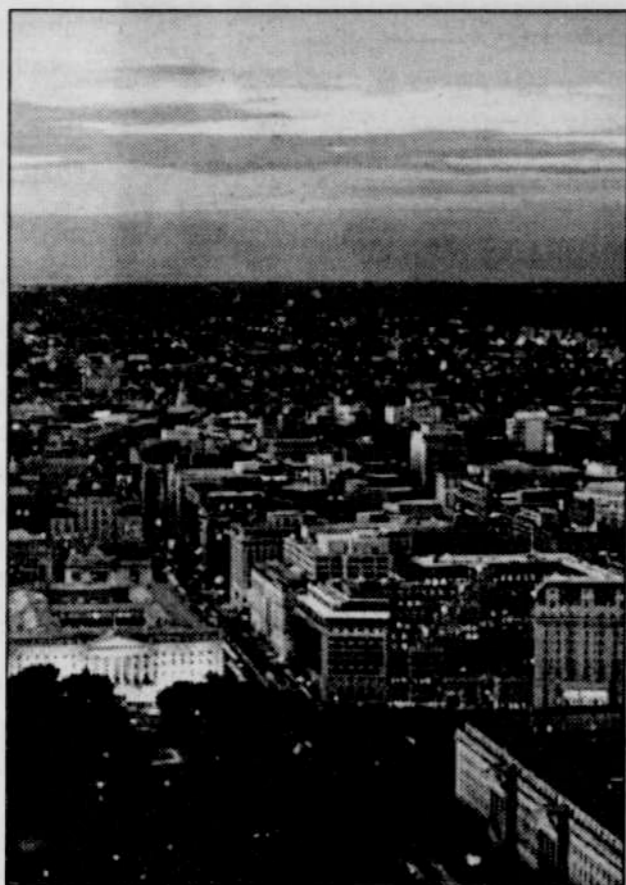


NATIONAL news

• Strictly enforcing the abstinence-only-until-marriage provision, which has led some states' public health departments to turn back Centers for Disease Control and Prevention AIDS funds rather than risk being found in violation. Many abstinence-only curricula reinforce dangerous stereotypes about sexual minorities, girls and people living with HIV.

"Both the GLBT community and communities of color have a lot to lose if these reactionary proposals are implemented," Jean said. "This is not only an issue of concern to those supporting equal treatment of GLBT families but also an issue of racial and economic justice."



Congress voted for a measure giving domestic partners of D.C. employees access to health benefits

The Bush administration has selected former Montana Gov. Marc Racicot to chair the Republican National Committee. The Human Rights Campaign called the decision a positive step that sends a message of tolerance and inclusion.

"This appointment hopefully signals that the GOP is moving in a more moderate direction that will embrace all Americans," said Winnie Stachelberg, Human Rights Campaign political director. "Racicot has a strong record of inclusion and has a history of supporting and respecting people regardless of sexual orientation."

While in office from 1992 to 2000, the popular governor enacted a state employee non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation. He also was a proponent of an unsuccessful 1993 effort to repeal Montana's sodomy law and came under attack by the Christian Coalition for that stance.

Further, Racicot opposed legislation in 1995 to add gay people to the sexual offenders registry and forced the state GOP to apologize for the attempt. However, he signed a bill in 1998 to make same-sex marriage illegal in Montana.

Racicot was President Bush's first choice for attorney general but declined to pursue the post, citing family and financial reasons. Right-wing groups vehemently opposed his candidacy because they viewed him as too moderate.

Congress passed a bill Dec. 7 that for the first time allows the District of Columbia government to fund a program giving domestic partners of city employees access to health benefits. The measure now will go to the desk of President Bush, who is expected to sign it.

"This is a tremendous victory that helps to assure fair and equitable treatment for all families in the Dis-

trict," said Winnie Stachelberg, Human Rights Campaign political director. "We look forward to President Bush's signature on this historic legislation."

The measure is the 2002 District of Columbia appropriations bill. According to HRC, Congress unfortunately stripped out language allowing funds to go to District needle exchange programs.

"We find it reprehensible that many people will unnecessarily be put at risk because the latest scientific and medical advice that clearly shows that needle exchange programs are effective and save lives is being ignored,"

Stachelberg said. "With the highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the nation, the District needs to pursue an aggressive, targeted prevention program. Yet the District is the only locality in America that is prohibited from using federal and local funds to support needle exchange programs."

