

It was a good political year for gay and lesbian Americans. Perhaps with time 2001 even will come to be seen as a pivotal milestone in the struggle for full equality.

January found many apprehensive about the pending inauguration of President Bush; some feared a rollback of gains achieved during the Clinton administration. His symbolic gestures provided a balm to soothe the often more limited accomplishments.

Many gay organizations joined with liberal allies in vigorous opposition of John Ashcroft's nomination as U.S. attorney general. Although most Democrats in the Senate voted against him, they were not willing to mount a filibuster.

The Log Cabin Republicans, who saw the controversy as an opportunity to open a dialogue with Ashcroft, became the first group to meet with him officially after he was sworn into office. That was seen as a sign of inclusiveness by the White House.

# Good News

## 2001 was a landmark political year for gay equality

by Bob Roehr



House Majority Leader Dick Armey announced his retirement in December

bill contained a provision exempting religious organizations from complying with state and local civil rights laws when they hire staff under contracts to provide social services.

A revolt of GOP moderates was headed off only when conservative U.S. Rep. J.C. Watts, R-Okla., the legislation's lead sponsor, promised to "more clearly address this matter [of a religious exemption] in conference" with

the Senate. He indicated that the Senate version of the bill likely will not include this language and that the House will accept that.

The religious right wing was able to get some of its pet anti-gay provisions adopted by Congress, such as an affirmation of the Boy Scouts of America. But its successes were largely symbolic, with few real teeth. And it lost a big one in September as its nine-year effort to block implementation of domestic partner legislation in Washington, D.C., crumpled in a House vote of 226-194.

In the wake of Sept. 11, New York Gov. George Pataki issued an executive order including gay and lesbian partners as qualifying for survivor benefits and other government programs. Kenneth R. Feinberg, appointed as special master to distribute \$11 billion in federal funds, issued regulations Dec. 20 indicating same-sex partners will be eligible claimants.

Three archnemeses decided to take a

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an openly gay man has led that agency. (Other gay and lesbian appointees have chosen not to make public statements of their orientation.) Vice President Dick Cheney's lesbian daughter, Mary, was highly visible at the inauguration but since has disappeared from public view.

In September, Michael E. Guest was sworn in as U.S. ambassador to Romania in a ceremony conducted by Secretary of State Colin Powell. At his side was teacher Alex Nevarez, who has accompanied his partner of six years overseas.

Powell acknowledged their relationship in

his remarks. The 43-year-old career diplomat is only the second openly gay person to serve as a U.S. ambassador.

The Senate changed hands in June when Jim Jeffords, R-Vt., became an Independent and voted with the Democrats to organize that body. It was the first time in history that such a switch occurred during a legislative year.

A political firestorm erupted in July when the *Washington Post* reported that the White House had made a "firm commitment" to revise regulations allowing the Salvation Army and other religious groups to practice hiring discrimination against gays when using federal funds. The administration denied the report, and the organization later said it must have misunderstood.

It all was tied in with Bush's "faith-based initiative," rammed through the House later that month by the Republican leadership. The



Vermont Sen. Jim Jeffords broke the GOP stronghold in D.C. when he switched parties last summer



Michael E. Guest (right, with Romanian President Ion Iliescu) was sworn in as U.S. ambassador to Romania in September

Much of the fear of the Bush administration largely dissipated during the ensuing months. Although the photo opportunities have disappeared, the door has remained open on issues of substance, albeit often at a lower level.

Perhaps the most visible acknowledgment of the community came with the April appointment of Scott Evertz to head the Office of National AIDS Policy, the first time



First lesbian Mary Cheney has disappeared from public view—along with her father

# Say What?

## Just Out compiles the year's most memorable quotes

by Rex Wockner

"You faggots can vanish to volcanic ash and reappear in hell with a can of gas and a match."

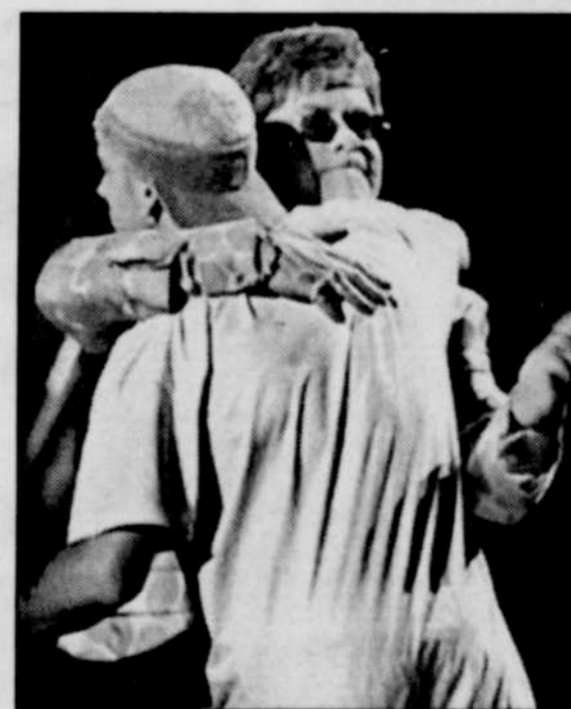
—Lyrics from rapper Eminem's *The Marshall Mathers LP*.

"If a person writes a novel and there's a homophobic scene in it, you don't say that the novelist is homophobic.... I don't think he's hateful."

—Elton John on Eminem, his duet partner during the Grammy Awards, to VH1, Oct. 11.

"I think Elton John would sing with a toilet-roll holder if he thought it would get him more publicity."

—Boy George, to *PeopleNews.com*, June 28.



Eminem (right, embracing Elton John): brilliant, bigot or both?

"What is the big deal about Eminem? Since when is offensive language a reason for being unpopular? I find the language of George W. much more offensive."

—Madonna to the *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 18.

"I believe that someone's sexual orientation is their private business. I mean, I view someone's private lifestyle as exactly that, private. So I don't—I try to judge a person based upon their heart and

soul and conscience and talent, when it comes

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