

**NATIONAL news**

isolation," Stachelberg said. "As of yesterday, the federal government is operating without a budget—this just seems like a tremendous waste of time that could have been better used on so many other pressing issues."

President Bush has tapped Maj. Gen. Robert T. Clark, former commanding general of Fort Campbell, Ky., for promotion to lieutenant general, the Army's second-highest rank. Activists have called on the Senate Armed Services Committee to reject his nomination in light of the anti-gay climate that festered on the base during his tenure.

In 1999, Pfc. Barry Winchell was killed by fellow soldiers at Fort Campbell. Targeted because he was believed to be gay, he endured constant harassment in the months leading up to his murder. Despite threats to the safety of gay, lesbian and bi soldiers on base, an Army report found that Clark failed to order training on "don't ask, don't tell" or on how to address homophobia.

"In the wake of Winchell's murder...Clark demonstrated the poorest leadership, issuing no statements against harassment, refusing to speak with or meet the parents of Pfc. Winchell or to reassure base soldiers that harassment would not be tolerated," C. Dixon Osburn, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network executive director, wrote to U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., Armed Services Committee chairman.

"Even after Winchell's murder, anti-gay graffiti, including one of a baseball bat with the words 'fag-whacker,' appeared in public areas."

In response to Winchell's murder, the Defense Department issued a 13-point "Anti-Harassment Action Plan" aimed at curbing harassment in the ranks. Officials never implemented it.

Winchell's mother, Patricia Kutteles, called Clark's nomination "disrespectful to every parent who has lost a child to the shadows of hate. It disrespects our men and women in uniform and sends a dangerous message that anti-gay harassment is condoned in our armed forces."

Navy officials refused last month to discharge two openly gay service members despite the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

At separate commands, Ensign Thang Nguyen and Hospitalman Roy Hill recently made statements acknowledging their sexual orientation. In both cases, officials have refused to initiate discharge proceedings while refusing to provide any guarantee of their safety.

Nguyen wrote to his command in December that he no longer felt safe because of the "intolerant and hateful attitudes of many naval officers." He reported hearing fellow servicemembers "saying that gays should be imprisoned, gays should be shot and gays should be tortured."

G.L. Hoewing, chief of naval personnel, responded in writing to Nguyen that the statement, which acknowledged his sexual orientation, did "not form a valid basis for separation processing." Hoewing refused, however, to outline any steps guaranteeing Nguyen's safety as an openly gay servicemember. Instead, Nguyen has been ordered to continue serving.

Hill reported a similar anti-gay atmosphere at Camp Lejeune, N.C. In his statement, he noted that he had overheard "bulldoze jokes" toward a fellow servicemember and virulently anti-gay comments such as "cocksucker, fag and queer."

In his letter, Hill expressed concern about the "blind eye the leadership took" toward the climate on base. Officials also have refused to discharge him, noting that the commander "exercised his discretion not to separate...Hill."

"Military officials hunt down gay sailors and ruin their military aspirations on one hand while attempting to force other openly gay personnel to continue serving," said Sharra E. Greer of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network. "The Navy has no legal authority to retain these servicemembers and to continue subjecting them to a hostile, dangerous environment."

**CALIFORNIA**

Gov. Gray Davis vetoed a bill Oct. 1 that would have protected gay, lesbian, bi and trans youth in the state's foster care system. The legislation, by Assemblywoman Judy Chu, D-Monterey Park, would have provided a number of protections to ensure foster children are free from harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

"We are extremely disappointed that the state of California has rejected a measure designed to protect some of its most vulnerable youth from continued discrimination and harassment," said Geoffrey Kors, California Alliance for Pride and Equality executive director. "California must...ensure that they are placed with foster parents who are trained and prepared to meet their unique needs. LGBT foster youth deserve no less. Their needs can no longer be ignored, and we will continue our efforts until the necessary protections are enacted into law." [E]

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



President Bush wants to promote Maj. Gen. Robert T. Clark despite his widely criticized handling of a 1999 murder in Fort Campbell, Ky.



California Gov. Gray Davis vetoed a foster care nondiscrimination bill introduced by Assemblywoman Judy Chu, D-Monterey Park

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