soon change, however: According to the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, state Sen. Leonard Lee Rawson (R-Las Cruces) has announced he will sponsor a bill that, like so many others spawned by the Defense of Marriage Act, would establish a heterosexual union as the only legally valid form of marriage in the state.

Meanwhile, a Santa Fe lesbian couple that was denied a marriage license is considering a lawsuit similar to the one currently under appeal with the Hawaii Supreme Court. Beth Saltzman and Patty Levey, as well as Santa Fe County officials, are waiting for an opinion from state Attorney General Tom Udall as to whether they will be issued a marriage license.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Free Americans Creating Equal Status, South Dakota's first statewide organization for sexual minorities, has made history again by opening the state's first sexual minority community center, in downtown Rapid City. The 400-square-foot, handicapped-accessible facility includes offices and a library.

FACES was incorporated and went statewide in 1995 in response to the state Legislature's first attempt to ban same-gender marriage; the organization's primary work is providing safe space for transgendered people, bisexuals, lesbians and gay men.

Compiled by Christopher D. Cuttone



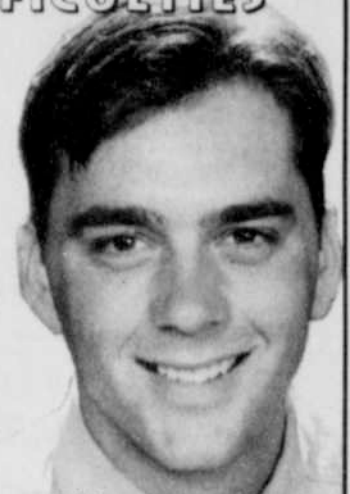
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