

Continued from Page 21

ALABAMA

A public school district in Alabama violated the U.S. Constitution by firing a teacher because he is gay, according to a federal lawsuit filed May 10. The man was deeply closeted but was fired anyway because officials suspected he was gay, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

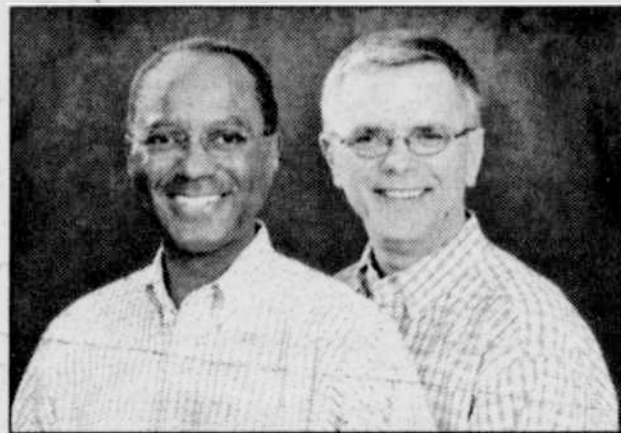
"This is a top-notch teacher. He was the first to get to school in the morning and the last to leave at night—and in between he created a new school program that won statewide awards," attorney Leslie Cooper said. "One day he sat down with his principal and received an excellent evaluation, and literally the next day he was fired."

Within days of the termination, kids circulated written petitions asking the school board to let him keep his job—and more than a quarter of the entire student body signed them, Cooper said. The school board, the superintendent and the principal stood by their decision, however, and replaced him with another instructor who was not even certified to teach the subject, the lawsuit charges.

The fired man is identified in the case as "John Doe" because he is working at another public school in Alabama where he remains closeted. In a court affidavit filed by the ACLU, he says he fears harassment or violence if his identity is known and that he again will be fired and become unemployable as a teacher in the state.

"I know I'm a good teacher," the man said. "My bosses know it, my students know it, and their parents know it. I've always understood that the bargain here is that I do my job and do it well and that I keep my private life private. I did that, and it didn't matter. I lost my job anyway."

tutional obstacles in their attempt to get this amendment enacted, so we must put this threat in its proper context," Birch said. "The amendment currently has little support and is nowhere near passage, but we must remain ever-vigilant and work with our allies in Congress to ensure the Constitution continues to represent all Americans."



Robert Compton and David Wilson are one of seven same-sex couples challenging Massachusetts laws that deny them the fundamental right to marry

MASSACHUSETTS

Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders appealed May 21 a trial court ruling denying marriage licenses to seven same-sex couples who challenged Massachusetts laws that deny them the fundamental right to marry. A judge dismissed the case May 9 despite acknowledging the importance of the status and the legal protections that marriage provides.

"We believe we have a strong case on appeal," attorney Jennifer Levi said. "Despite sharing the same love and commitment as their nongay neighbors, [they] cannot provide the same security for their family because they are not allowed to marry. That's unfair, and the state can provide no justification for it."

FLORIDA

In response to legal demands made by local and national civil rights groups on behalf of two students at Bloomingdale High School in Valrico, the principal has agreed to allow girls to wear slacks underneath their

gowns at graduation. The discriminatory dress code policy stated that senior girls only were allowed to wear dresses or skirts with hemlines above their gowns during the ceremony.

"Forcing girls to wear a skirt or dress reinforces stereotypical gender norms that are harmful to all students," said Kate Kendell, National Center for Lesbian Rights executive director. "We applaud Bloomingdale High School for promptly responding based on reason and common sense."

Attorney Karen M. Doering sent a demand letter May 22 on behalf of seniors Alicia Traurig and Amber Smith, both of whom wanted to wear dress slacks to graduation. She argued that the policy unfairly discriminates against female students in violation of their "constitutional right to privacy, liberty and First Amendment protections."

Doering demanded that the school amend its policy to accommodate the requests of Traurig, Smith and dozens of others who objected to the outdated and biased policy. Within hours after receiving the letter, Bloomingdale agreed to change its dress code to permit girls to wear slacks.

"Every year, when graduation rolls around, school districts across the country become obsessed with dictating what students can wear underneath their gowns," said Randall Marshall, American Civil Liberties Union of Florida legal director. "And in almost every circumstance, the students have prevailed." □

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



Three of the Federal Marriage Amendment's House co-sponsors are Democrats: from left, Ralph Hall of Texas, David Phelps of Illinois and Ronnie Shows of Mississippi

NATIONAL

An anti-gay constitutional amendment was introduced May 15 in Congress to preclude recognition of same-sex marriages and prevent courts from requiring that marital benefits be conferred on unmarried couples. The initiative could deprive gay families of fundamental protections such as hospital visitation rights, inheritance rights and health care benefits, according to opponents.

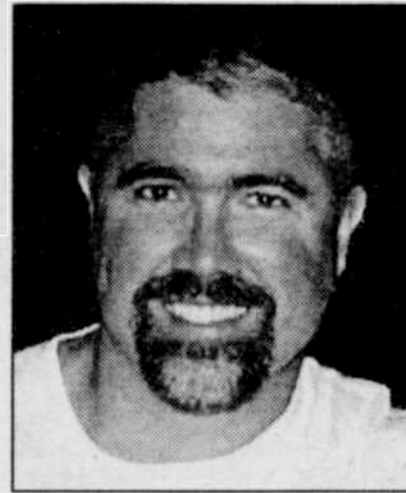
"The U.S. Constitution is a revered document and should not be used for cynical election-year posturing," said Elizabeth Birch, Human Rights Campaign executive director. "At a time when not a single gay couple can marry in any state of this nation, and as our country faces much larger challenges, this is hardly the kind of sideshow anyone needs."

The House and Senate introduction of the Federal Marriage Amendment was announced at a press conference by a group of religious political activists known as the Alliance for Marriage. House co-sponsors are U.S. Reps. Ralph Hall, D-Texas; David Phelps, D-Ill.; Chris Cannon, R-Utah; Sue Myrick, R-N.C.; Jo Ann Davis, R-Va.; and Ronnie Shows, D-Miss.

Passing a constitutional amendment requires two-thirds of both houses of Congress voting in favor of it. If this is accomplished, then three-fourths of the states must ratify the initiative before it takes effect.

"Our opponents face significant built-in consti-

We can meet all of your mortgage lending needs.



Free preapproval over the phone, first time buyer, zero down payment, complicated credit, all loan types, cashout

Christopher Mee
Rose City
Mortgage Specialists

(503) 635-0101 www.RoseCityMtg.com chrismee@rosecitymtg.com

Ferguson
AUTOBODY

(503) 232-3600

- Collision Repair Problems Solved
- Wheel Alignment
- Tires
- Oil Changes
- Service Work
- State Farm Service First Provider
- Specializing in Foreign & European Cars
- Mini-Vans & Sport Utility Vehicles

2454 E. BURNSIDE • PORTLAND, OR 97214
www.fergusonauto.com
Family Owned & Operated Since 1952

Center Townhouses

2 Bedrooms & Bonus Room
NEW PRICE
\$174,900—\$209,000



NE 60th & Glisan
Innovative Design
Convenience of the MAX

Model Open Sat. & Sun. 1-4
only 14 of 26 units left
financing available

Windermere
Cronin & Caplan Realty Group, Inc.

for appointment call
Call Jan Stranski
503-497-5255
stranski@windermere.com