

NATIONAL news

fare proposal calling for significant federal and state funding of programs to promote and foster heterosexual marriage.

Released Feb. 26, his plan encourages "healthy marriages and two-parent married families as a goal." This includes the expenditure of \$300 million for projects devoted to promoting heterosexual marriage, of which \$100 million will subsidize state and local experimental projects for premarital counseling and education as well as research to foster sound marriages.

"Lesbian mothers on welfare cannot marry," said Sean Cahill, NGLTF Policy Institute director. "The safety net should support all families in need, not only those which pass a conservative litmus test."

CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara resident Clint Scott Risetter, 37, died Feb. 24 as a result of burns he sustained to his body after being doused with gasoline and set on fire.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Martin Thomas Hartman, 38, attacked him because he was a gay man who was "unhappy and depressed so he didn't need to be around in the world." The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Pacific Pride Foundation condemned the killing March 4.

According to the lead investigator in the case, Hartman admitted he has a lot of hatred toward gay people. He has been charged with murder, arson and a hate crime.

"Acts of violence such as this against members of our community are unthinkable, yet they occur with alarming frequency around the country," said Darrel Cummings, NGLTF deputy executive director. "We are deeply saddened, angered and ever more committed to changing the environment that fosters and supports this kind of hate violence. Those in religious and political leadership—such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and, most recently, Chief Justice Roy Moore of the Alabama Supreme Court—must once and for all end the hateful rhetoric that inspires homophobia and accompanying hate crimes."

Pacific Pride organized a candlelight vigil and memorial March 4. NGLTF encouraged the sexual minorities community and its allies to contact officials and urge that this hate crime, and all bias-motivated activity and rhetoric, not go unnoticed.

"We are outraged and saddened by the news of such a heinous crime," said Janet Stanley, Pacific Pride executive director. "This is a time for all Santa Barbarans to come together to denounce such actions."

MICHIGAN

Michael Glenn Keep was found guilty of second-degree murder in the April 2000

death of Paul Chmiel, his gay cellmate at Brooks Correctional Facility.

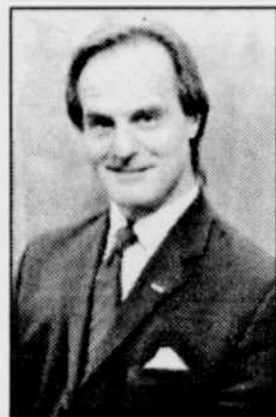
A Muskegon County jury deliberated for less than a day before announcing the verdict. Keep faces a possibility of life in prison during sentencing March 19.

He killed Chmiel in a brutal attack, using his bare hands to crush the inmate's ribs and strangle him. The murderer admitted in a written confession he hated gay men.

Chmiel allegedly offered oral sex to his roommate in exchange for a cigarette. Although no sexual contact or assault was claimed to have occurred, Keep still felt the need to slap him, crush several ribs and his neck, and press his neck into a bunk railing, eventually killing him.

"It was a pretty vicious death," Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Gary Miles told the *Muskegon Chronicle*. "The motive is his dislike of homosexual males."

Jeffrey Montgomery, Triangle Foundation executive director, added: "This case helps bring to light the risk and vulnerability of gay prisoners. Within the correctional system, gay people are horribly devalued. At least this jury understood the value of Paul's life, even if too late to save it."



Jeffrey Montgomery

MASSACHUSETTS

The Supreme Judicial Court ruled Feb. 21 that the state's centuries-old sodomy laws are inapplicable to private, consensual conduct. In a brief unanimous ruling, it found that two provisions providing penalties of up to five and 20 years for convictions for oral and anal sex, respectively, may not be enforced against people as long as they did not intend public exposure.

Nine individuals who engage in conduct of the type prohibited by the laws challenged their constitutionality because they criminalize common acts of intimacy. Although the court technically dismissed the case because none of the plaintiffs was subject to prosecution, it declared for the first time that neither of the Massachusetts statutes applies to private, consensual conduct.

"This is a tremendous victory," said Jennifer Levi, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders attorney. "The court today clarified that these antiquated laws may not be used to intrude on individuals' rights to engage in common acts of intimacy in private settings." □

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



Mourners attend a candlelight vigil and memorial for Clint Scott Risetter on March 4 in Santa Barbara, Calif.



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