

# national briefs

## ARIZONA

Tempe began a citywide effort Nov. 6 toward eliminating prejudice and discrimination, reports the *Arizona Republic*.

Mayor Neil Giuliano kicked off the campaign to celebrate diversity in the community by speaking with several dozen people who gathered at the Tempe Public Library for an event called Together We're Better.

It aims to unite people in Tempe to help make everyone feel welcome in the city.

In January, the City Council passed a one-page resolution to celebrate diversity, but the meeting was marred by a few speakers who claimed the council was trying to promote a hidden gay agenda.

Giuliano, who last year acknowledged he is gay, denied there was any gay agenda.

## CALIFORNIA

Facing a deficit of \$110,000 and counting, the committee that produces San Francisco's annual pride parade is looking for ways to cut costs, according to the *Bay Area Reporter*.

While the group's creditors—including Wells Fargo Bank, several city departments and nearly 20 community groups that staffed beverage outlets at the celebration and are entitled to a share of the sales—are satisfied with the debt payment arrangements, it's clear that changes must be made before next year.

Hoping to retire the debt in a single parade cycle, event organizers have accepted a proposal that cuts costs and enacts procedures for approval and tracking of expenditures. The group is also working to increase corporate sponsorship, despite the controversy surrounding the large profit taken away from last year's event by the non-gay, for-profit contract vendor Best Beverages.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Motivated by the grief of losing two friends to AIDS-related illness and by frustration with the inadequate medical care they had received, Virginia resident Elizabeth Solomon, 52, donated \$1 million to the D.C.-based Whitman-Walker Clinic.

According to the *Washington Blade*, it is the second-largest fiscal gift ever received by the clinic, which provides services for two-thirds of the people living with AIDS in the Washington, D.C., area.



Solomon's gift enabled the clinic to establish the Fleming-Morgan Access Center, where full-time care coordinators are available to help clients obtain housing, food, medical, legal and mental health services, as well as alcohol and substance abuse treatment.

## GEORGIA

Robin Shahar announced on Oct. 31 that she is petitioning the U.S. Supreme Court to review her case against Michael Bowers, the former Georgia attorney general who dismissed her from his staff upon learning she was planning to hold a commitment ceremony with her lesbian partner.

Shahar's petition seeks to overturn a federal appeals court decision, saying the firing violated her First Amendment rights to intimate and expressive association.

According to a Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund news release, if the court hears Shahar's case, it "will have the opportunity for the first time to rule on whether gay relationships are protected by the right of intimate association, which protects all kinds of deep personal bonds, such as family relationships, from government intrusion."



The Georgia Supreme Court on Nov. 3 upheld the City of Atlanta's policy to extend health benefits to dependent domestic partners of municipal employees.

In a news release the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund said the challenge to the ordinance was brought by a single plaintiff, Atlanta resident Lamar Morgan, who claimed that as a local government the city did not have the power to enact such a measure.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 1644, the Atlanta Executive Network, the Georgia Equality Project, the National Employment Lawyers Association-Georgia chapter, the Service Employees International Union Local 1985 and the Stonewall Bar Association of Georgia joined Lambda in filing an amicus brief supporting the ordinance.

The city had created a more comprehensive domestic partner benefits package in 1993 that was struck down in court.

## ILLINOIS

With seven couples signing up on Oct. 27, Oak Park became the first municipality in Illinois to offer a same-sex partner registry, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reports.

The partnership registry was established to recognize committed relationships of gay men and lesbians, says Village Clerk Sandra Sokol.



While registration in Oak Park doesn't grant any rights, "the gesture has its own importance," Tony Dobrowolski, an actor who registered with his partner early that morning, told the paper.

Oak Park is one of 13 municipalities nationwide with domestic partner registries.

## NATIONAL

On Oct. 16, two months after an internal audit found that Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays was in a "state of crisis," the organization's executive director, Sandra Gillis, proffered her resignation.

During an August meeting, PFLAG's regional director's council confronted the board of directors with charges of financial mismanagement and other failings at the national office, and called for Gillis to resign, reports the *New York Blade*.

A native of New York, Gillis first became active in national queer politics in 1984 as presidential nominee Walter Mondale's liaison to the sexual minority community. She became head of PFLAG's national office in 1993.

She told the *Blade* her resignation was unrelated to the recent complaints.



New York businessman and gay civil rights leader Fred P. Hochberg was nominated Oct. 10 by President Clinton to be deputy administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Hochberg, 45, is the sixth openly gay person to be appointed by Clinton to a high-level government position in the preceding five weeks, according to the *Washington Blade*.

If confirmed by the Senate, Hochberg will become the second in command at the SBA, which has 4,839 employees and cabinet-level status—making him the second-highest ranking openly gay person to serve in the U.S. government.

Richard Socarides, Clinton's liaison to the queer community, said the White House does not expect any obstacles to the confirmation.

Hochberg currently serves as co-chair of the Human Rights Campaign and as head of the Heyday Company, a private management and investment firm which he founded and owns.

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