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**WORLDnews****SWEDEN**

Swedes elected five gay men to Parliament on Sept. 15. A total of 27 gay men and lesbians were elected to local government posts.

The gay MPs are incumbent Tasso Stafilidis of the Left Party, representing Helsingborg; Martin Andreasson of the Liberal Party, representing Stockholm; Ulf Holm of the Green Party, representing the university town of Lund; Börje Vestlund of the Social Democratic Party, representing Stockholm; and Tobias Billström of the Moderate Party, representing Malmö. Vestlund and Andreasson have a long history as activists with the National Federation for Sexual Equality.

"It is possible to be an out LGBT person and at the same time a politician without any negative consequences," federation president Sören Andersson said. "It is very important that the Parliament has out LGBT members. [It means] extra support for MPs who already today are supporting LGBT issues."

The Social Democrats will continue in power, working in coalition with the Left and Green parties. Swedish gay activists have five goals, said Jon Voss, editor of the newspaper QX: to ban discrimination via the constitution, to reform the nation's draconian HIV transmission laws, to abolish a law that criminalizes encouraging patrons at saunas to have sex, to open up hospital-based artificial insemination to lesbians and to merge marriage and registered partnership laws.

Swedish registered partnership grants more than 99 percent of the rights and obligations of marriage, but gay couples cannot wed under the laws straight couples use. "We expect that all remaining negative treatment of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons in current legislation will be removed," Andersson said.



From top, Tasso Stafilidis, Martin Andreasson and Tobias Billström are among the five gay men who were elected to Sweden's Parliament

scrap of apparel anywhere on your body, no matter where or how flimsy, then...you are not 'nude in a public place' under the law."

Restricting marriage to opposite-sex couples violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a second court ruled Sept. 6.

The decision by a Quebec Superior Court echoed a July ruling by an Ontario Superior Court. Both rulings give the federal government two years to comply before being preempted by the judiciary.

"In Quebec, the [plaintiffs] have been able, since July 2002, to solemnize their relationship by entering into a civil union, which provides all couples with similar rights and responsibilities," Madam Justice Louise Lemelin wrote. "But they are still denied access to marriage, which is an important societal institution. One cannot avoid the conclusion that offering benefits to gay and lesbian partners under a different scheme from heterosexual partners is a version of the separate-but-equal doctrine. That appalling doctrine must not be resuscitated in Canada four decades after its much-heralded death in the United States."

Lemelin told the government to replace the marriage law phrase "a man and a woman" with the phrase "between two persons."

**CHINA**

China's most well-known AIDS activist was released from jail Sept. 20 after admitting he'd made a "mistake."

Wan Yanhai was detained Aug. 24 for widely e-mailing a leaked government report on thousands of farmers in the Henan province who were infected with HIV while selling their blood to unsanitary, government-sanctioned blood collectors between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s. He has said up to 2 million people might have been infected in similar circumstances.

"I admitted wrongdoing and I asked the government for leniency, so that is why I think they let me go," Wan told Agence France-Presse. "I think the whole ordeal is over, but in this society there are many things that are not up to me to decide."

**AUSTRALIA**

Western Australia's Lesbian and Gay Law Reform Act took effect Sept. 20, lowering the age of consent for gay sex from 21 to 16 and extending marriage rights to same-sex couples in the areas of adoption, in vitro fertilization, medical treatment, inheritance and death benefits.

"The pursuit of equality for gays and lesbians in WA started back in 1972," said Damian Meyer, Gay and Lesbian Equality WA spokesman. "Finally, young gay men will be treated the same as their straight counterparts when discovering their sexuality."

GALE's Jackie Beesley added: "Lesbian couples having children by artificial conception will now both be recognized as that child's parents."

**IRAN**

A book that discusses the homosexuality of Persian literary figures was banned Sept. 16 in Iran.

*Witness Play* by Cyrus Shamisa had been OK'd by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, but then the approval was withdrawn. The director of the Ferdos publishing house told Agence France-Presse he has recovered about 400 of the 2,000 copies of the book that were printed.

**CANADA**

All charges were dropped against seven men who marched naked in Toronto's Gay Pride parade this year because they were wearing shoes and thus were not technically nude under the statute in question. They were members of TNT!MEN—Totally Naked Toronto Men Enjoying Nudity.

"Nude means absolutely, utterly, completely bare without a single solitary scrap of clothing," attorney Peter Simm said. "If you have any