

Lawyers for the plaintiff said the ruling will prevent the California National Guard from hiding behind federal military regulations to justify discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

CALIFORNIA CLERGY ENDORSE QUEER LOVE

In response to the anti-queer, anti-feminist stance declared by the Southern Baptist leadership, more than 100 religious leaders in northern California have signed a petition defending same-sex marriages. By signing, the clerics say they are willing to conduct same-gender marriage ceremonies.



The *San Francisco Chronicle's* June 12 article on the movement quoted Cheryl Deaner, who called this new turn the largest interfaith group of religious leaders in the nation to publicly support legal marriage for lesbians and gay men.

Deaner, executive director of the San Francisco-based All Our Families Coalition, said the aim of the Southern Baptists' stance was to "demean and destroy any family that is not headed by dominant heterosexual males."

The clergy's petition does not explicitly attack the Southern Baptist position, which urges believers to "resist any claims of legitimacy" for same-sex relationships, rather it is meant to demonstrate that not all organized religions oppose same-gender unions.

HIV DISCOVERY UNVEILED

Scientists working on new ways of attacking HIV have forced the virus to surrender one of its long-kept secrets: the shape of its gp120 protein.

According to a June 17 Associated Press report, gp120, which studs the surface of the virus like dozens of spikes, acts as a key for unlocking and subsequently infecting healthy cells.

Having a three-dimensional map of gp120 gives scientists far more information than they previously had on finding the protein's vulnerabilities. Understanding the shape of gp120, for example, might allow scientists to design drugs that block the virus's ability to enter healthy cells. The discovery will also have an impact on vaccine research, despite—or because of—the fact that certain parts of the protein differ from strain to strain.

"Before we were blind. Now we're sighted," explains Dr. Joseph Sodorski, a researcher at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. "We can see what the defenses of this virus are, and that allows us to focus on a logical approach to penetrate those defenses."

HEALTH CONFERENCES ON THE HORIZON

San Francisco will host the 20th annual National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference and the 16th National AIDS/HIV Forum from July 25 to 29.

"This year's conference will have many firsts that will help set the health care agenda for the coming year for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans

communities," says Beverly Saunders Biddle, executive director of the National Lesbian and Gay Health Association, the organizing sponsor of the conference. "We are a tremendously diverse community, and so are our health care needs."

In addition to providing new AIDS-related information, the conference aims to educate physicians, nurses, health educators, activists and other health care professionals about the critical health issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people. New workshop tracks include those addressing bisexual health, trans health and aging.

Author Michael Scarce will discuss his recent findings about male-on-male sexual violence. Similarly, other authors will discuss their research on lesbian health, gay men's wellness, "post-AIDS" identities, AIDS survivor grief and other topics.

Saunders Biddle expects more than 1,500 participants to attend the event.

NLGHA is a nonprofit organization representing a network of individual health care professionals, community health centers, clinics and programs that provide health care focusing on the needs of lesbians, gay men and people affected by HIV/AIDS.

Additional conference information is available at NLGHA's website, www.nlgha.org, or by calling Bob Gordon of Lorber Consulting at (415) 864-8812 or NLGHA at (202) 939-7880.

OBERLIN COLLEGE HIRES GAY ATHLETICS DIRECTOR

The June 18 issue of *Academe Today*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* says Oberlin College has hired a gay man as its athletics director.

Michael Muska, a former track and field coach at Auburn and Northwestern universities, is believed to be the first openly gay athletics director in college sports.

"There are only a handful of schools at which I would have felt comfortable applying for a position like this, and, obviously, Oberlin was one of them," says Muska.

Oberlin, which prides itself on the diversity and tolerance of its student body, has a substantial lesbian and gay population.

Muska, who was an assistant director of athletics and associate director of admissions at Brown University from 1987 to 1993, says he had raised the issue of his sexual orientation with the search committee at Oberlin because he preferred discussing the matter publicly to "having a lot of whispering and innuendo."

Alan Moran, Oberlin's vice president for college relations, says Muska was hired because he has experience coaching and recruiting athletes who meet Oberlin's high admissions standards.

"His sexual orientation had nothing to do with his hiring and never came into play," Moran says.

Nor does the college expect the appointment to be controversial.

Muska says, however, that he expects to encounter some resistance to his appointment. He says one coach had questioned whether hiring a gay male athletics director would hurt the college in recruiting heterosexual male athletes.

But for some coaches, that is not an issue.

"If the fact that [Muska] is gay is the only reason that a young man would not come to Oberlin to play basketball, then he is probably not the kind of young man that I want to be with two hours a day, six days a week," says James Sullinger, head coach of the men's basketball team.

Compiled by WILL O'BRYAN and INGA SORENSEN

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