

NATIONAL

The shift in control of the U.S. Senate will create an environment more favorable for issues important to the queer community and to progressive allies, according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Vermont Sen. Jim Jeffords' decision to withdraw from the Republican Party, become an Independent and vote with the Democrats on organizational matters effectively gives the party a 51-49 majority. They officially took control of the chamber June 6, and South Dakota Sen. Tom Daschle was named majority leader.

"I had serious, substantive reservations about that budget and the decisions it sets in place for today and the future," Jeffords said. "Looking ahead, I can see more and more instances where I will disagree with the president on very fundamental issues: the issues of choice, the direction of the judiciary, tax and spending decisions, missile defense, energy and the environment, and a host of other issues, large and small."



Jim Jeffords meets with Jeanne White, Ryan White's mother, after she testified at a hearing

Because of the shift, Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., replaced Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, as chairman of the Judiciary Committee, which votes on President Bush's judicial nominations. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., became chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which considers a number of issues important to the queer community, including nondiscrimination laws, school safety and HIV/AIDS programs.

Sen. Joe Biden, D-Del., replaced Sen. Jesse Helms as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. The North Carolina Republican is one of the senators who held up the nomination of James Hormel to be ambassador to Luxembourg during the Clinton administration.

"The new composition of the Senate will serve as a brake on Bush's more radical proposals," said Tim McFeeley, NGLTF political director. "It will mean that Bush's nominees, particularly for the judiciary, will receive more careful scrutiny. It will mean that pro-GLBT measures, like the proposed hate crimes law, safe schools legislation, bans on discrimination and pro-GLBT immigration measures could stand a better chance of at least being aired for debate. All in all, this change will make the U.S. Senate more compassionate and less conservative."

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network hailed the recommendation of a commission reviewing the Uniform Code of Military Justice to repeal the military sodomy statute, also known as Article 125.

Calling military sodomy prosecutions "arbitrary, even vindictive," the Cox Commission recommended Congress repeal the statute and replace it with one governing sexual abuse similar to laws adopted by many states and in Title 18 of the U.S. Code.

The commission published its findings May 30 in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the uniform code. The report is the first comprehensive review of the code since its enactment.

"The commission is appropriately urging Congress to step into the present and do right by our men and women in uniform," said C. Dixon Osburn, SLDN executive director. "The military's sodomy law is antiquated and should be repealed."

SLDN submitted comments to the commission urging it to recommend repeal of Article 125. Legal director Sharra E. Greer represented SLDN at a public hearing held by the commission March 13. "Article 125 is a throwback to English common law that has long since been abandoned by the militaries of the original NATO countries, including Great Britain, on whose law ours relies," she said.

The commission's recommendations have been forwarded to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who has ordered a comprehensive review of Pentagon personnel policies. The report also will be shared with the chairman and ranking members of the Senate and House Committees on Armed Services and to the Code Committee on Military Justice.

President Bush is under fire for refusing to honor Gay and Lesbian Pride Month, breaking the



President Bush doesn't believe in "politicizing people's sexual orientation"

custom established in 1999 by Bill Clinton.

"Just as it is wrong for President Bush to exclude gays and lesbians from equal employment and hate crimes laws, it is disheartening to think that he would turn down an opportunity to recognize the community's impressive role in our nation," said Terry McAuliffe, Democratic National Committee chairman. "This is the type of divisive politics and discrimination that is detrimental to the progress of our country."

Bush thinks all people should be treated with dignity and respect but doesn't believe in "politicizing people's sexual orientation," according to White House spokesman Scott McClellan. Since he became president in January he has signed proclamations designating

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The Portland Police Bureau Joins in the Gay Pride Celebration



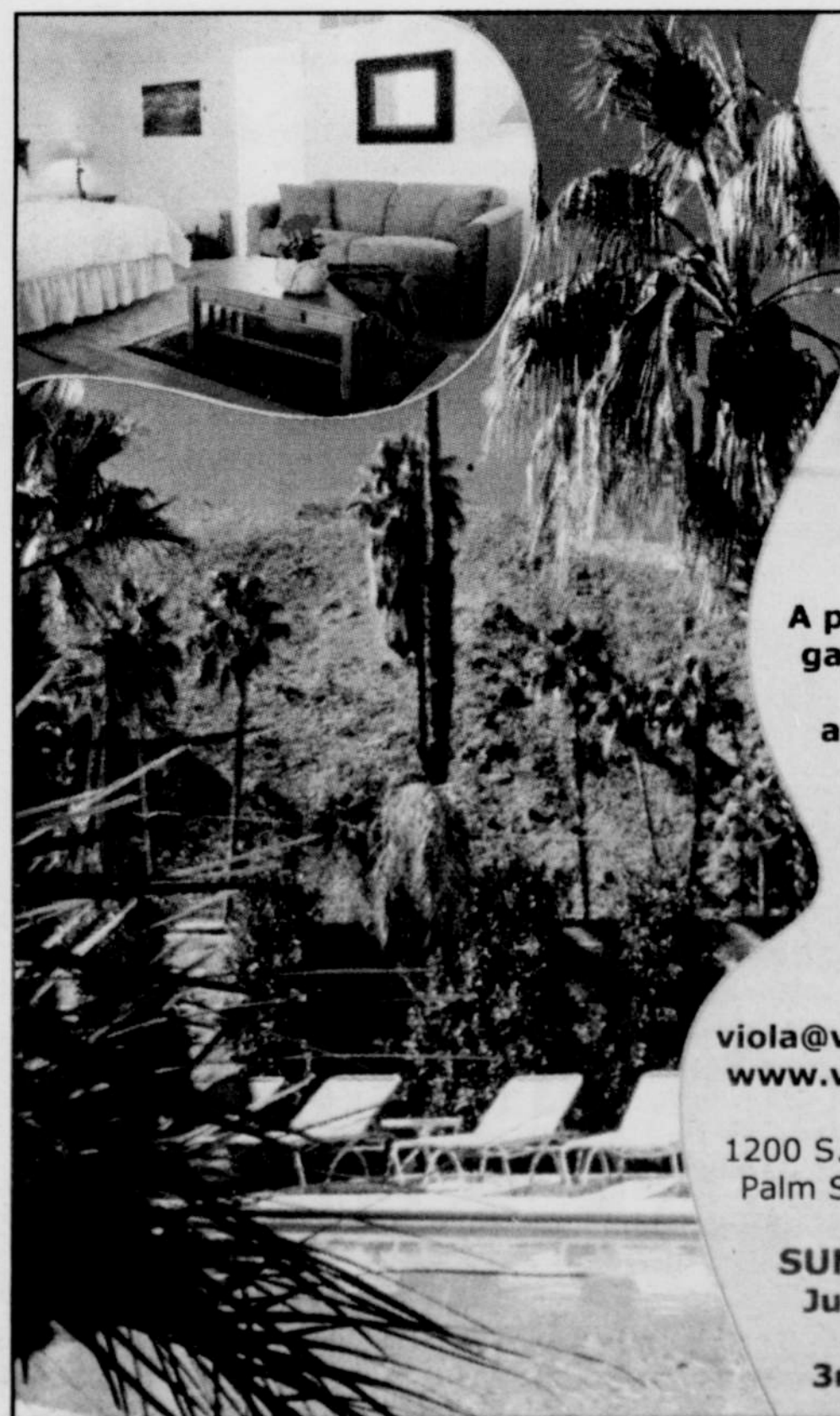
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