

The measure, sponsored by Rep. Steve Largent, R-Okla., lost by a 215-213 vote.

ILLINOIS

Exodus International, a Seattle-based organization that claims gay men and lesbians can be converted to heterosexuals, opened its annual conference July 26.

"A whole new chapter has opened up," said Bob Davies, executive director of Exodus. "For the first time in our 23-year history, the body of Christ has gotten behind this ministry."

According to The Associated Press, the conference took place at Wheaton College, "a prominent Evangelical Protestant school," but was not sponsored by the college.

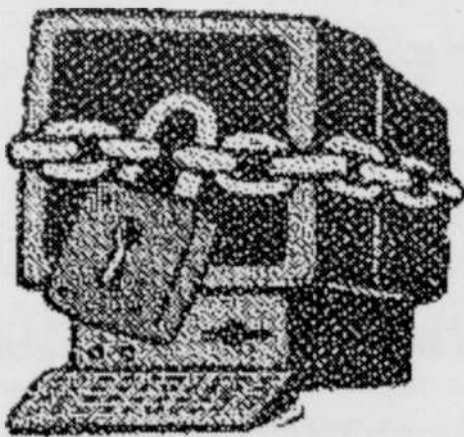
Protesters were on hand, including the Rev. Bradley Mickelson of the Metropolitan Community Church of the Incarnation in Oak Park.

"People of Exodus are our brothers and sisters in the faith. We're here to make a witness," Mickelson told the AP.

Cynthia Marquardt, a member of the Oak Park congregation, added: "Exodus has a right to their message, and we will continue to proclaim that God loves us just as we are."

NATIONAL

In Washington, D.C., two recently introduced bills pose new threats to freedom of Internet access, says the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.



According to GLAAD, on July 20, Rep. Ernest Istook Jr., R-Okla., introduced the Child Protection Act of 1999, which would require libraries and schools to install Internet filtering software in order to receive federal funds for computer operations.

Meanwhile, the Senate Commerce Committee approved the Children's Internet Protection Act, sponsored by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., which would require schools and libraries to install filtering software in order to receive a key telecommunications discount.

Some fear information and resources relevant to gay and lesbian youth would be unavailable with the filtering software in place.

"The trend toward filtering legislation could deny access and support resources to those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community who need them the most," says GLAAD Executive Director Joan Garry. "This is a frightening thought. The Internet has proven to be a virtual lifeline to those in isolated communities, and online access to our community must remain available to them."

Openly gay and lesbian state and local elected officials from throughout the country met with President Bill Clinton at the White House July 28.

The conversation, which focused on myriad gay-related issues, took place in the Cabinet Room adjacent to the Oval Office.

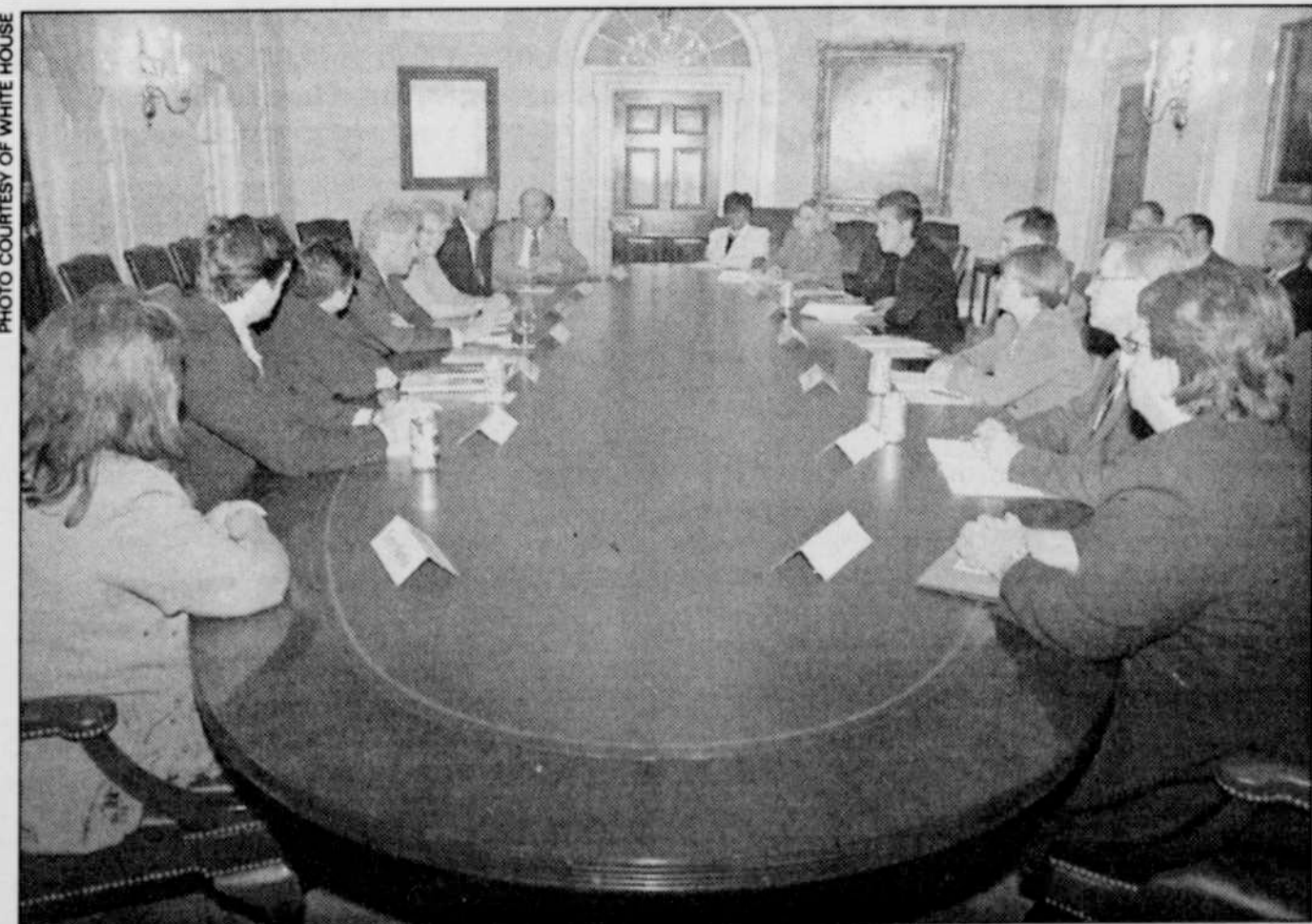
"[This] meeting represents a milestone on the long road to full inclusion of gay and lesbian Americans in the civic life of our nation," says Brian K. Bond, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, which helps elect exemplary openly gay and lesbian candidates for public office and strives to create a more level playing field for their campaigns.

He adds: "One day, sexual orientation will no longer be a barrier to public service. One day, all office holders will be judged on their merits, the way we all should be. This meeting with the president is one more sign that we are moving closer to that day."

Among those who participated in the meeting were: Arizona state Rep. Ken Chevront; New York state Assemblywoman Deborah Glick; Massachusetts state Rep. Liz Malia; Connecticut state Rep. Evelyn Mantilla; San Francisco Board of Education President Juanita Owens; Nevada state Assemblyman David Parks; and Atlanta City Council member Cathy Woolard.

"We are deeply appreciative that the president is listening to the concerns of some of our nation's outstanding openly gay and lesbian officeholders," says Bond, adding that the White House gathering "reflects the finest tradition of our national struggle to create an America where we are all treated fairly and equally under the law."

■ Compiled by KRISTINE CHATWOOD and INGA SORENSEN



Openly gay and lesbian state and local elected officials from throughout the country met with President Bill Clinton July 28 in the Cabinet Room adjacent to the Oval Office

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