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world briefs

CALIFORNIA

On April 2 the California Assembly Judiciary Committee approved legislation that would institute state-recognized domestic partnerships, reports United Press International. Assemblyman Kevin Murray (D-Los Angeles) sponsored the bill, which grants hospital visitation rights and allows finance- and property-sharing arrangements typically reserved for married couples.

The American Association of Retired People lobbied for the bill on behalf of members who live with other unmarried seniors for economic reasons: An AARP spokesperson told lawmakers that California's 6 million single adults include more than 145,000 unmarried older or disabled people living together to preserve Social Security income and reduce expenses.



On March 18, after four years of contention between queer rights activists and religious conservatives, the Long Beach city council approved a domestic partnership ordinance. The law, which passed by a 6-3 vote, allows hospital and jail visits for registered partners, as well as other benefits of a legally binding, publicly recognized relationship.

In a press release, the Domestic Partnership Registration Coalition lay the victory to the help of a public relations consultant, an expert on senior citizen affairs and activists from the senior, disabled and other communities.



Shari Lo, a 15-year-old Coachella Valley High School student, plans to fight a decision by school officials to remove her trophy-winning science fair project from further competition. According to a *Los Angeles Times* story, her experiment, which measures condom reliability, was pulled from a regional competition because school officials say it contradicts the district's sex-education philosophy, which recommends abstinence, not safe sex.

Lo expressed confusion and disappointment at the way her project was "judged scientifically and scored well but didn't score well with some people's opinions." She said she chose the topic out of concern over high rates of teen pregnancy and other consequences of unprotected sexual activity.

HAWAII

Nearly 100 same-sex marriage opponents gathered peacefully on April 2 outside the offices of Hawaii state senators who were reviewing proposed legislation to ban same-gender unions. The protest, organized by Hawaii's Future Today, sought to ensure the Senate's support for a constitutional amendment already approved by the House.

During the protest, a group of 20 local ministers and others who support equal rights for sexual minorities held a brief meditation in the Capitol atrium.

ILLINOIS

Without explanation, the state Supreme Court on April 2 refused to hear the appeal of a central Illinois man seeking to win custody of his children because his ex-wife is in a lesbian relationship. The case is Illinois' first in which custody was awarded to a gay or lesbian parent, reports United Press International.

The remarried father, who has said he wants his children raised in a "Christian" atmosphere, had been granted custody of the two pre-teens by a Tazewell County judge who felt the children would suffer social condemnation living with their mother. That decision was overturned last year by a state appeals court.

MASSACHUSETTS

On Feb. 24 the Cambridge City Council voted unanimously to amend the municipal human rights ordinance to prohibit discrimination based on gender and gender expression—with gender defined as one's "actual or perceived appearance, expression or identity." The law, which according to the *Washington Blade* dates back to 1984 and already included sexual orientation in its language, prevents unfairness in employment, housing, public education, recreation and city government.

Transgendered people also are protected from discrimination through either civil rights ordinances or disability laws in Pittsburgh and San Francisco, Minnesota, Florida, Oregon and Indiana, says the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy.

NEW YORK

On April 5, just days after an announcement that he would continue to write despite a diagnosis of terminal liver cancer, Allen Ginsberg died at the age of 70.

A master poet of the iconoclastic Beat generation, Ginsberg suffered from cirrhosis brought on by chronic hepatitis. According to an Associated Press account, doctors at Beth Israel Medical Center had given him four months to a year to live.

Perhaps best known for *Howl*, an extended poem published in 1956 about disenfranchised youth and a bastardized U.S. culture, Ginsberg was an early advocate of gay rights and an outspoken pacifist. The latest collection of his work was printed last year by HarperCollins under the title *Selected Poems 1947-1995*.



PHOTO BY ROMA'S PRESS PHOTOS



Settling once and for all an issue that has plagued the organization, the elders of the U.S. Presbyterian Church voted to disallow ordination of homosexuals and anyone who engages in extramarital sex. The new amendment to the Book of Order was written by the Rev. Roberta Hestness and stipulates that all people ordained into church office must live in "fidelity within marriage or chastity in singleness," reports United Press International.

Voting followed a North-South division, with presbyteries in New York, New Jersey, New England and Northern California opposing the ban, while those in Texas, Southern California and the Southeast supported it.

PENNSYLVANIA

At a national symposium focusing on sexual minority issues within the Catholic Church held March 7-9 in Pittsburgh, two bishops and many others urged the church to re-examine its homophobic teachings and foster a more open and loving climate. According to a *Washington Blade* story, Bishop Matthew Clark of Rochester, N.Y., and Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit addressed more than 650 church leaders from 40 states at the event, which was sponsored by New Ways Ministry, a group serving the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics.

In his speech Gumbleton said the church's condemnation of same-gender marriage could change if leaders listen to the experience of homosexuals; he encouraged gay men and lesbians in the church to come out and share their stories. His own views on the subject changed, he said, when his brother came out several years ago.

Compiled by Christopher D. Cuttone