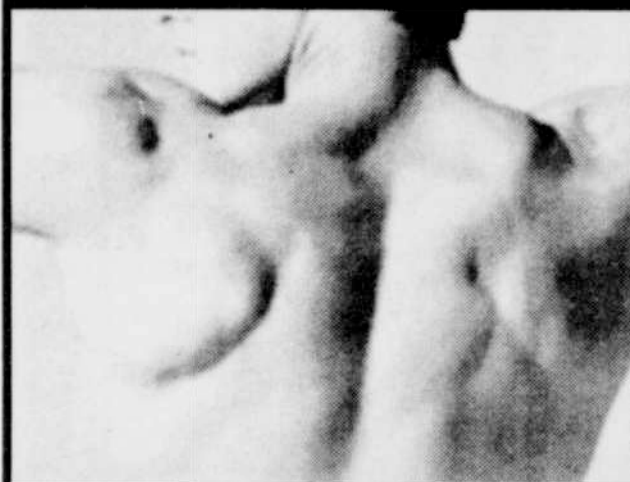


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NATIONAL news

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queer adults feel that Bush prefers a war on Iraq rather than trying to achieve his main goals without a military attack, compared to 51 percent of heterosexual adults. In addition, when asked, "Would you favor or oppose military action in Iraq if President Bush believes Saddam Hussein is hiding weapons of mass destruction but U.N. weapons inspectors cannot find any and the United Nations does not vote in favor of an attack?" more than half (56 percent) of queer adults say they would oppose attacking Iraq, as compared to just more than one-third (35 percent) of heterosexuals. The finding for all adults who were asked this question—gay and nongay—was 45 percent in favor of attacking Iraq, 36 percent opposing and 19 percent stating they don't know.

Regarding Saddam Hussein and Iraq's alleged ties to al-Qaeda terrorists, however, there appears to be a closer resemblance between the opinions of gay and nongay adult U.S. citizens. About 45 percent of queer respondents believe there is some link, and 49 percent of heterosexual adults agree.

FLORIDA

In a case highlighting a common form of discrimination in Florida and around the country, Lambda Legal filed a lawsuit March 10 in Palm Beach County Court on behalf of two men who were denied housing in a Boca Raton apartment building because they are gay.

Before showing Fred Sternbach several units in Royal Colonial Apartments, property manager Peggy Watson asked him to complete and return a file card that asked, among other questions, how many people would live there and what their relationship to him was. He wrote that he would reside with his partner.

Sternbach was shown a number of available units and expressed interest in one of them. An hour after he left, Watson called him to ask what "partner" meant and whether it was a wife or fiancée.

Once Sternbach explained that partner did not mean wife or fiancée, she said that Royal Colonial Apartments would not be able to accommodate him because it only rents to couples who are married. Although Sternbach and his partner, Stephen Miller, have been together 16 years, no state, including Florida, will grant them a marriage license.

"In Palm Beach County, this kind of discrimination is illegal—yet the apartment complex brazenly told our clients that they couldn't have a home because they're an unmarried gay couple," attorney Greg Nevins said. "Housing is one of our most basic needs, and anti-gay bigotry shouldn't determine where people can live."

A Palm Beach County law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and marital status. In Florida, four other counties (Broward, Leon, Miami-Dade and Okaloosa) and eight cities (Gainesville, Key West, Miami Beach, Orlando, Sarasota, St. Petersburg, Tampa and West Palm Beach) have similar ordinances prohibiting anti-gay discrimination in housing. Nationwide, 145 cities or counties have such laws.

"We want to fight this so it doesn't happen to anyone else," Sternbach said. "We need to send a message to landlords that if they don't follow the law, they'll pay a price."

After being rejected Sternbach and Miller were forced to pay more money to rent a less



President Bush meets with military personnel Dec. 7, 2001, aboard the USS Enterprise in Norfolk, Va.

desirable apartment. Their lawsuit seeks financial damages and a court order forcing Royal Colonial to stop discriminating.

MINNESOTA

A bill that would have rolled back basic civil rights protections for gay, lesbian, bi and trans Minnesotans was withdrawn by its Senate sponsor March 21 in response to unrelenting criticism of its unprecedented scope.

"After most members of the Senate Judiciary Committee had identified the numerous flaws...it was apparent that the proposal was doomed," said Monica Meyer, OutFront Minnesota public policy director. "As a result, