

CALIFORNIA

The Archdiocese of San Francisco is upset over a plan by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence to close one block of Castro Street for the group's 20th anniversary party. The real bite for the Archdiocese is that the event is scheduled to take place on Easter Sunday, according to various media sources.

So upset is the Archdiocese that its spokesman, Maurice Healy, says allowing a group which "mocks the Catholic Church" to close a street on the holiest day of the Christian year is as horrific as "allowing a group of neo-Nazis to close a city street for a celebration on the Jewish feast of Passover."

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence is an over-the-top theater group with gay, lesbian, trans and straight members who dress like nuns and are known for both their charitable work and zany antics.

The group was founded on Easter Sunday 20 years ago and has celebrated its anniversary every Easter since its founding. This year's controversy seems based solely on the issue of allowing the closure of one city block.

An earlier ruling by the city Department of Parking and Traffic denying the group permission for the street closure was overturned on March 1 by a unanimous vote of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

Since that vote, two supervisors—Alicia Becerril and Amos Brown—have urged their fellow board members to reconsider their votes and delay the Sisters' celebration by one week.

Tom Ammiano, president of the Board of Supervisors, says: "Changing the date is a scam. It's an empty gesture to appease inappropriate pressure on the democratic process. I'm very concerned about the very cherished value of separation of church and state."

COLORADO

The state House Judiciary Committee defeated a bill that would have prevented Colorado from recognizing the marriages of same-sex couples who marry in other states and then move to Colorado. The vote against the bill was 7-6, reports the March 10 issue of *The Denver Post*.

Current state law does not allow same-sex marriages to be performed in Colorado. However, under the U.S. Constitution's Full Faith and Credit Clause, Colorado must recognize contracts entered into in other states, unless Colorado law explicitly refuses to do so.

The hearing was very emotional, with supporters of the bill claiming it was necessary to prevent a "serious problem."

Said Rep. Richard Decker, R-Fountain, by way of explaining why he thought the bill was needed to protect Colorado: "The harm to society could be if this thing catches on.... Our population growth is stable now except for the immigrants. We need to keep this machine going."

Rep. Gloria Leyba, D-Denver, pointed out that had she been born and married at an earlier time in the United States, she would not have been allowed to marry her current husband, who is African American.

"It is not my decision who other people choose to be in committed lifelong relationships with," she said as she cast her vote against the bill.



Tom Ammiano, circa 1993

PHOTO BY STEVEN BARATZ

Bill sponsor Rep. Shawn Mitchell, R-Broomfield, was asked why his bill singled out same-sex couples, rather than including other out-of-state marriages that do not comply with Colorado statutes. Examples of these other marriages include polygamy and marriages where one of the parties is underage by Colorado standards.

The 1,400-member Denver police union, the Police Protective Association, is throwing its weight around in the upcoming City Council race. The union voted to endorse Kevin Shancady, a 38-year-old gay man who is attempting to upset the incumbent, Ed Thomas.

Within hours of the police union vote, Denver firefighters also voted to endorse Shancady, according to a March 12 story in *The Denver Post*.

"This is a major boost for this campaign," said Shancady. "It indicates a broad base of support."

Mike Stack, PPA's president, says Shancady won the union's support because he is thought to have the best chance to beat Thomas. The union and Thomas have recently found themselves on opposite sides of issues involving police officers.

"We're not interested in anyone's sexual preference," said Stack. "We're after good government."

The election will be held in May.

FLORIDA

The third time proved to be the charm for Fort Lauderdale police trying to apprehend an arsonist who had already set two fires at a new gay nightclub.

While police officers watched, Humberto Alvarado rode a bicycle up to The Pier Restaurant, used a sledgehammer to smash open the doors, and threw two containers of gasoline into the building, various media sources report.

Police then stepped forward and arrested Alvarado before he could remove a lighter from his waistband and torch the restaurant. Two more containers of gasoline were found by his bicycle.

One of the club's owners, Dennis Doheny, and two workers were inside the building at the time of the arson attempt and arrest.

Alvarado has been charged with a first-degree felony count of arson of an occupied building and with possession of a firebomb. His fingerprint has been matched to one on a bag left at the scene during the first arson fire. Alvarado has been charged with one count of arson related to that fire. If convicted, he faces up to 30 years in prison.

GEORGIA

The city of Atlanta is suing John Oxendine, the state insurance commissioner, to force him to approve changes in the city's policy that would allow domestic partner benefits, according to the March 16 *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

In November 1997, the Georgia Supreme Court upheld a policy allowing Atlanta city employees to include gay or straight dependent partners in their insurance coverage. Despite that court ruling, Oxendine refused to approve changes in the city's policy.

In a February order against the city, Oxendine wrote that allowing the coverage would be "unfair, inequitable, would encourage misrepresentation and is contrary to the public policy of the state."



Said Nick Gold, spokesman for Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell: "This is something that the mayor has really taken a stand on, and he intends to take it as far as it can go. His position is that employee benefits should be available to all, whether heterosexual or homosexual, based on the diversity in the city."

LOUISIANA

A state judge threw out the state's sodomy law, saying the statute unconstitutionally criminalizes private sexual behavior by adults, according to a March 17 Associated Press story.

Judge Carolyn Gill-Jefferson wrote, in part: "The state has presented no evidence, much less the required compelling state interest, to justify its intrusion on plaintiffs' constitutionally protected right of privacy."



ILLUSTRATION BY JAN FAUST

Under the sodomy law, consensual oral and anal sex was a felony punishable by five years in prison.

If the state challenges Gill-Jefferson's ruling, the case will go directly to the U.S. Supreme Court because it is a civil case dealing directly with a constitutional issue.

NATIONAL

The U.S. Supreme Court will decide whether public universities can use mandatory student activity fees to subsidize campus groups that pursue political goals, according to a March 29 Associated Press report.

The justices will review rulings that prohibited the University of Wisconsin from using money from activity fees it collects from students to finance such groups. Advocates for gay and lesbian rights organizations say limiting subsidies will hurt "disfavored groups" nationwide.

According to the AP, a federal trial judge and an appeals court panel ruled that the subsidies unlawfully force some students to subsidize views they find objectionable and thereby violate free-speech rights. The lower courts barred the university from using fees collected from objecting students.

The appeals court panel's ruling gave objecting students an opt-out privilege, meaning they can identify the groups they do not want to support and have their fees reduced on a prorated basis.

Among groups objected to in the 1996 lawsuit against the university were Students of National Organization for Women; International Socialist Organization; Campus Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Center; and an AIDS support network.

Patricia Logue of the Lambda Legal Defense and Educational Fund, a national lesbian and gay rights group, told the AP: "We look to the Supreme Court to stop this narrow-minded assault on a neutral system for supporting campus dialogue."

A decision is expected next year.

Compiled by KRISTINE CHATWOOD



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SINGLES**

**SOCIAL
AFFAIR**

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6-8 pm**

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**All ages (18+);
No alcohol, no
smoking event**

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