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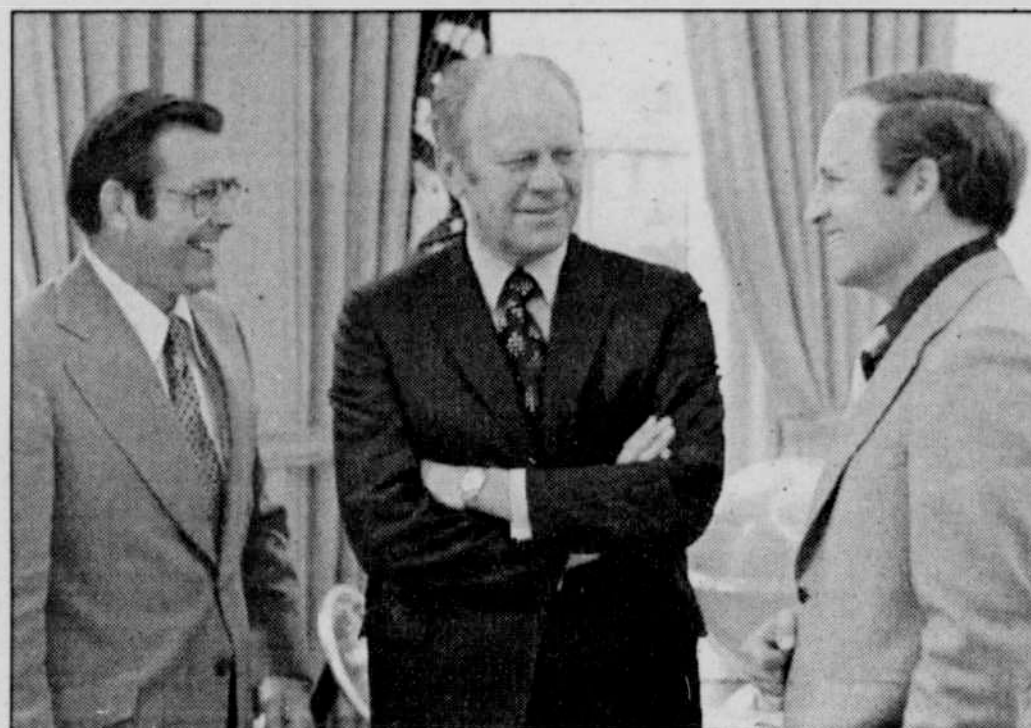

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NATIONAL news


President Gerald Ford meets with Chief of Staff Don Rumsfeld (left) and Deputy Chief of Staff Dick Cheney in the Oval Office on April 28, 1975

NATIONAL

President Gerald Ford stated unequivocal support for gay and lesbian equality under federal laws and programs in an exclusive interview with *Deb Price* published Oct. 29 in the *Detroit News*.

According to her article, he said: "I think they ought to be treated equally. Period."

Ford, the last GOP president to support the Equal Rights Amendment, comes from a generation of moderate Republicans whose ranks have dwindled dramatically since the Reagan era. Chad Johnson, National Stonewall Democrats executive director, welcomed the news.

"It is heartening to know that Gerald Ford supports equality under federal law for gay and lesbian Americans," he said. "Let's hope that President Bush will follow his wise advice and stop pandering to the radical right. Instead of taking a few token and quiet actions on gay issues, he should boldly follow the Democratic example to support [the Employment Nondiscrimination Act] and other LGBT rights measures."

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi is refusing to issue a birth certificate to a 4-year-old boy solely because he has been adopted by a lesbian couple. The refusal means the child has no legal document to prove his name, the names of his parents and his date and place of birth.

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund filed a lawsuit against the state Oct. 25 demanding Mississippi provide a birth certificate to the child, as required by law. The state has refused repeated requests for the document since the child was adopted at infancy.

"The state of Mississippi is unfairly punishing this small boy by denying him his birth certificate, which is a basic necessity for everyday life," said Michael Adams, Lambda deputy legal director. "The state is harming this child simply because he was adopted by loving parents who happen to be gay. Mississippi needs to issue this birth certificate and let this boy live his life."

Lambda argues that Mississippi is ignoring its own law requiring it to honor valid, out-of-state adoptions and provide an amended birth certificate when the adoption is complete. Singling this child out for different treatment not only creates an unlawful exception to state law and regulations but also violates the guarantees of equal protection of the law under the Mississippi Constitution.

Cheri Goldstein and Holly Perdue took the boy into their Vermont home when he was discharged from a Mississippi



Hector Vargas

hospital eight days after his birth. In April 2000 the adoption was finalized in Vermont, and a request was made to have Mississippi amend the child's birth certificate to include his adoptive parents' names and his new name.

Goldstein and Perdue live with their son and six other adoptive children. They also care for two adults with severe mental retardation.

Perdue has been a foster parent for 18 years and has taken care of many kids with special needs. The couple have been sought out by Vermont officials when special-needs children need adoptive homes.

"This family is extraordinarily loving," said Hector Vargas, Lambda Southern Regional Office director. "The entire community benefits from the nurturing home they provide. Mississippi should not make life difficult for a child just because some people dislike his parents' sexual orientation."

MASSACHUSETTS

In two landmark decisions issued Oct. 10, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination ruled that trans people are protected under state laws prohibiting sex and disability discrimination. These decisions are the latest victories in an emerging trend among state and federal courts reversing cases from the 1970s and early 1980s in which trans people were excluded from the civil rights protections.

"This is a tremendously important decision...that affirms the recent trend we have seen in which courts and agencies have corrected the historical error of excluding transgender people from legal protections," said Jennifer Levi, a staff attorney for Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders who successfully has litigated several cases in New England on behalf of trans clients. "The decisions acknowledge there is no principled reason, legal or otherwise, to graft an exclusion onto nondiscrimination laws for transgender people. Every court to consider the question in the last 10 years has agreed with that conclusion."

The sex discrimination analysis in the decisions relies on a 1989 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*, in which an accounting firm associate was denied partnership because she was considered too masculine, macho and aggressive. In its decision, the Supreme Court explained that enforcing sex stereotypes is a form of sex discrimination. The commission's rulings recognize that discrimination against trans people often is grounded in this same type of discrimination.