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## NATIONAL news

### NATIONAL

Ex-gay poster boy John Paulk was spotted Sept. 19 at a gay bar in Washington, D.C. Patrons who recognized him quickly snapped photographs to document the sighting, the *Denver Post* reports.

Paulk later confirmed it was him, but what remains unclear is what he was doing there. A Focus on the Family spokesperson told The Associated Press that he entered Mr. P's to use the restroom and had no idea it was a gay bar.

After it was revealed that Paulk spent almost an hour at Mr. P's, he quickly changed his story. "I had not been in (a gay bar) in 15 years, and I was curious because I speak frequently about the gay bar experience. I stayed a while. That was my mistake."

Wayne Besen, a Human Rights Campaign associate director, says he took Paulk to task outside the bar for causing "untold harm, damage and pain to people." He and his wife, Anne, appeared on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine in 1998, proclaiming they had "recovered" from their homosexuality.

"Because of his rhetoric, there's no doubt in my mind that many young men and women have contemplated suicide," Besen said. "Many people I know don't speak to their parents because their parents have become convinced they can simply change, and they know they can't."

Exodus International North America voted Oct. 3 to remove Paulk as chairman—but to retain him as a board of directors member on probationary status—after confirming the media reports. The nonprofit organization promotes the message of "freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ."

"John told the board that he had 'no sinful intentions' in entering that bar," said Bob Davies, Exodus International North America director. "However, he did engage in behavior which has negatively impacted the credibility of Exodus. He was guilty of a serious lapse in judgment, and we feel that his behavior warrants some type of disciplinary action."

Besen said Paulk's actions expose the ex-gay movement for "the fraud it is." He has received calls and e-mails from all across the country since the sighting was reported.

Paulk is "a pawn of Focus on the Family" and "a victim of the same rhetoric he's hurting other people with," Besen added. "He's like an actor playing a role, but sooner or later the final curtain always falls."

Faced with national blood shortages, the Food and Drug Administration considered lifting its ban on gay male donors, but government scientists narrowly rejected the proposal Sept. 14, The Associated Press reports.

All men who seek to donate blood are asked if they have had sex, even once, with another man since 1977. Those who say they have are banned per-



John Paulk flees Mr. P's after coming out of the water closet

manently from donating blood.

The proposal would have changed the rule to ban only men who had sex with another man within the past five years. Advisers voted 7-6 that not enough evidence was available to determine how the move might affect the AIDS risk to the nation's blood supply.

The blood industry is divided over the controversy, with half of the nation's blood banks supporting easing the policy even more—to one year instead of five—while the American Red Cross opposes any change. Thousands of potentially healthy men are turned away every year despite new genetic tests that largely eliminate the risk of HIV-infected units slipping through the system.

### ARIZONA

A U.S. Army panel ruled Sept. 17 that openly gay Arizona state Rep. Steve May should be removed from service based on remarks he made

regarding his sexual orientation during a policy debate.

Lawyers argued that he should not be discharged because his statements made on the Legislature floor are protected by the speech and debate clause of the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, his attorneys asked that the Army retain him because it is in the best interest of the services to retain the most qualified personnel.

Soldiers testified at the administrative discharge hearing that May's removal would hurt his unit's cohesion and morale. In his most recent officer evaluation, his superiors said he had "unlimited potential" in the Reserve, even after the disclosure of his sexual orientation.

"Steve May is exactly the kind of soldier the Army should want to fight for our country," said C. Dixon Osburn, co-executive director of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network. "It is ironic that the citizens of Arizona have voted him into office as an openly gay man and the Army is punishing him for it. The American people are far ahead of the Pentagon on this basic issue of integrity."

The Army recalled Lt. May to the Reserve last year despite his status as an openly gay Republican state representative. He will ask that the appointing authority, Maj. Gen. John Scott, review the proceedings fairly and not accept the board's recommendation of discharge.

### FLORIDA

New information reveals Florida's law prohibiting gays and lesbians from adopting not only harms children but also will cost the state millions of dollars in federal funds, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, which has a federal lawsuit under way to overturn the ban.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services last year gave Florida a \$2.6 million bonus grant for increasing the number of children moved from foster care into

