

NATIONAL news

Defense and Education Fund, said the Boy Scouts is not an essentially anti-gay organization and therefore Dale's presence did not burden the group's message.

Wolfson added that Dale did not seek to use his position as a Scouts leader to advocate homosexuality.

The justices will decide by July whether the Scouts had the right to oust Dale.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a strain of AIDS-related tuberculosis identified in Baltimore and New York City may be spreading among transsexual and transvestites.

In an April 20 story, Reuters reports that experts have identified 26 cases of active TB and 37 cases of dormant or latent TB since 1998 in the transsexual and transvestite communities of the two cities.

Although anyone can become infected with the bacterium that causes TB, CDC officials say 62 percent of the patients identified as part of this outbreak are HIV-positive.

People who are infected with both HIV and tubercle bacillus bacteria are at very high risk of developing TB. In most cases, TB is easily cured with a course of drugs. If it is not diagnosed and treated, it can be fatal.

According to Reuters, the cases identified in the outbreak were among men and women who

were members of a social network known as a "house," or who had contact with house members. Researchers are concerned that house members—who frequently travel to take part in fashion and dance competitions—may spread TB to other cities.

VERMONT

Gov. Howard Dean signed a bill into law April 26 that makes Vermont the first state to give same-sex couples the rights and benefits of marriage.

"I think it is a courageous and powerful statement about who we are in the state of Vermont," Dean told reporters. "I also believe that this legislation speaks to the heart of this state, and certainly to my heart."

Dean signed the bill privately, because he did not want the ceremony to be a triumphal party for supporters of the law. Instead, he said, it was time for the state to begin healing.

A day earlier, the state House took a final vote on accepting Senate amendments to the civil unions bill.

In a last-ditch attempt to derail the historic legislation, a Republican representative proposed delaying the vote on the measure until after the November elections. That move was defeated 84-63.

Passage of the bill creates civil unions as a legal framework parallel to marriage. Marriage itself can only occur between a man and a woman. Civil union partners would gain all the benefits the state confers through marriage, including medical decision-making power and inheritance rights.

The law takes effect July 1.

Compiled by KRISTINE CHATWOOD, a longtime Just Out contributor.



Plaintiff James Dale (center) and Evan Wolfson, of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, at the U.S. Supreme Court

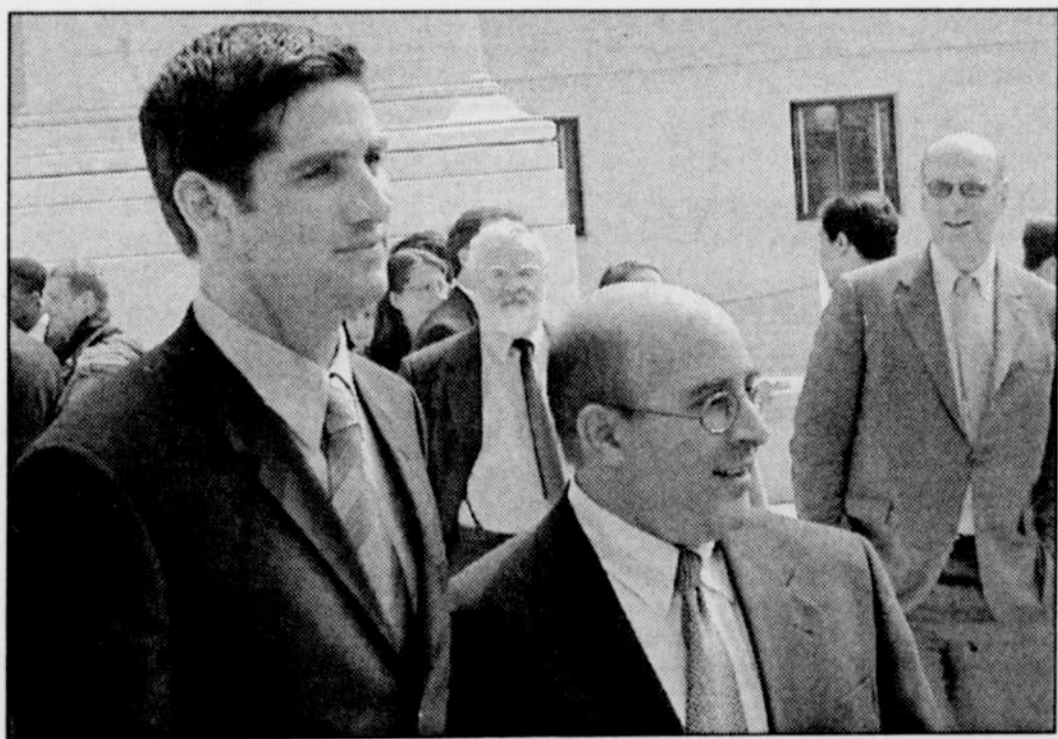
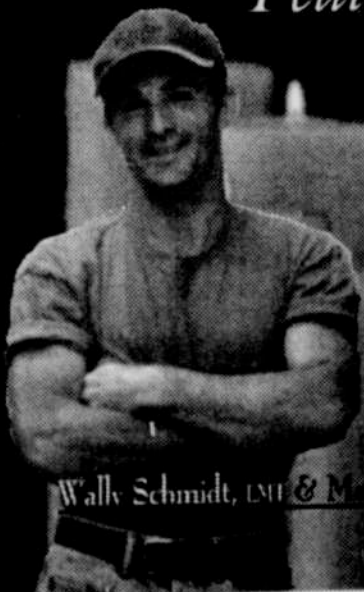


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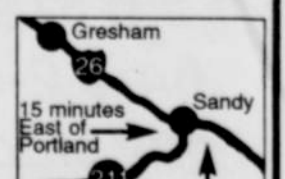
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