



Police arrest gunman Volkert van der Graaf, who since has confessed to killing Dutch leader Pim Fortuyn (inset)

stone, D-Minn., died in a plane crash in October. Anti-gay Tom DeLay, R-Texas, advances to majority leader in the House, but it will be little change from the retiring Dick Armey, R-Texas, of "Barney Fag" fame.

Another homophobe who will not be missed is the defeated Bob Barr, R-Ga. In the politics-as-strange-bedfellows category, he has been hired to lobby Congress by Anthony Romero, the American Civil Liberties Union's openly gay executive director.

Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., steps up to lead the Democratic minority in the House. The San Francisco representative has been a strong supporter of gay and AIDS issues.

An anti-gay marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution was introduced in May but has garnered few supporters. Even the archconservative *Washington Times* editorialized against it. Its chief

sponsor was a Democrat who was defeated for reelection, and it is unclear whether the amendment even will be reintroduced.

The future of gay civil unions is brightening. The furor is dying down in Vermont, along with electoral support for social conservatives, and no attempt likely will be made to roll back the measure. Legislators in three southern New England states are seriously considering similar proposals and even broader marriage options.

David Cicilline was elected mayor of Providence, R.I., the largest

city and the first state capital to be led by an openly gay or lesbian person. Election Day saw incremental gains elsewhere and the defeat of anti-gay initiatives other than those dealing with marriage.

Internationally, openly gay political leaders made headlines as victims. Dutch leader Pim Fortuyn was shot to death in May just nine days before his party won an upset victory in national elections. Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoe suffered serious knife wounds to the abdomen during an assault in October; he has recovered.

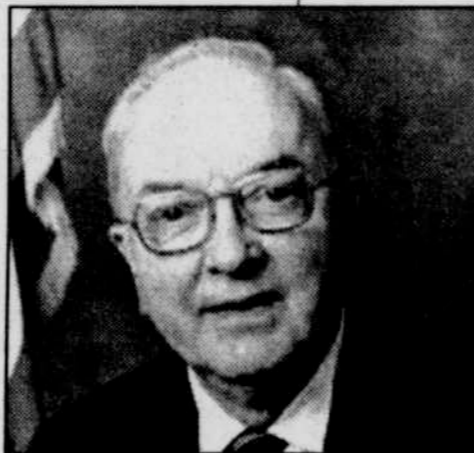
Many U.S. citizens feared a deterioration of personal rights and liberties in the post-Sept. 11 environment. The courts have not adopted that mind-set. They have supported the right to counsel and have struck down attempts at censorship on the Internet.



The sexual minorities community lost a strong ally when U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., was killed in a plane crash shortly before Election Day

Another sodomy statute bit the dust in July when the Arkansas Supreme Court declared the law to be an unconstitutional violation of the state's right to privacy. Courts in Louisiana and Texas have been more recalcitrant, but the U.S. Supreme Court's decision this month to hear the appeal of the Texas case leaves observers optimistic that it will strike down some or all of the remaining state sodomy statutes.

Disgust with the way Catholic bishops have handled the controversy concerning priests' sex abuse of children has greatly undermined their credibility, including efforts to shift the blame to gay priests. Rumbblings are coming out of the Vatican about purging priests who are believed to be gay, but the rank and file in the pews seems to want none of it. [E]

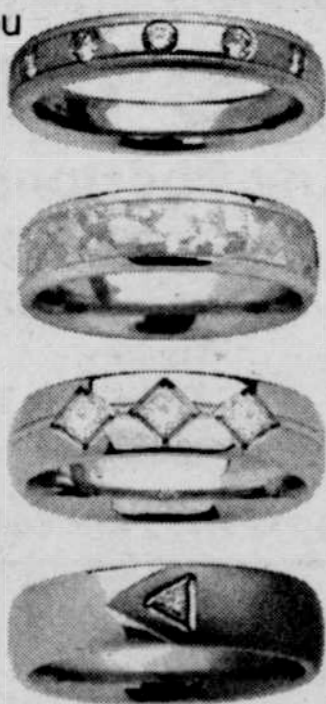


Good riddance: U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, left, and House Majority Leader Dick Armey went off into the sunset this year

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