Congress also allowed the bill to include an amendment limiting the use of any funds to issue, implement, administer or enforce any order invalidating the policy of the Boy Scouts of America regarding the employment or voluntary service of gay or lesbian troop leaders. "We are disappointed that Congress has elected to interfere with an ongoing judicial process and erode the local decision-making authority of the District of Columbia," Stachelberg said.

NORTH CAROLINA

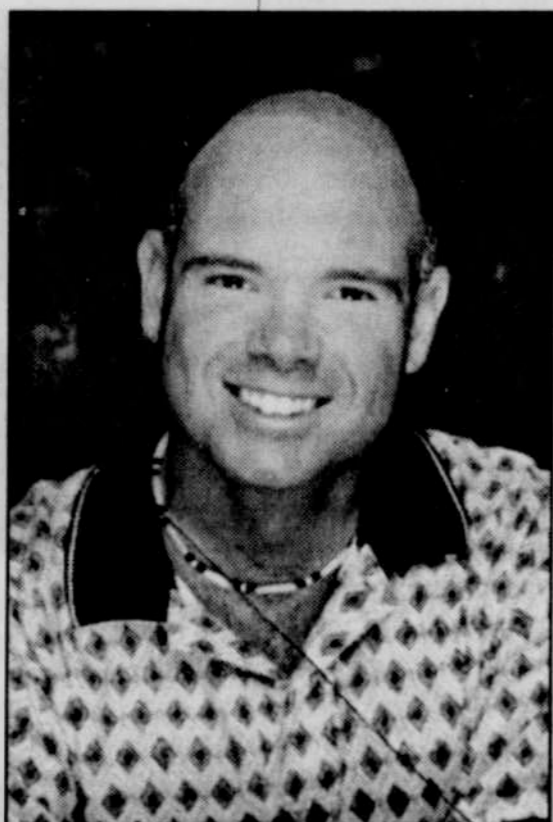
Bill "Bunky" Miller, the beloved gay contestant on the CBS reality show *Big Brother 2*, was kicked out of his hometown Christmas parade at the 11th hour, PlanetOut.com reported Dec. 6.

Jody Frankly, head of the Bessemer City Parks and Recreation Department, had asked the new national celebrity to serve as the grand marshal. But when Buddy Rampey, First Wesleyan Church pastor, found out about the invitation, he rallied his parishioners to flood City Hall with angry calls.

The town mayor, a devout Christian, caved in to the pressure. Still, Miller says he has no hard feelings.

"They're all very, very nice," the 36-year-old told the *Shelby Star*. "At least the offer was there before getting taken back."

Miller was kicked out of the *Big Brother* house Aug. 30. Since then he has been on the road with a one-man show benefiting the American Red Cross and other charities. [E]



Big Brother 2 contestant Bill "Bunky" Miller won't be coming home for the holidays

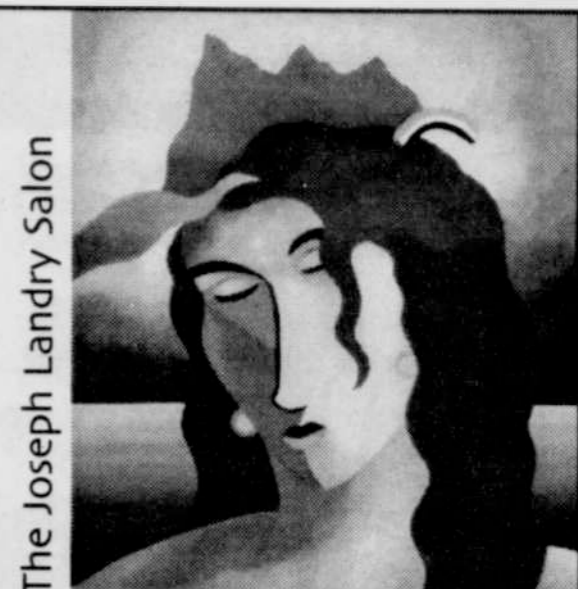
Compiled by News Editor JIM RADOSTA, who can be reached at jim@justout.com.

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