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**NATIONAL news**



Janna and Mike Taylor

tion but that they have described themselves as half-sisters. GERALYN GRAHAM had claimed to be Rilya's grandmother. "Bush's comments were the kind of childish, locker-room homophobia all too prevalent on school campuses," said Nadine Smith, Equality Florida executive director. "They are not the kind of statements nor sentiments we should expect from the highest elected official in the state." Bush opposes legalizing adoption for gay and lesbian families. His administration's attempt to remove children from the homes of same-sex couples was the subject of media scrutiny earlier this year and led to the disclosure by comedian Rosie O'Donnell that she is a queer parent.

**MONTANA**  
 Queer Democrats have denounced gay-baiting tactics that appeared in a political advertisement paid for by the Montana Democratic Party. The television spot, which led to Republican state Sen. Mike Taylor's withdrawal Oct. 10 from the U.S. Senate race, visually implied that he was gay in an apparent attempt to discredit his character. Whether or not this was intentional on behalf of the state party, the National Stonewall Democrats added, it was clearly understood by voters, the candidate and the media. Executive director Chad Johnson immediately contacted the Montana Democratic Party regarding this issue and asked for a formal apology from its media director. "Any gay-baiting tactic is contrary to the fundamental principals of the Democratic Party," he said. "As gay Democrats, we are required to hold all levels of our party accountable regarding gay and lesbian equality." The ad, which attacked Taylor regarding discrepancies with his student loans, cast him in an effeminate light by including clips from a Denver-based television program produced in the early 1980s showing him offering beauty tips while wearing disco-era garb and applying lotion to a male client's face. The married father of two owned a successful hair care company at the time.



Geralyn (left) and Pamela Graham

**FLORIDA**  
 Activists are calling on Republican Gov. Jeb Bush to apologize for insensitive, homophobic remarks he made about two caregivers of a missing girl who were arrested Oct. 2 on allegations of welfare fraud. Rilya Wilson's mysterious disappearance in Miami eight months ago made national news and highlighted Florida's embattled child welfare system, which has had difficulty keeping track of the kids' whereabouts. When the girl's caregivers, Pamela and GERALYN GRAHAM, were arrested, Bush told a visiting Panhandle delegation of legislators that he had "some juicy details": allegations that the two women were lesbians. "As [Pamela Graham] was being arrested, she told her co-workers, 'Tell my 'wife' I've been arrested.' The wife is the grandmother, and the aunt is the husband," Bush explained, using his fingers to indicate quotation marks to emphasize the word "grandmother," according to a report in the *News Journal*. "Bet you don't get that in Pensacola. That's not something conservative folks are used to." The paper said that the relationship between the two women has been the subject of specu-

**NATIONAL**  
 Gallup released the results of an August poll Oct. 8 revealing that U.S. citizens estimate about 20 percent of the general population is gay or lesbian. During the 25 years that the organization has monitored opinions about the sexual minorities community, it has found a continual rise in public acceptance. People were asked for their own estimate of the percentage of U.S. men and women who are gay or lesbian. The average responses were that 21 percent of men are gay and that 22 percent of women are lesbians. In fact, roughly a quarter of the public thinks more than 25 percent of the country is queer. Gallup also noted that male respondents tended to give lower estimates of both the gay and lesbian populations than female respondents and that both sexes believe there are more gays of the opposite sex than of their own sex. At least one in six respondents did not offer an estimate. "While clearly not a scientifically accurate count, the Gallup numbers demonstrate that the public realizes we are a significant part of the population," said Cathy Renna, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation news media director. "People are getting to know real gay men and lesbians as we come out in our communities and as the media more accurately represent us. This number is a guess—but a much more informed guess than the public has been able to make in the past."

The House rejected an effort Oct. 2 to bring up the House of Worship Political Speech Protection Act. The bill, which would have permitted churches and synagogues to engage in partisan political activity without losing their tax-exempt status, not only failed to garner the two-thirds vote necessary to pass under suspension of the rules but also failed to receive a majority vote. The legislation was defeated 239-178, with 46 Republicans opposing the measure. "While we are troubled that the bill was able to come up at all, we are relieved that the House very clearly recognizes that churches, synagogues and other religious institutions should continue to have the same rights and privileges as other non-profit groups," said Winnie Stachelberg, Human Rights Campaign political director. "We believe that all tax-exempt advocacy organizations should be treated equally under the law—regardless of where they fall on the ideological spectrum." All 501(c)3s, including organizations like the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and most churches, synagogues and other religious institutions, are strictly prohibited from engaging in partisan political activities. If they do, they must forfeit their tax-exempt status. "Today's vote was much more about political posturing by the House leadership, who are trying to appeal to their base supporters during an election year, than it was about meaningful leg-