

NATIONAL news

CALIFORNIA

The American Civil Liberties Union plans to fight the Desert Pacific Council Boy Scouts of America's leases on public land, reports an Aug. 3 *San Diego Union-Tribune* story.

The troop is seeking an early renewal of its 50-year lease on almost 16 acres in Balboa Park. The lease, which expires in 2007, costs the Scouts only \$1 a year.

The troop has another lease with the city on a half-acre at Fiesta Island, ACLU spokesman Dale Kelly Bankhead said. "They should terminate these leases with the Boy Scouts unless they change their discriminatory practices."

President Dan McAllister says his troop has just as much right to the park as any other group. "A national policy is not something we're in a position to change, and therefore we have to deal with the situation as it is, and our goal is to get that lease renewed and to move forward."

The ACLU says the Boy Scouts' anti-gay stance violates the California and U.S. Constitutions, the city's Human Dignity Ordinance and the lease terms, which bar discrimination. In addition, policies promoting belief in God and excluding atheists and agnostics are unconstitutional and cause for revoking the leases, Bankhead said.

"Boy Scouts may be free to discriminate," he said. "Government is not."

VERMONT



A town clerk in Corinth who can't deal with the state's landmark civil unions law has hired an assistant who can, reports a July 27 Associated Press story.

Susan Fortunati, who didn't return phone calls, maintains that issuing licenses to gay couples would violate her moral and religious convictions. She says she has considered resigning because of the dispute.

Former town clerk Jack Learmonth now will be in charge of helping homosexual couples qualify for almost all of the approximately 300 rights, benefits and responsibilities the state offers to married couples. The law took effect July 1.

Fortunati and 18 others—including members of the Vermont Legislature—are continuing to press their lawsuit filed in May to overturn the statute that grants marriage benefits to same-sex couples. Although the statute allowed her to appoint an assistant willing to perform a duty she found repugnant, it still forces her to violate her moral convictions, attorney Matthew Staver said.

Clerks in other towns are complaining, too. Darlene Wyman of Athens recently joined the list of plaintiffs in Staver's lawsuit because she

"has no assistant town clerk whom she can appoint to issue the civil unions license."

HAWAII

At a time when several sports franchises are switching mascots in an effort to promote sensitivity, the University of Hawaii did just the opposite last month. The Associated Press reports.

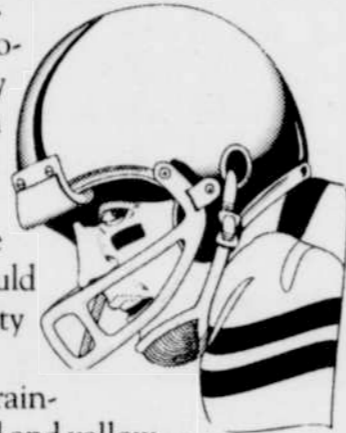
Claiming the symbol has become too closely associated with gay and lesbian pride, the school changed its football team's nickname from the Rainbows to the Warriors. Activists swiftly attacked the decision.

The athletics program needs sensitivity training, said Ken Miller of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center. "The issue is...the fact they would use the gay community as a scapegoat."

The old logo—a rainbow of blue, green, red and yellow—was replaced with Polynesian designs signifying strength and unity. University officials cited confusion with the Rev. Jesse Jackson's National Rainbow/PUSH Coalition as one of the reasons behind the decision.

"Our intent was to illustrate that the rainbow and rainbow logos are associated with a wide array of entities and causes," athletic director Hugh Yoshida said. "Our new identity is intended to be unique to Hawaii and to University of Hawaii athletics."

The new Warriors nickname also might upset Native Americans, who have been putting increased pressure on college and professional teams to change their Indian-related mascots. The Marquette Warriors now are known as the Golden Eagles, and the St. John's Redmen recently became the Red Storm.



WEST VIRGINIA

New details have revealed Arthur "J.R." Warren's murder was even more horrific than previously thought. The African American gay man was beaten, kicked and repeatedly run over by a car July 4 in Grant Town.

Circuit Court Judge Rodney Merrifield's "findings of fact" released Aug. 3 determined Warren was, in fact, alive even after he was beaten severely and kicked by his alleged attackers—both of whom were wearing steel-toed boots. David Parker and Jared Wilson, both 17, will be tried as adults.

"During the drive to the power plant [where police found the body], Mr. Warren climbed from the hatchback area into the back seat and requested to be taken home," Merrifield wrote. "No one responded to Mr. Warren's request to go home."

At a deserted point on the road, Warren was taken out of the car, beaten and kicked again, then "[Parker] re-entered the Camaro and drove over Mr. Warren's body twice—once going forward and once in reverse. After stopping for [another suspect] to get in, [Parker] drove over Mr. Warren's body twice more before leaving the scene."

The judge's order said that earlier in the evening, Parker and Warren had "engaged in an argument over a rumor that had circulated concerning (Parker) and Mr. Warren." A source close to the investigation told The Associated Press that Warren, 26, was beaten because he wanted to reveal their sexual relationship.

NATIONAL

House Majority Bully Richard K. Arney is picking on U.S. Rep. Barney Frank again. Gay rights activists have condemned the Texas Republican for a homophobic joke he told

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