

NATIONAL news

eliminate homophobia in medicine and work toward equal access in health care for lesbian and gay people in North America," said Harris, he first African American to lead the association. "Their revolutionary beginning created a national force that has ultimately led to immense gains for our community."

Harris pointed to the association's role in the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, lesbian health research, the physicians advocacy network, the physicians referral program and a number of other initiatives that led to the elimination of discrimination in the medical arena. He cited successful efforts to include, for the first time, gay and lesbian disparities in the federal government's own blueprint for health. The organization also holds continuing medical education conferences and publishes the *Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association*, the world's first and only peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary publication of its kind.

"During these two decades, we've expanded our charter to include bisexual and transgender people," Harris said. "In fact, we have resolved to further expand the ethnic and cultural diversity of our organization. This is one of the driving forces for us as we enter our third decade."

The president heads up the 25-member board of directors and the executive committee. Melinda Muller of Portland serves as treasurer.

"We see continued expansion of our membership and our programs," Harris said. "We are going to be making some exciting announcements early in 2002 as we continue to build on what our founders conceived 20 years ago."

Harris is a pediatric pulmonologist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. A longtime member of the association, he has been active in gay and lesbian youth health issues.



Christopher Harris

The 8-1 vote came after a heated public hearing over the measure. Citizens of Maine have voted against statewide protections twice, once in 1998 and again last year.

"Equal rights and equal dignity are not special rights," Councilor Joe Baldacci, one of the ordinance co-sponsors, told the *Bangor Daily News*. "They are basic American values."

The law allows victims to sue violators with no city-imposed limits on financial damages. It includes an exemption for religious organizations.

But an opponent, Bangor Baptist Church pastor Jerry Mick, said an effort to repeal the ordinance could prove successful, according to the newspaper. He said he would look to gain support from community evangelical leaders before launching a petition drive for a referendum.

Previous challenges to local gay rights laws in Maine have had mixed results. Portland voters rejected an attempt to repeal the city's ordinance in 1992, but a similar effort in Lewiston a year later proved successful.

CALIFORNIA

Paula Poundstone, who faced a felony child abuse charge and a misdemeanor charge of infliction of injury on a child, pleaded no contest Sept. 12 in Santa Monica, Agence France-Presse reports.

According to Judge Bernard Kamins, the standup comedian's relationship with her two foster children has been terminated. It is unknown how this will affect her relationship with her three adopted children.

Media reports indicate Poundstone will be sentenced Oct. 10 to five years' formal probation and six months in a secure alcohol and drug rehabilitation facility. The 41-year-old also will be ordered to undergo weekly psychological counseling for 12 months, attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, perform 200 hours of community service and pay a \$1,000 fine plus penalty assessments.

Poundstone was arrested June 27 for the incidents, which occurred between May 19 and June 6. Her appearance Nov. 9 at Roseland Theater and Grill in Portland has been canceled. [7]

Compiled by News Editor JIM RADOSTA, who can be reached at jim@justout.com.

LOUISIANA

The New Orleans City Council unanimously approved an ordinance allowing domestic partners of gay city employees to receive health benefits. In addition, the law grants bereavement rights and family leave policies as well as access to city recreational facilities for employees' same-sex partners.

"New Orleans sets the standard for the state, and for the whole South really, in officially recognizing same-sex couples," Melinda Shelton of the Louisiana Lesbian and Gay Political Action Caucus told *Southern Voice*. "They did it with domestic partner registration in 1993, and they did it again today."

An executive order by Mayor Marc Morial in 1997 also granted the benefits, but the City Council vote puts the force of law behind the policy. He has said he would sign the measure once it passed, according to *Southern Voice*.

MAINE

The Bangor City Council approved an ordinance Sept. 24 prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, employment, education, credit and public accommodations.



Paula Poundstone warms up the audience during a political rally last November in Portland

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