

ning discrimination against people for jobs, housing, public accommodations or credit. It now heads to the more conservative Senate. But supporters of the bill got a boost when Senate President James "Pate" Philip said he plans to give the issue a committee hearing instead of delaying it.

"I want to express my gratitude to my colleagues in the House for their support," said the state's only openly gay representative, Democrat Larry McKeon, who sponsored the bill. "I strongly encourage the Senate leadership to allow the bill to be moved to the...floor for a vote."

The Delaware House passed legislation March 27 to ban discrimination based on real or perceived sexual orientation in employment, housing, public works contracting, public accommodations and insurance. It now heads to the Senate, and Gov. Ruth Ann Minner has pledged she will sign the bill if she gets the opportunity.

"Hopefully today brings us closer to a time when our differences are not seen as reasons for division and strife but as opportunities for education and celebration," said Peter Medwick of the Delaware American Civil Liberties Union Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Project.

ARIZONA

Lt. Steve May, an openly gay Republican state representative, has completed his term



Larry McKeon is grateful for the support of his colleagues in the Illinois House

of service in the U.S. Army Reserve.

He faced discharge under "don't ask, don't tell" for revealing his sexual orientation during a debate on the floor of the Arizona Legislature in response to an anti-gay bill. The Army dropped the discharge action in January to allow him to complete his service.

Prior to his Reserve service, May served in the First Infantry Division from 1993 to 1995 as a nuclear, biological and chemical defense officer. Before leaving active duty as a first lieutenant, he served as an assistant battalion operations officer, platoon leader and company executive officer. He is one of very few qualified as a nuclear submariner (Silver Dolphins) and paratrooper (Airborne).

"May's service directly undercuts the rationale that gays hurt military readiness," said C. Dixon Osburn, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network executive director. "May is exactly the sort of soldier the Army should fight to retain. Congress needs to wake up and recognize the cost of the gay ban to our country."

May, who left officially April 14, told the *Arizona Republic*: "It was tough. I'm never going to wear this uniform again. I'm not going to see my soldiers again."

FLORIDA

State Rep. Allen Trovillion, R-Winter Park, unleashed a personal tirade against youth lobbyists who visited Tallahassee to discuss the fre-

quency of anti-gay violence in schools April 9. One of the kids, Chris Vasquez, was left in tears.

"He is one of the people we're supposed to look up to for moral guidance and support," the 17-year-old said. "He's spouting...ideas that only make the world more dangerous for gay youth."

Thomas Gentile, a 19-year-old from Boca Raton, told Trovillion that classmates targeted him because of his sexual orientation. Administrators suspended the attackers for only one day, then humiliated him by suggesting he provoked the violence by being "too openly gay."

Despite a nationwide call for additional security and safety on school campuses, Trovillion told Gentile: "You have to suffer the consequences of your actions.... God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and he is going to destroy you and a lot of others."

Trovillion questioned: "I don't understand why the gay population is becoming so vocal. You are going to cause the downfall of this country, which was built on Christian principals."

Statewide human rights leaders expressed outrage upon hearing of Trovillion's remarks. Equality Florida executive director Nadine Smith urged politicians to take action.

"Rep. Trovillion has disgraced and embarrassed the Florida Legislature by callously dismissing the painful experiences of these students," she said. "We call on the governor, Trovillion's colleagues in the Legislature and all fair-minded Floridians to stand with students who are striving to make our schools safe."



Allen Trovillion

The Florida Supreme Court has put an end to right-wing efforts to block domestic partner benefits for unmarried public employees in Broward County. "With this order, the court has improved security and peace of mind for many lesbian and gay families, and it has allowed Broward to be a better employer," said attorney Stephen R. Scarborough of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, which assisted in the case.

Broward adopted the Domestic Partner Act in April 1999, creating a registry and providing health and other benefits and protections for employees' partners and their children. The conservative Northstar Legal Center, on behalf of a resident named Lawrence Lowe, claimed that the ordinance conflicted with state law by creating a "marriagelike" relationship and that the county exceeded its authority by enacting it.

After all of his claims were rejected, the case went to the Florida Court of Appeals for the Fourth District, which unanimously upheld the ruling last year. Lowe appealed to the Florida Supreme Court, which rejected his petition for review April 4.

Although scores of states and cities now offer domestic partner benefits to their workers, Broward, which includes Fort Lauderdale, is among the first public employers in the country also to encourage its contractors, through a bidding preference, to offer family benefits to unmarried as well as married employees. "All of Broward wins with this workers' benefits program—the county gains by being able to better attract employees, and the community overall has the advantage of improved security and health coverage available to more of its families," Scarborough noted. **J**

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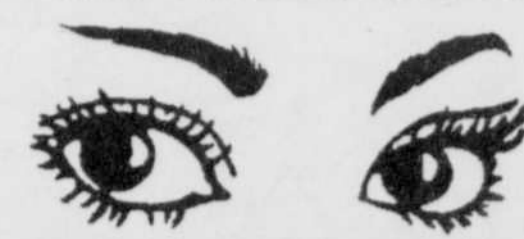
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