

NATIONAL news

Mark Nassif, coordinator of the school's gifted program, said the protest "was unpleasant, not unsafe."

"The protest," he added, "was done in a way that anyone who values freedom would understand. They have a right to protest. They should not have disrupted school, but they did not create an environment that compromised safety. No one was ever unsafe."

Thirty-six students from the high school received three-day suspensions for their roles in the demonstration against the formation of a Gay-Straight Alliance.

MICHIGAN

It was a close vote in Ferndale, but voters opposed to a human rights ordinance that would have banned discrimination against gay men and lesbians, as well as other groups, won out.

The measure failed 51.2 percent to 48.8 percent, reports a Feb. 23 *Detroit Free Press* story.

The ordinance would have banned discrimination on the basis of race, religion, disability and sexual orientation, as well as other grounds. It was the sexual orientation category that caused outrage.



Former Mayor Robert Paczkowski led the battle against the ordinance. His group received a \$5,000 donation from the American Family Association, a Christian fundamentalist group headquartered in Tupelo, Miss.

Paczowski denied that outside sources had any effect on the election.

Said Craig Covey, the city's first openly gay councilman: "We're really, really disappointed. We had to deal with last-minute issues raised by outsiders. We'll probably take a breather and work on it again in a couple of years."

General Motors Corporation has made its first donation to a gay and lesbian group, giving \$10,000 to Affirmations, the largest gay and lesbian community center in Michigan.

In a March 1 *Detroit Free Press* story, members of the gay and lesbian community called the donation historic. They said the gift, coming from one of the state's more conservative companies, signals a shift in attitude.

"First the closet doors came open, and now the financial doors are open," said Affirmations Executive Director Leslie Ann Thompson.

The Ferndale-based community center offers counseling and youth-group activities.

GM spokeswoman Marcia McGee said the company was acting on the recommendation of its gay and lesbian employees.

MISSISSIPPI

The state House Judiciary Committee passed a bill that would ban adoption of children by same-sex couples and would forbid state recognition of such adoptions granted by courts in other states, according to a National Gay and Lesbian Task Force press release.

NGLTF Executive Director Kerry Lobel said: "The goal of adoption is to make sure that the child has a permanent home with people who have the skills to be good parents. The issue of adoption is best decided by judges and professionals on a case-by-case basis, not by politicians or the government. If the anti-adoption bill passes, it will result in Mississippi children who are desperately seeking placement in loving families, including committed gay and lesbian couples, being denied permanent homes. This legislation is not just an attack on gay and lesbian people. It's an attack on children."



According to a recent review by the American Psychological Association, "not a single study has found children of gay or lesbian parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents."

The APA report concluded that "home environments provided by gay and lesbian parents are as likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to support and enable children's psychosocial growth."

WEST VIRGINIA

The state Legislature voted March 11 to ban same-sex marriages and prohibit the state from recognizing such marriages performed in other states.

The Senate had already passed the bill, and the House approved it by a 96-3 vote, sending it to the governor for his signature.

According to The Associated Press, Gov. Cecil Underwood introduced the ban, so his agreement is expected.

The bill would allow marriage licenses to be issued only to opposite-sex couples. It would add to marriage license applications the phrase: "Marriage is designed to be a loving and lifelong union between a woman and a man."

The measure also prohibits West Virginia from recognizing same-sex marriages performed in other states.

Compiled by KRISTINE CHATWOOD, a longtime Just Out contributor.

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