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NATIONAL news

COLORADO

April 4 was a tough day in the Legislature for gay men and lesbians. The state House of Representatives defeated a bill that would have prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation. HB1331, introduced by Rep. Gloria Leyba of Denver, went down by a 34-30 vote.

On the same day, a joint House-Senate committee stripped a gay-friendly amendment from a bill defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman. That bill, HB1249, had been amended in the Senate to include a provision ensuring that the same-sex marriage ban would not affect city and county laws or agreements between companies and their employees involving domestic partner benefits, reports the April 5 Rocky Mountain News.

"I'm totally disappointed," said Lori Girvan, executive director of the gay rights group Equality Colorado. "I think it sends a message that somehow there is a separate but unequal realm for us."

Insisting the legislative actions were not anti-gay, Rep. Mark Paschall, R-Arva, said, "Neither bill addresses private behavior nor do they try to re-establish sodomy laws."

FLORIDA

A coalition calling itself Take Back Miami-Dade failed to gather enough petition signatures to qualify for the September ballot in its effort to repeal a Miami-Dade County law banning discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Local gay and lesbian activists waged a successful campaign to discourage voters from signing the petition.

"The voters of Miami have sent a clear message that they are against discrimination and do not want a disruptive ballot measure that will divide the community," said Human Rights Campaign's national field director, Seth Kilbourn.

To place the repeal issue on the September ballot, Take Back Miami-Dade needed to collect 32,582 petition signatures—4 percent of Dade County's registered voters. The group, which includes the Christian Coalition and the Florida Family Association, has indicated it is not giving up the fight. It will begin collecting signatures to place the issue on the November general election ballot.

Take Back Miami-Dade is trying to repeal an ordinance that forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing and employment. Miami-Dade County commissioners passed the ordinance in December 1998.

Other Florida cities and counties with similar ordinances are Broward County (Fort Lauderdale area), Key West, Miami Beach, Palm Beach County, Tampa and West Palm Beach.

IOWA

Last September, Gov. Tom Vilsack signed an executive order banning discrimination against gay men, lesbians and transsexuals in the hiring of state workers. In early April, however,

Republicans in the Iowa Legislature overturned that executive order, according to an April 5 story in *The Des Moines Register*.

The measure had barely registered on the House tally board before Vilsack delivered a blistering veto message. There are not enough votes to override the veto.

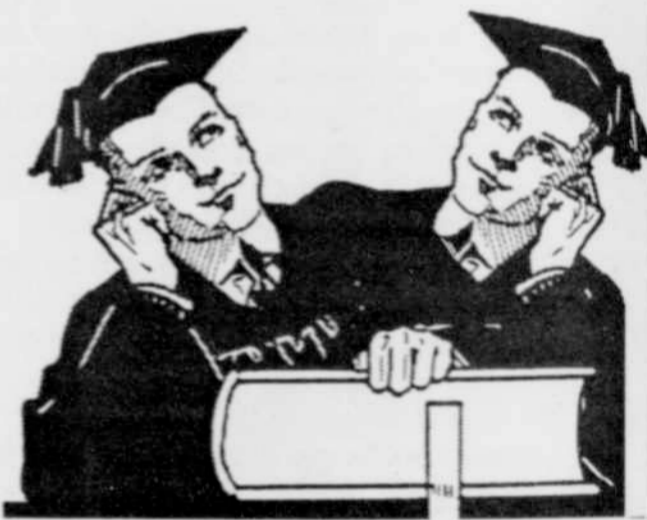
The House passed the measure on a largely party-line vote, 55-43.

Democrats believe Republicans orchestrated the measure so they could use it as an issue in the general election this fall. Republicans deny that was their motivation. They say the governor overstepped his authority and have stated they may take Vilsack to court to settle the issue.



Appearing at a news conference in late March, Gov. Tom Vilsack and Judy Shepard, the mother of slain college student Matthew Shepard, announced the creation of a college scholarship program in Matthew's name.

Three scholarships per year will be awarded to openly gay high school students. They can be used to attend one of Iowa's three state universities. A winning student's tuition, fees and books will be covered at the University of Iowa, Iowa



State University and the University of Northern Iowa, reports a March 31 Associated Press story.

Funding for the scholarships comes from a charitable foundation established by Rich Eychaner, an openly gay Des Moines businessman.

Scholarship recipients will be chosen based on academic achievement, financial need and community service.

MICHIGAN

Starting this fall the University of Michigan will offer a class titled "How to Be Gay: Male Homosexuality and Initiation." English professor David Halperin will teach the class.

A March 30 story in the *Detroit Free Press* indicates the course will examine the role initiation plays in the formation of gay identity. The class will study gay men's writings, cultural artifacts and activities that seem to play a major role in learning how to be gay. Movies, opera, muscle culture and interior design are among the subjects covered in the course.

Halperin says he will approach the role of initiation "as a subcultural practice...a theme in gay male writing and a class project, since the course itself will constitute an experiment in the very process of initiation that it hopes to understand."

Gary Glenn, president of a conservative policy group called the American Family Association of Michigan, insists Halperin is out to recruit teen-agers to become gay.

Says Glenn: "We do not believe that Michigan taxpayers, many of whom oppose homosexuality, should pay for a course whose express purpose is to recruit and initiate teen-age men into a high-risk homosexual lifestyle. We are asking for the class to be cancelled."

According to University of Michigan

