

**NATIONAL news**



New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg waves to the crowd March 16 during the St. Patrick's Day Parade

23 million—from 5.4 percent to 8.3 percent of U.S. citizens. This represents overall a 53 percent increase in the number of people protected. "I was always taught that everyone is equal," Bloomberg said. "I do this today because it is right."

New York Assembly Health Committee chairman Richard N. Gottfried, D-Manhattan, has introduced a bill requiring the correctional services commissioner to develop comprehensive sexually transmitted disease and HIV prevention programs in all state prisons.

The legislation would require education, outreach, harm reduction, testing and the availability of disease barriers such as condoms. A recent survey by the U.S. Justice Department shows New York state prisons have the country's highest rate of HIV.

"We have 70,000 people in our state prisons," Gottfried said. "Preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV in our prisons protects the people in the communities to which the inmates will return when they leave prison and the inmates themselves."

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After meeting with Pope John Paul II, a few Roman Catholic leaders continued to link the church's crisis involving the sexual abuse of minors to the admission of gay men into the priesthood.

"One of the difficulties we do face in seminary life or recruitment is made possible when there does exist a homosexual atmosphere or dynamic that makes heterosexual men think twice" about entering because they fear harassment, said Bishop Wilton D. Gregory, head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, during a press briefing April 23. "It's an ongoing struggle to make sure the Catholic priesthood is not dominated by homosexual men."

In talking about the Rome meeting, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington, D.C., said: "People mentioned problems in society. One was sexual permissiveness. One was homosexuality. One was lack of commitment."

The American Psychological Association, National Association of Social Workers, American Academy of Child Psychiatrists and Child Welfare League of America all have policy statements indicating no correlation exists between homosexuality and child abuse. In fact, a 1994 study found "a child's risk of being molested by his or her relative's heterosexual partner is 100 times greater than by someone who might be identified as a homosexual."

"The church hierarchy is refusing to acknowledge their own failings in moving abusive priests from parish to parish and protecting criminals instead of children," said Marianne

Duddy, executive director of Dignity/USA, an organization for sexual minority Catholics. "And now the American church has joined the Vatican in cynically shifting the blame to gay priests."

The U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee recommended April 24 that the entire chamber consider the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. If passed, the legislation would prohibit workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Announcing her support of the bill, U.S. Sen. Susan Collins offered two amendments that were accepted by voice vote to bring it more in line with Title VII of 1964's Civil Rights Act. "In the final analysis, I simply do not believe it is fair to allow discrimination in the workplace against men and women solely because of their sexual orientation," the Maine Republican said.

Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., has committed to securing a vote on the bill before the end of the session. ENDA has support from labor groups such as the AFL-CIO.

The legislation also has been endorsed by 65 companies, including 29 major corporations. Supporters include AT&T, Coors, Xerox, Fleet-Boston, Eastman Kodak, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and General Mills.

ENDA "goes to the core of what this nation is all about: giving all our citizens the fundamental right to be judged on one's own merits," Shell Oil CEO Steve Miller said. "We encourage the Congress to move expeditiously to pass this common-sense legislation."

ENDA enjoys widespread, bipartisan support. It has 44 co-sponsors in the Senate and 191 in the House.

The public also supports the principles of ENDA, according to a June 2001 Gallup Poll. Up from 56 percent in 1977, 85 percent of respondents favored equal opportunity in employment for gay men and lesbians.

**MONTANA**

Republican Gov. Judy Martz refused April 18 to commit her support for expanded hate crimes legislation and compared anti-gay violence to tree-spiking by environmentalists who want to halt logging projects. She instead said she is taking a wait-and-see approach, 365Gay.com reported.

State Rep. Christine Kaufmann, the Legislature's only openly gay member, organized the meeting to request Martz's support. "The added element in these hate crimes is that an entire group of people is really terrorized by the act because the perpetrator means to send a message to the entire group, not just the people who are victims," the Helena Democrat said.

Martz responded: "I go back to the timber people. Same thing. When they spike trees, it's to scare the whole industry. So I agree with you; it is perpetrated to scare the whole group, but there are groups out there that get scared...and it's not right in any case. I don't care what the case is. It is not right." □

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Judy Martz

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