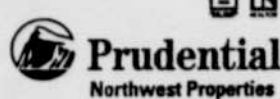




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**NATIONAL news**

**CALIFORNIA**

Dr. Laura Schlessinger's apology to gays and lesbians Oct. 11 has been greeted with groans of "too little, too late," Reuters reports.

Her statement was printed in a full-page advertisement published in a special "Gay Hollywood" edition of the entertainment trade paper *Daily Variety*. It appeared as a signed letter under the headline "A heartfelt message from Dr. Laura Schlessinger" and invoked Oct. 9's observance of Yom Kippur.

"While I express my opinions from the perspective of an Orthodox Jew and a staunch defender of the traditional family, in talking about gays and lesbians, some of my words were poorly chosen," she wrote. "Many people perceive them as hate speech. This fact has been personally and professionally devastating to me as well as to many others. Ugly words have been relentlessly repeated and distorted for far too long."

In closing the letter, Schlessinger wrote: "On the Day of Atonement, Jews are commanded to seek forgiveness from people we may have hurt. I deeply regret the hurt this situation has caused the gay and lesbian community."

Leaders of several gay rights groups questioned Schlessinger's timing. Four Canadian television stations dropped her talk show, *Dr. Laura*, earlier this month because of poor ratings.

"Laura Schlessinger once again blames others for the impact of her rhetoric, refusing to take responsibility for her precisely chosen, scientifically inaccurate descriptions of gay and lesbian lives," said Joan Garry, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation executive director. "Schlessinger's tepid assertion that her anti-gay words were 'poorly chosen' represents another blow to her waning credibility."

**MASSACHUSETTS**

A Massachusetts Superior Court in Brockton ruled Oct. 11 that a middle school may not prohibit a transgendered student from expressing her gender identity even if that expression does not conform with the sex ascribed to her at birth. In a case brought by Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders on behalf of a 15-year-old who was born male but has a female gender identity, the court ruled that disciplining a biologically male student for wearing girls' clothing would violate her First Amendment right of free expression and constitute sex discrimination.

"As the first reported decision addressing the rights of a transgendered student to express her gender identity in school, it is tremendously important," said GLAD staff attorney Jennifer Levi, who argued the case. "We know that a large number of transgendered students face serious hostility from teachers and administrators who lack a basic understanding about gender identity. This case confirms that a school may not exert its authority over a student simply to enforce stereotyped ideas of how boys and girls should look. Nor can a school's discomfort with the fact that a biologically male student has a female gender identity justify enforcing a dress code in a discriminatory way."

The case was brought against the Brockton School Department when "Pat Doe" was pro-

hibited from attending wearing what the principal considered to be girls' clothing. This exclusion followed almost two years of disciplinary action against her for wearing girls' clothing, starting from the time she began to identify as transgendered.

Despite acknowledging that girls who wore the same clothes Pat did were not prevented from attending or otherwise disciplined, the school tried to justify its exclusion of her based on other students' discomfort. The court rejected this argument, holding that prohibiting her from wearing girls' clothing was akin to "the stifling of plaintiff's selfhood merely because it causes some members of the community discomfort."

The court affirmed that transgendered students need the same support and protection for their safety as other students. It further recognized that "exposing children to diversity at

an early age serves the important social goals of increasing their ability to tolerate differences" and teaches "respect for everyone's unique personal experience."

**ARIZONA**

The Arizona Rainbow Veterans have completed the "Rainbow Memorial," the first in the National Cemetery System to acknowledge the service of gays and lesbians.

The memorial is being donated by the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America. The Arizona Rainbow Veterans, a group of Phoenix gay and lesbian vets who designed and won approval for the monument, announced that the money has been raised and that they are preparing for a dedication ceremony Nov. 11 at the Arizona National Memorial Cemetery in Phoenix.

The sunrise service will be conducted by the Rev. Patrick Stout of the Community Church of Hope. Because of the Veterans Day Parade in Phoenix, a small group of veterans are expected to gather at the cemetery for the dedication.

The memorial is a boulder-shaped, rainbow granite monument inscribed, "In memory of all who served with courage and pride." The design was approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs in August.

"We can never repay the sacrifices made by America's veterans," said Wally Straughn, Arizona Rainbow Veterans president. "The best we can do is to pay tribute to their descendants and honor their memory." He pointed out that the memorial is intended to be all-inclusive, not limited to the memory of only gay and lesbian veterans but dedicated to the service of all veterans.



**NATIONAL**

Civil rights organizations roundly criticized a U.S. Senate conference committee for voting 11-9 on Oct. 5 to remove a hate crimes provision from a defense authorization bill. John Warner, R-Va., Senate Armed Services Committee chairman, said he recommended that the language be stripped from the legislation to hasten its approval.

