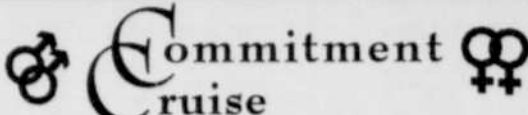


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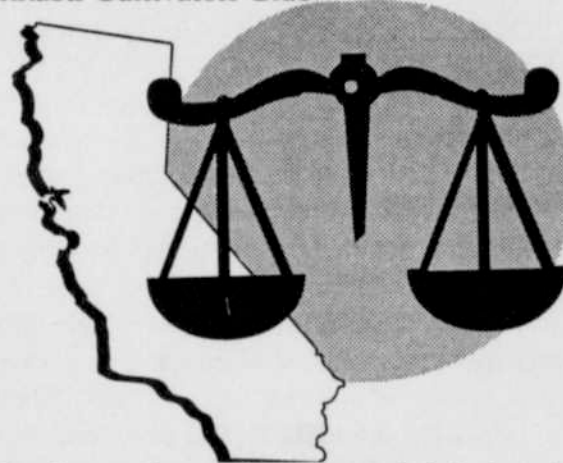
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NATIONAL news
BRIEFS

CALIFORNIA

Same-sex marriage is turning into a decisive issue in the state's gubernatorial race. According to the *San Francisco Examiner*, none of the three Democratic hopefuls advocate same-sex marriage. Nevertheless, two of the three, Al Checchi and Jane Harman, say they would sign a bill recognizing same-sex marriage if the Legislature approved such a measure. Lt. Gov. Gray Davis says he wouldn't sign such a bill but insists his record illustrates a history of support for gay and lesbian issues. He says he would instead push to expand the legal rights of gay couples in domestic partnerships.

A San Francisco-based cannabis club reopened under another name April 21, just a day after a court order shut down its predecessor. According to The Associated Press, about 40 patients and supporters cheered as the new Cannabis Healing Center opened. The day before, state Attorney General Dan Lungren pursued the court order that shut down the Cannabis Cultivators Club.



Replacing former director and club founder Dennis Peron, who is running against Lungren in the Republican gubernatorial primary, was Hazel Rodgers, who celebrated her 79th birthday April 20.

The court order that shut down Peron's club was based on its sales to caregivers, rather than directly to patients. A large sign banning caregivers from entering the new club was posted at the facility.

COLORADO

Residents of Fort Collins opposed to a city anti-discrimination ordinance that includes sexual orientation as a protected class have submitted enough signatures to force a vote on the issue.

According to The Associated Press, the city council can either repeal the proposed ordinance revision or put it on a citywide ballot.

Colorado is home to some of the most bitter fights in the history of sexual minority civil rights. Ten years ago, Fort Collins voters rejected a similar anti-discrimination ordinance.

Greg Snyder, who led the recent petition drive, says the ordinance, which also alters the city's process for handling human rights complaints, is unconstitutional.

FLORIDA

Members of Operation Rescue are planning to visit the Orlando area this summer, but you won't find Space Mountain or Sea World on their itineraries. According to United Press International, the anti-abortion activists will spend the first week of June protesting in the Sunshine State; the proposed working holiday will coincide with Gay Days at Walt Disney World.

The Operation Rescue platform specifically faults Disney's policy of providing health benefits to employees' same-sex partners, claiming the company promotes homosexuality as "an acceptable lifestyle."

Group leaders say Orlando was also chosen because reproductive health clinics operate in the city, and some area bookstores sell materials Operation Rescue considers pornographic. The group's 1997 summer protest brought nearly 1,000 activists to Dayton, Ohio.

Queer teenagers recently had their day in the sun, presenting their side of things to state legislators in Tallahassee April 15. Several Tampa Bay area high school students told tales of discrimination and alienation, the *St. Petersburg Times* reports.



"Middle school was the worst years of my life," Ethan English, a 1997 Largo High School graduate, said through tears. "We are the future and we have to have education and acceptance of minorities, whether it be racial or sexual."

Largo High's Gay and Straight Student Alliance has been the target of a letter-writing campaign by the Florida Family Association, a conservative Christian group opposed to school-sponsored queer student groups.

The panel discussion, sponsored by the advocacy group Human Rights Task Force of Florida, drew positive comments from several area legislators, including Rep. Mary Brennan, D-Pinellas Park, and Rep. John Morroni, R-Clearwater.

GEORGIA

According to the *Southern Voice*, former state attorney Michael Bowers' mistress and onetime secretary, Anne Davis, has named herself in the current edition of *George* magazine.

Bowers is notable for defending his state's sodomy law before the U.S. Supreme Court and for rescinding a job offer to a lesbian on the grounds that her lifestyle violated that law. Bowers also insisted the law was not applicable within "the sanctity of marriage."

As to whether Bowers—who hopes to be Georgia's next governor—broke the law with Davis, she offers: "As far as sodomy is concerned, Mike Bowers is a hypocrite."

MAINE

With a Town Council vote of 6 to 1, Bar Harbor became the first town in Maine to once again protect people against discrimination based on sexual orientation since the protection was stripped from the state's Human Rights Act by public referendum in February. The Bar Harbor vote occurred April 22.

Following the Feb. 10 repeal of Maine's 1-year-old law banning discrimination in housing, employment, credit and public accommodations several towns took up the idea of enacting locally protective measures.

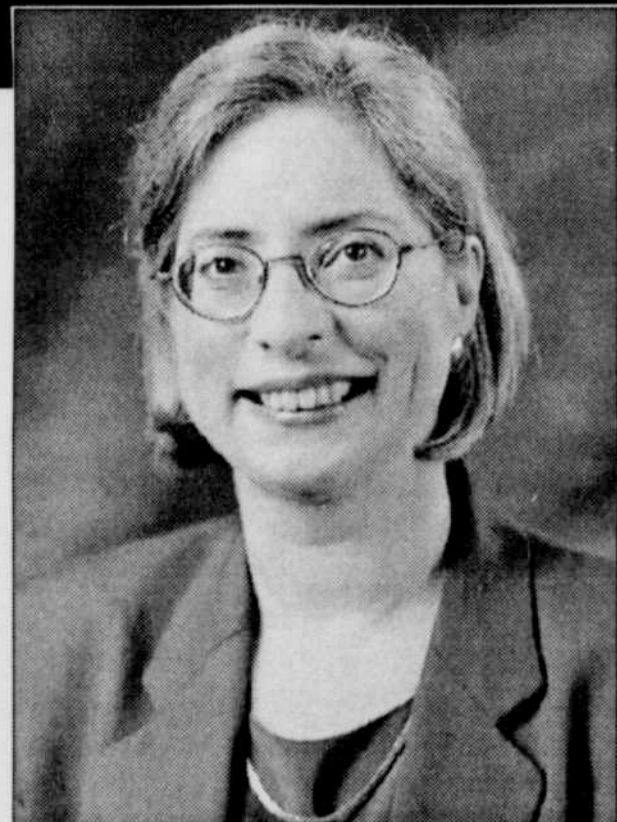
Bar Harbor is the first community to take action on an actual proposal, reports the *Bangor Daily News*.

A similar ordinance is being considered by Orono and Camden. The idea has been rejected in Brunswick, where supporters said they wanted to concentrate on bringing the issue to a statewide vote again.

Bar Harbor's ordinance, which takes effect in late-May, allows people who believe they have been discriminated against due to their sexual orientation the opportunity to file a civil lawsuit against the alleged discriminator.

■ Compiled by WILL O'BRYAN

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