

NATIONAL news

MASSACHUSETTS

Republican Gov. Jane Swift made history Jan. 3 by selecting an openly gay activist and senior aide to run on her ticket as lieutenant governor in the 2002 election—a first for a sitting governor. Patrick C. Guerriero, a former state representative and the former mayor of Melrose, will resign as deputy chief of staff to campaign full time.

"This is a historic step for either party...and we're proud it was made by a Republican," said Rich Tafel, Log Cabin Republicans executive director. "The Massachusetts Republicans have always been on the cutting edge of the future of the GOP, starting with the anti-slavery and women's suffrage movements, to Gov. William Weld's first-ever gay youth commission in 1991, to this moment in history with Gov. Swift."

Chris Ferguson, Log Cabin Republicans of Massachusetts president, added: "Gov. Swift has made history by breaking a major barrier in Massachusetts for gays and lesbians, and we strongly applaud her leadership. Pat Guerriero brings strength to the Republican ticket, not only with his record of winning elections and bringing people together but also for his tireless advocacy for citizens from all walks of life in Massachusetts."

Guerriero served three terms in the state Legislature before a successful two terms as mayor of Melrose, where he campaigned on a "return to civility" and an end to divisive politics in the town. As mayor, he also was an outspoken advocate of the sexual minorities community.

Turning away critics, Guerriero strongly supported a gay-straight alliance program at Melrose High School. He also was awarded the prestigious Fenn Award for Political Leadership by the John F. Kennedy Library in 1998.

PENNSYLVANIA

The state Supreme Court has affirmed that a lesbian mother who raised a child with her former partner may seek visitation despite the biological mother's objection.

The 5-2 ruling recognized the lesbian mother's legal standing as a parent in fact, applying the same rules it has applied to other families. The court said lesbian or gay parents may seek visitation or custody of a child, even if there is no biological or legal tie, if they assumed a parental status and performed parental duties over time with the consent of the legal parent.

The parents in this case, identified by their initials to protect the child's privacy, were in a long-term relationship and raised her together for three years. After their breakup in 1996, L.R.M., the biological



Patrick C. Guerriero

mother, refused to allow T.B. visits with their daughter despite T.B.'s daily parental role in her life.

"This child had a loving parent ripped from her life for no good reason," said Patricia M. Logue, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund senior counsel, who represented T.B. and argued the case. "We are pleased that the court ruled in the best interests of the child and that this mother has the chance to reunite with her daughter."

In 2000, the Superior Court unanimously held that L.R.M. cannot claim her biological ties to their daughter give her absolute rights to the child. In 1997, the Court of Common Pleas had determined

T.B. had parental status and ordered visitation. The latest decision does not automatically grant visitation but gives T.B. the chance to see her child again.

"This mother helped raise and care for her child for years," said Kevin M. Cathcart, Lambda executive director. "Her love and commitment to her child transcends biology, and the court recognized what truly makes a family."

NEW YORK

Gov. George E. Pataki called upon legislators Jan. 9 to pass the Sexual Orientation Nondiscrimination Act during the 2002 session.

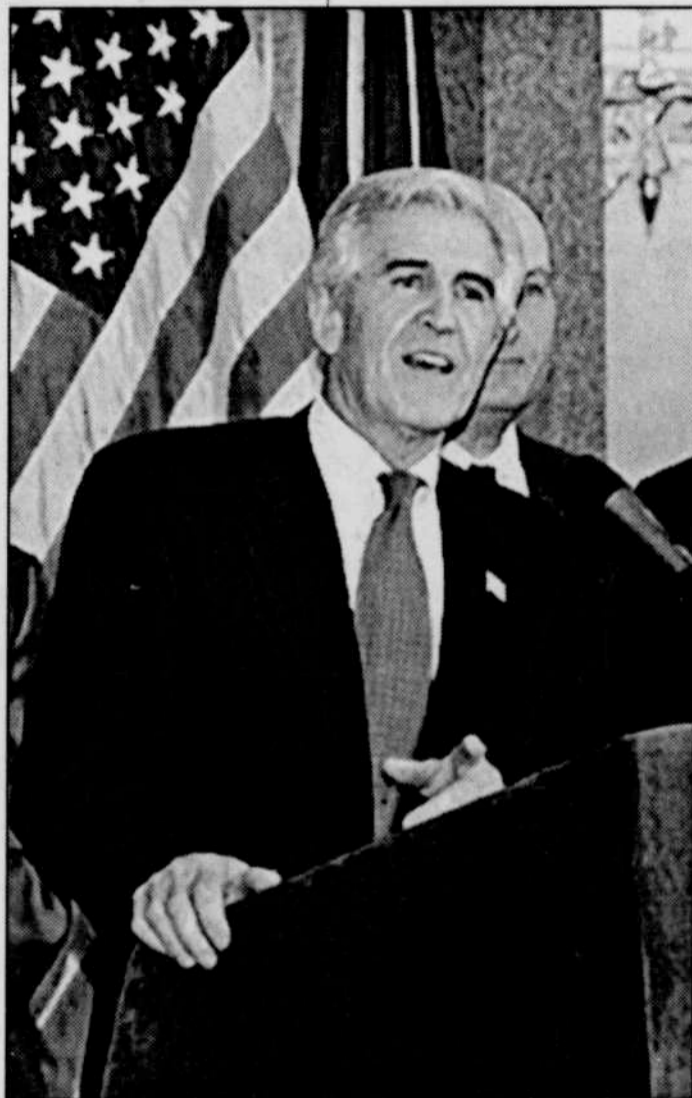
The statement received an immediate standing ovation—one of only four during his State of the State address to the Assembly and Senate. The entire podium and most of those in attendance—including Lt. Gov. Mary O. Donohue, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno—took to their feet.

"There is no place in our society for bigotry, intolerance or hatred," Pataki said. "Let's extend the hate crimes law by passing the Sexual Orientation Nondiscrimination Act."

Joe Grabarz, Empire State Pride Agenda executive director, said the speech sends a clear message that the time has come for New York to grant equal protections to gay men and lesbians in employment, housing and public accommodation. This legislative session promises to be the most challenging one ever because of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, he added.

"These remarks...and the impressive show of bipartisan support for them are historic," Grabarz said. "We now need a commitment from both chambers to schedule a vote as soon as possible. We believed we had such a commitment last year—a year in which the session never really ended and much business was left unfinished."

The Democrat-controlled Assembly has



New York Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno responds to the State of the State address Jan. 9

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