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NATIONAL news

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Black History Month, Women's History Month and Irish-American Heritage Month.

"President Bush and his administration have a responsibility to embrace the uniqueness of all its citizens, not a select few," McAuliffe said. "I encourage President Bush to search deep within his 'compassionate' heart over the coming days and recognize the month of June as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month."

Despite the White House decision, Human Rights Campaign spokesman David Smith said most federal agencies, excluding the president's office and the departments of Defense and Justice, are going ahead with planned Gay Pride celebrations anyway. "He is clearly excluding an important constituency in America."

A new Gallup poll on attitudes toward homosexuality shows public support continues to build for equal opportunity in the workplace.

The survey also indicates increased acceptance among U.S. citizens of homosexuality as well as slight erosion in their reluctance to support the extension of marriage benefits to gay and lesbian couples. A total of 85 percent of the people polled support equal opportunity in the workplace.

In addition, 54 percent say homosexual relations between consenting adults should be legal, while 52 percent say homosexuality is an acceptable "alternative lifestyle." Further, 44 percent favor allowing homosexual couples to form civil unions and receive some legal rights of married couples, according to the poll, conducted in mid-May.

The most dramatic shift in public opinion is the increase in perception that homosexuality is biologically based. For the first time in the 24 years Gallup has asked the question, an equal number of respondents say homosexuality is something a person is born with as those who think it is environmental. This represents a major shift from 1977, when environment was seen as the more prevalent factor by more than a 4-1 ratio.

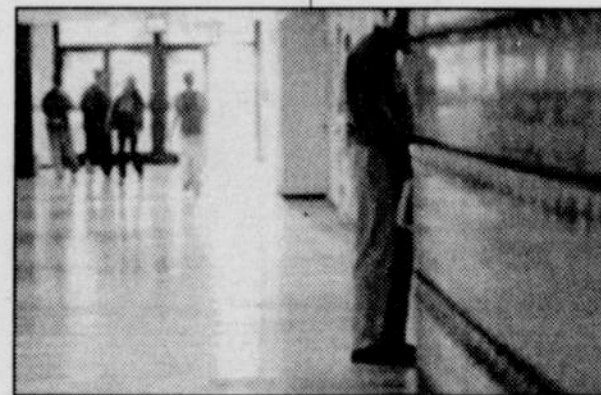
According to a groundbreaking report released May 30 by the largest U.S.-based human rights organization, government's failure to protect queer youth in schools from discrimination and harassment constitutes a human rights abuse. This should lead to immediate change in policy and practice at the federal, state and local levels, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network demanded.

"This report changes the terms of the debate, bringing anti-gay harassment and discrimination out of the closet and into our national discussion on school safety and educational access," executive director Kevin Jennings said. "The daily abuse suffered by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students can no longer be dismissed, by principals or politicians, as simple 'teasing.' This harassment is pervasive and exceptionally violent, it prevents young people from getting an education, and it deserves immediate intervention."

The report, *Hatred in the Hallways*, chronicles the experiences of 140 youth as well as 130 service providers from seven states. Offering a detailed list of policy recommendations, authors Michael Bochenek and A. Widney Brown suggest, among other things, that states enact

nondiscrimination laws to protect queer students and that schools facilitate the formation of gay-straight alliances and other support programs.

"We applaud Human Rights Watch for making clear that our schools and elected officials can no longer tolerate these abuses," said MK Cullen, GLSEN public policy director. "Now is the time to enact laws and policies that will protect all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression."



A report issued June 6 by the American Association of University Women unearthed the disturbing levels of sexual harassment that remain in schools. In light of the

results, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network called for consistent and complete implementation of policies to prevent the debilitating amounts of harassment that affect all students, including those who are queer.

"Despite the fact that 96 percent of schools have put sexual harassment policies in place, there is a failure for those schools to enforce those policies in a way that truly protects all students," executive director Kevin Jennings said. "Public schools continue to create a culture of harassment, which can have damaging effects on all youth, including GLBT youth. We commend AAUW for bringing attention to this pervasive problem and for holding public schools accountable for addressing it, in accordance with the law."

The association, which promotes education and equity for all women and girls, initially conducted the first-of-its-kind research on secondary school sexual harassment in 1993. In 2001, 80 percent of students report having experienced sexual harassment at least once, and 25 percent say they are sexually harassed often.

"We're seeing a trend that sexual harassment is at record levels for LGBT students, with lesbian and bisexual young women being especially targeted," Jennings said. "The often sexual nature of anti-gay harassment can no longer be ignored, neither by schools nor policymakers."

Four out of 10 health care providers don't ask their gay and lesbian patients about their sexual practices, according to the second annual GayHealth.com online survey. "It's crucial for doctors to talk to and educate their patients about sexual health, especially their gay and lesbian patients who may feel stigmatized and uncomfortable with the subject," medical director Stephen Goldstone explains.

More than 35 percent of men and 44 percent of women said their doctors never ask them about sexual practices; 22 percent of men and 30 percent of women said their doctors "rarely" ask. The survey, conducted between April 12 and May 18, included 184 women and 724 men.

More than 40 percent of the men said they have not been vaccinated against either hepatitis A or B, potentially fatal viral liver infections spread through sexual activity. Men who have sex with men are at higher risk than the general population for these diseases.

