



Clinton and Gore met with ENDA supporters on April 24

attitudes about homosexuality are changing in immigrant communities.

Gay émigrés at the pageant told the *Mercury News* that a female impersonation contest was an appropriate celebration because gay men in Vietnam have for years used cross-dressing as the only available way to express their sexuality and meet other gay men.

To many Vietnamese, transvestitism and homosexuality are synonymous, 23-year-old Dewey Nguyen told the newspaper. Nguyen is a co-founder of Sunshine Productions, California's first gay Asian production company, which sponsored the pageant. He and the group's other founder, Huy Nguyen, hope to make Miss Gay Asian an annual event.

Although many Vietnamese Americans disapprove of such behavior and deny its prevalence in their homeland, gay culture in Vietnam has increasingly come out of the shadows over the past decade. Web sites list more than a dozen bars and cafes in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi that are either gay or gay-friendly, and in early April Reuters news agency reported the country's first gay wedding.

## Arizona governor relents, signs hate crimes bill

After vetoing a hate-crimes penalty enhancement measure last year, and following months of heated debate over this year's hate crimes bill and threats of another veto, Gov. Fyfe Symington signed Arizona's hate crimes statute on April 28. The law allows judges to implement maximum sentences for bias-motivated crimes; its passage comes after more than five years of lobbying and coalition building among minority groups committed to overcoming violence, reports *Echo Magazine*, a Phoenix gay and lesbian publication.

"We are all different from each other in many ways," Symington said by way of explaining his decision. "In a free society, we are not required to like or embrace these differences. However, society does require that the intolerant among us not express their beliefs through criminal conduct." He also cited Arizona Department of Public Health statistics that indicate an increase in hate-motivated crime.

When he vetoed last year's hate crimes legislation, the governor said he did so because of his personal beliefs and concerns about state death penalty laws.

## Turn-of-the-century gay life too hot to handle

The Idaho Board of Education voted April 17 not to fund a sociological research project being conducted by an Idaho State University professor, Peter G. Boag, because the topic might be considered offensive. According to a report in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Boag's study,

which looks at the origins of queer communities in the Pacific Northwest, is the second proposal in 10 years to be denied funding for fear of offending taxpayers.

The project had received a favorable recommendation from Idaho's Higher Education Research Council, which advises the board. During the same meeting at which it turned down Boag's project, the board voted to revamp the research council. The board says it plans to replace the council's research officers (such as graduate school deans and vice-provosts) with the presidents of Idaho's four public colleges.

Rayburn Barton, the Board of Education's executive director, denies any connection between the two decisions. He said the reorganization reflects the board's desire to shift research money toward pressing issues for the state, such as water quality and nuclear cleanup. He added that the decision was not meant to rule out future funding of social science projects.

Russell Wahl, a philosophy professor who chairs the Idaho State University Faculty Senate, said he believes the reconstitution of the council is indeed linked to the board's rejection of Boag's proposal.

Boag plans to continue his research without the grant and publish his findings about the connections between urban and rural gay communities in Seattle, Boise and Portland between 1870 and 1920.

## Clinton and Gore give ENDA a hand

Prospects for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act look good, following a meeting of President Clinton, Vice-President Gore, civil rights leaders and key sponsors of the bill, says a Human Rights Campaign press release. HRC and other organizations working for passage of the bill, which would provide job protections for sexual minorities nationwide, are also encouraged by the results of a recent bipartisan poll indicating that 68 percent of voters support the legislation.

The poll revealed that support for ENDA is strong across party lines and in every region of the country: 59 percent of Republicans, 69 percent of independents and 79 percent of Democrats favor the bill; while 77 percent of voters in the Northeast, 71 percent in the Midwest, 68 percent in the West and 62 percent in the South support this legislation.

A White House press statement summarizes the president's feeling on the issue: "[T]he bill in its current form appears to answer all the legitimate objections previously raised against it, while ensuring that Americans, regardless of their sexual orientation, can find and keep their jobs based on their ability and the quality of their work.... I support it and I urge all Americans to do so. And I urge Congress to pass it expeditiously."

Compiled by Christopher D. Cuttone

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