

# national briefs

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The Christian Coalition has tapped former Republican Rep. Randy Tate of Washington state to be its new executive director, reports Reuters.

Tate will succeed outgoing head Ralph Reed, who helped build the coalition into one of the most powerful factions in the GOP with some 1.9 million members and a \$27 million budget.

Tate lost his seat in November after serving only two years, and earned zero points on the Human Rights Campaign's scorecard for the 104th Congress. He worked on the 1988 presidential campaign of television evangelist and Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson.

## FLORIDA

Dade County commissioners nixed a proposal June 18 to add gay men and lesbians as a protected group under the county's antidiscrimination laws. Instead, they passed a resolution affirming the county's support of traditional "family values" and structures.

According to a United Press International story, neighboring Broward and Palm Beach counties and Miami Beach all have approved sexual minority rights ordinances, and supporters expected Dade County to follow suit.

The events call to mind the bitter anti-gay backlash of 1977, when entertainer Anita Bryant led a referendum effort that overturned a then-groundbreaking gay rights ordinance in the county.

## ILLINOIS

After hearing a pitch from attorney J. Brian Heller about why the Bible should be incorporated into public high school courses, Peoria District 150 officials said they would take his plea under advisement.

United Press International reports that Heller met with district representatives June 16 to suggest the Bible could be worked into English and history courses and may provide students with a better understanding of current events in the Middle East.

He claims high school students have asked him whether the Bible can be used in classes, and says he would like to see both the Old and New testaments taught in an optional class.

Such an approach would be unique for Illinois, but nearly 300 school districts in 18 other states have incorporated the Bible into classes.



## MARYLAND

A Frederick County school official forestalled a brewing controversy by deciding on May 22 that the telephone numbers of two gay-related organizations would be included in the "Yellow Pages for Frederick County Teens."

According to the *Washington Blade*, Associate Superintendent of Curriculum Dr. Elizabeth Morgan upheld a recommendation made in April by the county's Family Life Advisory Committee to publish contact information for the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

The directory, distributed by the county's Interagency Committee on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting, has provided resources for public high school students since the mid-1980s. It came under fire earlier this year when conservative activists targeted the sexual minority-related listings.

## MICHIGAN

Patricia Brown, a lesbian public relations professional, says a smear campaign cost her the June 9 election in which she was unseated as Wayne-Westland Community Schools board president.

In the weeks before the election, three different fliers with anti-gay comments, including claims

that Brown would introduce gay themes and topics into school lessons, were distributed to board members and area residents, says the *Detroit News*.

Trouble started for Brown not long after the board unanimously approved an amendment to the school code of conduct in January adding the words "sexual orientation" to a list of groups protected from harassment, which prompted some parents to voice concerns about Brown's orientation.

Brown has been an unpaid school board member for four years and served as president this past year; her term ended June 30.

## NEW YORK

The State University of New York at New Paltz suspended its search for a dean in May after a local resident raised concerns about one of the three final candidates, Dr. Rosemary Keefe Curb, a former nun and lesbian who describes herself as a witch.



The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that Peter Shipley, leader of a group called the National Catholic Forum, was the first to publicly criticize Curb, calling her a "militant anti-Catholic."

Curb is an award-winning professor who presently runs the English department at Southwest Missouri State University. She edited the 1985 book *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence* (Naiad Press), which contains personal accounts from several nuns and Curb's descriptions of rituals she has attended, in which she calls herself a witch.

## PENNSYLVANIA

The 18th annual Family Conference of the Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International and Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere will be held in Philadelphia from July 24 to 27.

Along with numerous workshops, the event includes keynote addresses from Elizabeth Birch, executive director of the Human Rights Campaign, and April Martin, author of *The Lesbian and Gay Parenting Handbook: Creating and Raising Our Families*.

For more information, write to GLPCI, PO Box 50360, Washington, DC 20091; call (202) 583-8029; or e-mail GLPCINat@ix.netcom.com.

## VERMONT

Conservative New York-based radio commentator Don Imus was castigated once again for remarks he made on his show, according to an Associated Press story.

In early June, Imus told listeners, "Don't be a fairy, buy some Ben and Jerry's," prompting a flurry of phone calls to the counterculture ice cream company's headquarters in South Burlington, as well as a meeting of Ben and Jerry's CEO Perry Odak, Imus, and the general manager of WFAN-AM, Imus' flagship station.

"We're letting people know that's not reflective of [what] we're all about," says Ben and Jerry's spokesman Rob Michalak.

The company, which prides itself on having an accepting attitude toward sexual minorities, ironed out its differences with Imus, however, and he will continue to promote its product.

## VIRGINIA

Democrats in Arlington chose Jay Fiset Jr. to be the party's nominee for a county board seat, reports the *Washington Post*.

Fiset Jr., who earned 55 percent of votes in the primary, will face off in November against Amy Jones-Baskaran, an independent endorsed by Republicans. If successful in that race, Fiset Jr. believes he will be Virginia's first openly gay elected official.

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