

NATIONAL news

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President Bush's proposal to create a Homeland Security Department perpetuates a double standard for gay, lesbian and bi Coast Guardsmen that should be removed, according to Service-members Legal Defense Network.

In making the announcement June 6, he suggested the U.S. Coast Guard be moved from the Transportation Department to the new

Cabinet-level agency. Under his plan, Coast Guardsmen would work alongside officials from the Secret Service, Customs Service and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, among others.

The plan, however, would mean Coast Guardsmen are the only members of the new department who would continue to be fired on the basis of sexual orientation under the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. All other agencies would be covered by an executive order, implemented by the Clinton administration and still in effect under the Bush administration, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

"The president's proposal presents a unique opportunity for the White House and Congress to free the Coast Guard from the military's policies of anti-gay discrimination," said Sharra E. Greer, SLDN legal director. "The Department of Homeland Security will recruit America's best and brightest, including linguists and intelligence officers."

"There is no question that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans have been, and will continue to be, a part of our nation's defense. In his proposal to Congress, President Bush should recognize their contributions and free this new agency from the hypocrisy of a dangerous, anti-gay double standard."

Greer noted that almost as many members of Team Coast Guard are protected from anti-gay discrimination by executive order as are subject to "don't ask, don't tell" in the first place. "Already, Coast Guardsmen serve alongside openly gay people as they protect our nation," she said.

The nation's leading group of psychoanalysts announced May 28 that the best interest of the child—not sexual orientation—should be the determining factor in parenting decisions regarding conception, child rearing, adoption, visitation and custody disputes. The organization also gave a strong endorsement to same-sex parenting, saying gay people can be just as capable as other parents.

"Accumulated evidence suggests the best interest of the child requires attachment to committed, nurturing and competent parents," the American Psychoanalytic Association said in a statement. "Evaluation of an individual or couple for these parental qualities should be determined without prejudice regarding sexual orientation. APsAA believes that



President Bush prepares for his June 6 speech about the Homeland Security Department with counselor Karen Hughes at the White House

gay and lesbian individuals and couples are capable of meeting the best interest of the child and should be afforded the same rights and should accept the same responsibilities as heterosexual parents."

Association president Newell Fisher took a firm stand against discrimination in adoptions. He criticized opponents who distort the truth.

"It is disturbing to hear about cases in which gay or lesbian parents are being denied custody or the right to adopt solely on the basis of their sexual orientation," Fisher said. "That's discrimination. The American Psychoanalytic Association deplors such discrimination and is especially troubled when psychological findings are distorted, misrepresented or blatantly ignored, as is so often the case in these legal decisions."

Dignity/USA, the nation's foremost organization of queer Catholics, reacted with cautious optimism to the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference draft policy on pedophilia June 5. The document contained no mention of sexual orientation as a factor, contrary to earlier statements from Vatican leaders.

"The church and the victims of sexual abuse have been waiting for the bishops to acknowledge their own fault in perpetuating a system of abuse and cover-up," Dignity/USA president Mary Louise Cervone said. "They finally seem to be admitting that they were a big part of the problem."

Dignity/USA acknowledged that the exclusion of blame on gay men is not a final resolution to the conflict begun by Vatican spokesman Novarro-Valls in March.

"Repeated, unsubstantiated slurs against gay priests—and, by extension, the entire gay community—have persisted for months and have come from some of the most powerful men in our church," executive director Marianne Duddy said. "We continue to demand a full retraction of all statements linking homosexuality and child abuse."



Demonstrators protest anti-gay comments by Catholic officials April 27 at St. Patrick's Cathedral

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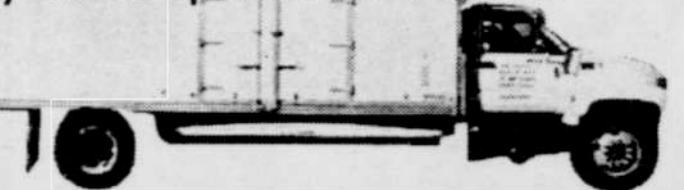
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