

what sodomy laws do but also because of what they say," said Matt Coles, Lesbian and Gay Rights Project director. "A society's laws are its core statement of right and wrong. Sodomy laws, because they are understood to primarily apply to lesbians and gay men, marginalize gay people and their pursuit of equal citizenship."

Minnesota's sodomy law, which has been on the books since the 1800s, prohibits both oral and anal sex between any adults. Penalties include up to a year in jail and up to \$3,000 in fines.

In recent years the law has been enforced directly and used indirectly to deny opportunities, especially to lesbians and gay men, in employment, child custody and other areas. Multiple efforts to repeal it in the state Legislature were unsuccessful. Right-wing groups unsuccessfully tried to alter the law in recent years so it would not apply to married straight couples.

The ACLU is asking the court to certify the case as a class action, which staff attorney Leslie Cooper said will leave "absolutely no question" that the sodomy law cannot be enforced directly or indirectly. If Ventura's administration files legal papers opposing this, a hearing will be held June 7.

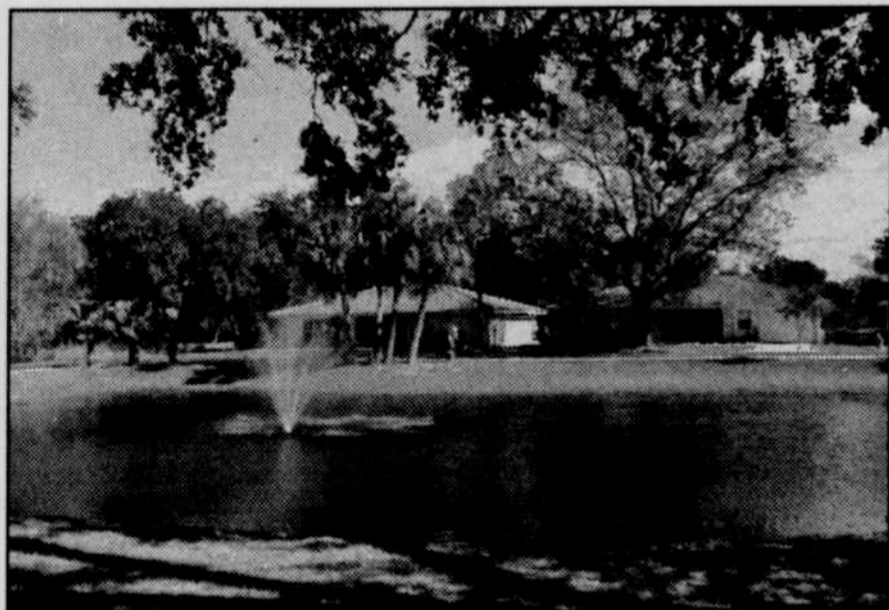
**FLORIDA**

The nation's first gay and lesbian retirement community broke ground for a second phase of construction May 21 in Palmetto.

A total of 44 villas will be built in groups of three or four to a building on 10 landscaped acres. A community center and swimming pool serving the entire development will be constructed during this phase.

The first phase broke ground on a 28.2-acre parcel of land in 1997. By the end of January 2001, 21 single-family homes sat amid towering trees and well-manicured grounds.

John Goodwin, Palms of Manasota Inc. president, said the homes are wheelchair accessible with wider doorways, sliding pocket doors and no stairways. "A welcoming community atmosphere beckons all our gay and lesbian friends to come and have a look."



The Palms of Manasota Villas will be the nation's first gay and lesbian retirement community

The state will provide \$500,000 for a right-wing advocacy group, the American Family Association, to move a part of its business operations to Okaloosa County. People for the American Way president Ralph G. Neas and Florida director Lisa Versaci sent a letter May 23 to Gov. Jeb Bush urging the administration to renounce its plan.

"The American Family Association...has a tradition of bigotry and intolerance," they wrote. "In a fund-raising letter...president Don Wildmon proclaimed: 'For the sake of our children and society, we must oppose the spread of homosexual activity! Just as we oppose murder, stealing and adultery!'"

**SOUTH CAROLINA**

In an unusual twist, a Democrat is in hot water for making anti-gay remarks about a Republican.

South Carolina Democratic Party chairman Richard A. Harpootlian, commenting Feb. 21 on a possible replacement for the state's 98-year-old senator, said Rep. Lindsey Graham is "a little too light in the loafers to fill Strom Thurmond's shoes." He later pleaded ignorance about his language's connotation.



Lindsey Graham

Brian K. Bond, Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund executive director, scolded Harpootlian in a letter May 17: "Your use of rumors concerning sexual orientation as a political weapon is deeply disturbing considering your role as an official of the Democratic Party. Although Congressman Graham's record on equality for all is deplorable, your innuendo and homophobic references do nothing to promote the hard work of your party that seeks inclusion."

This isn't the first gay-baiting comment made by Harpootlian. According to a report on the January 1999 South Carolina inauguration, he said: "Lindsey Graham criticized President Clinton for 'having sex with a young woman in the Oval Office.' Now I don't know about you, but I can't tell what part Lindsey objected to: having sex with a young woman or having sex in the Oval Office."

Graham appears to have a lock on the Republican nomination in the 2002 race for Thurmond's Senate seat. The 45-year-old bachelor repeatedly has denied that he is gay and has said Harpootlian's comments are slanderous.

**MASSACHUSETTS**

Opponents of a bill that would ban same-sex marriage in Massachusetts as well as prohibit domestic partner benefits for public employees greatly outnumbered proponents during a marathon 11 1/2-hour committee hearing in Boston. "Super DOMA" would define marriage as between one man and one woman and would forbid any legal recognition for same-gender couples and their families, including domestic partners and civil unions.

"Family diversity is a fact of life in Massachusetts," said Tim McFeeley, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force political director. "Through adoption proceedings and other measures, family courts in Massachusetts have been creating and protecting families headed by same-sex couples for many years. Super DOMA would put

the courts against the Legislature and endanger existing families in the state as well as cast a shadow of doubt over the future of adoptions by same-sex couples."

More than 150 people showed up for a press conference against the bill, then attended a hearing before the Joint Committee on the Judiciary. Opponents—including representatives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans groups; legal groups; adoption professionals; clergy; and labor organizers—greatly outnumbered a small handful of proponents. The hearing began at 1 p.m. May 17 and finally adjourned at 12:30 a.m. May 18. [M]

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