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**NATIONAL news**

**FLORIDA**

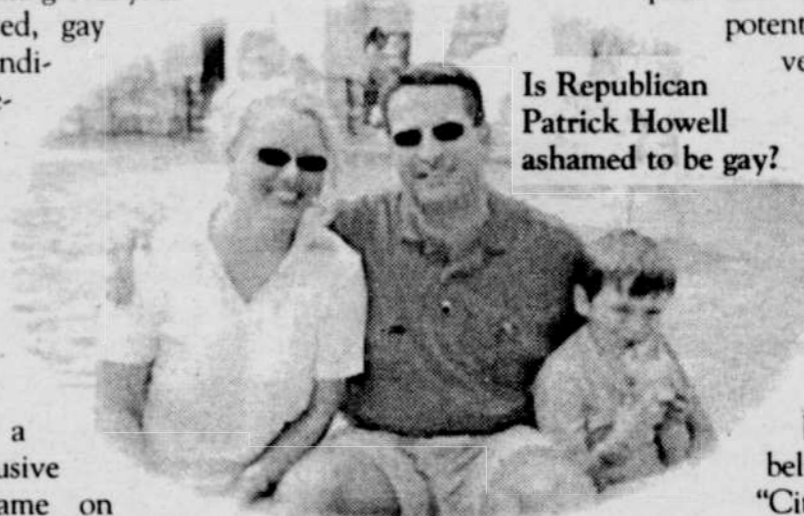
The Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, a political action committee that endorses openly gay candidates, has condemned a statement by Doug Head, Orange County Democratic Party chairman, comparing an openly gay Republican to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.



Doug Head

Head was interviewed by the *Orlando Sentinel* about Patrick Howell, a candidate for the Florida House of Representatives who has the Victory Fund's endorsement. The July 30 article read, in part, "Head said, however, that gay Democrats crossing party lines to support Howell would be like a 'Jew voting for Hitler.'" Bob Kearney, Victory Fund political director, responded: "Head's analogy is alarming and reprehensible. There is no comparison between a man who is participating in the democratic process and a totalitarian responsible for the slaughter of millions of innocent people, including Jews and gays. Head's attempt to make sexual orientation a partisan issue is divisive and ignores the positive contributions made to our society by openly gay public servants of every political affiliation."

Kearney and Victory Fund board member David de Silva Cornell of Miami Beach responded to Head's statement with a letter to the editor of the *Sentinel*, stating: "As your story documented, gay and lesbian candidates and office-holders are in the extreme minority, but all of them—no matter their party affiliation—are making great strides toward a more inclusive democracy. Shame on Head for suggesting otherwise."



Is Republican Patrick Howell ashamed to be gay?

Head lashed back by implying Howell is a sellout. "I...was shocked by the bizarre campaign Web site photo of 'proudly' gay Mr. Howell posing as the happy heterosexual family man with his arm around a female campaign worker and the son of a marriage he left when the boy was 2 months old bouncing on his knee."

**GEORGIA**

In a new case challenging public funding of a religious organization, the United Methodist Children's Home in Decatur has been accused of using state tax dollars to discriminate in employment and to indoctrinate foster youth in religion. Seven Georgia taxpayers filed the lawsuit July 31 to stop the state from funding the organization unless it changes its practices.

Represented by Lambda Legal, the plaintiffs charge that, despite receiving 40 percent of its budget from the state of Georgia, the Home only will hire Christians, fired a lesbian counselor because her sexual orientation conflicted with its religious teachings and refused to hire a highly qualified psychologist because he is Jewish. The lawsuit also alleges that the Home requires its staff to provide services to youth based on its own religious beliefs rather than on sound professional practices.


For example, the Home instructs its staff that queer kids should be sent into potentially dangerous intervention therapy to undermine their sexual orientation. In addition, all youth at the state-funded facility are required to attend Methodist services, regardless of their religious beliefs.

"Citizens of Georgia do not expect their tax dollars to be used to fund religious discrimination, and the Constitution does not allow it," attorney Susan Sommer said. "The state must hold the United Methodist Children's Home accountable and stop funding the Home as long as it continues to use tax dollars to force its religious beliefs on young people in state custody and to discriminate in employment."

The lawsuit charges that the lead plaintiff, Aimee Bellmore, was fired because she is a lesbian and does not share the Home's religious beliefs about homosexuality. She was a highly capable youth counselor at the Home who had been notified in July 2001 that she soon would be promoted to the position of family therapist.

Instead, Bellmore was terminated in November of that year after the Home learned she was a

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