



California Assemblyman Dennis Mountjoy (left, with Arnold Schwarzenegger) opposes landmark legislation protecting queer youth in foster care

Continued from Page 19

A report published last year by Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund detailed the vast unmet needs of queer youth in California's foster care system. An estimated 20 percent to 40 percent of homeless youth are gay, lesbian or bi, and queer kids account for about 30 percent of adolescent suicides.

Amid vicious rhetoric from several conservative Republicans on the Assembly floor—Dennis Mountjoy of Monrovia declared angrily, "This bill says it's OK to be gay; it's not OK to be gay"—numerous Democrats stood up to voice their strong support for the bill. Co-author Dion Aroner of Berkeley remarked afterward, "Mr. Mountjoy's comments provided a perfect example of the kind of intolerant behavior that this bill will protect vulnerable foster youth against."

PENNSYLVANIA

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled unanimously Aug. 20 that the Pennsylvania Adoption Act unequivocally allows a gay or lesbian partner to adopt the other partner's children. The decision follows four years of litigation for two families, a gay couple in Erie with two children and a lesbian couple from Lancaster with twin boys.

The Superior Court had held that the act first would require a legal parent to relinquish his or her parental rights before allowing a same-sex partner to adopt the children being raised by both of them. The Supreme Court reversed that decision, calling the interpretation "absurd," and remanded the cases for full evidentiary hearings.

"There is no language in the adoption act precluding two unmarried same-sex partners...from adopting a child who had no legal parents. It is therefore absurd to prohibit their adoption merely because their children were the biological or adopted children of one of the partners prior to the filing of the adoption petition," states the unanimous court decision authored by Chief Justice Stephen A. Zappala.

This ruling is critical to providing kids with the rights associated with a legal parent-child relationship including inheritance rights, Social Security survivor benefits, eligibility for health insurance benefits, medical decision-making authority, child support payments and custody. Same-sex couples throughout Pennsylvania now will have the opportunity to adopt their partners' children.



Paul Cameron

gay men and lesbians as child abusers and prone to violence and disease have been rejected in federal court and caused him to be booted out of the American Psychological Association for unscientific and unethical practices in his work.

"The board based this ban on a handful of ugly and outdated stereotypes and then went out looking for any evidence to back up what it had done," attorney Leslie Cooper said. "The board has yet to come up with any evidence that gay people are bad parents from a legitimate scientific source—that's because there isn't any."

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

VIRGINIA

A lesbian Episcopal priest in northern Virginia will be able to adopt another foster child from the District of Columbia—and Virginia child placement officials no longer will bar such adoptions based on the parents' sexual orientation—under a lawsuit settlement made public Aug. 14.

Linda Kaufman adopted a 5-year-old D.C. foster child in 1992, and she has been trying to adopt a sibling for him since 1999. A Virginia adoption agency and D.C. officials determined that she is well qualified to provide a home for a second child—but state officials refused to approve the placement because she is a lesbian.

"This is a common-sense settlement that puts the focus of adoption back where it belongs—on the kids," attorney Greg Nevins said. "Today's settlement isn't only a victory for Linda's family—it's a beacon of hope for some of the 1,016 children in foster care in D.C. who are waiting to be adopted."

Kaufman works in Washington, D.C., but lives in Arlington with her partner, Liane Rozzell. She said she immediately will begin the process of adopting another child.

"These kids need a loving, stable, permanent home, which is what my family provides," Kaufman said. "This settlement is what I've wanted all along—for my application to be processed and assessed like all the others and for kids who badly need homes to have that chance."

ARKANSAS

Saying a state ban on gay and lesbian foster parenting does nothing to help children in need and is based only on bias and stereotypes, the American Civil Liberties Union filed papers Aug. 20 asking a judge to strike down the policy once and for all.

In the lawsuit, originally filed in 1999, four prospective foster parents—including a gay couple who have been in a committed relationship for 17 years and a heterosexual married man who is barred from foster parenting because his gay son lives at home—said the ban violates their right to equal treatment under the federal and state constitutions. The policy was adopted by the state's Child Welfare Agency Review Board in 1999.

"The child welfare board's own attorneys advised them against enacting this ban, and they went right ahead and did it anyway," said Rita Sklar, ACLU of Arkansas executive director. "They allowed their bias against gay people to guide their actions in the face of overwhelming social science evidence that lesbians and gay men make perfectly good foster parents."

In passing the policy, the board relied on the widely discredited "junk science" of Paul Cameron, a psychologist whose efforts to paint

Pastor Kathy Tackett The City Church, Portland

Openly Gay & Diversified
All Sexual Orientations & Gender Expressions Welcome
Services: Sunday 10:45am

503-775-5024
available for commitment ceremonies

KAREN M. SWEIGERT, MD
Obstetrics and Gynecology

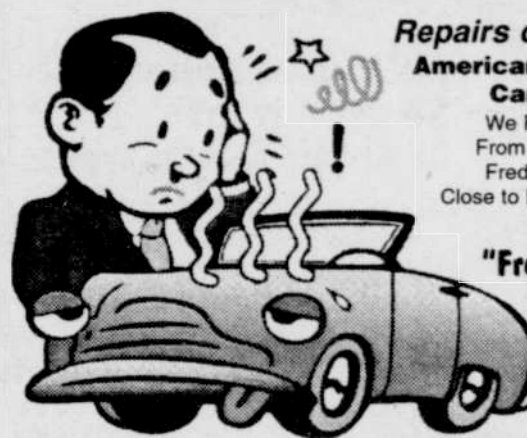
Phone
503 274-9936
Fax
503 274-2660



Cascade Women's Health, PC
1130 N.W. 22nd, Suite 320, Portland, OR 97210

DOMESTIC A&G IMPORT Automotive

Mention this ad and get a 10% discount.
"SAME DAY SERVICE ON MOST REPAIRS"



Repairs of All Makes & Models
American • European • Imports
Cars • Trucks • RVs
We Fix It Right the First Time
From Oil Changes to Overhaul,
Fred's Auto Works Does It All
Close to Downtown • Free Local Rides
All Makes & Models

"Fred's Auto Works...
Why Doesn't Yours?"

Services Include:
• Maintenance • DEQ
• Tune-ups • Poor Engine
Performance
• Brakes • Clutch
• All Electrical Problems
• Carburetors & Fuel Injection
• Pre Purchase Inspection
• Alternators & Starters
(Repaired, Rebuilt
or Exchanged)

503 238-1159

926 SE Morrison, Portland • <http://aandgautomotive.uswestdex.com>



Will You Be Shut Out When Your Partner Needs You?

Richard B. Schneider

ATTORNEY AT LAW

is well versed in the special estate planning needs of the GLBT community and can help you with care and professionalism.

FREE REPORT!

"Gay & Lesbian Couples Face Special Challenges In Estate Planning."

What Every Gay And Lesbian Couple Should Know About Estate Planning.

Call today for your free copy.

503.241.1215

www.rbsllc.com

Law Offices of Richard B. Schneider, LLC
2455 NW Marshall St., Suite 11 • Portland, OR 97210



"Proudly Serving the
Northeast Portland
Gay Community"

AUTO • HOME • LIFE
Small Business Needs

Ellen Guldenzopf
Insurance Specialist

503.281.2228

2154 NE Broadway #120
Portland, OR 97232

email: agntln@aol.com

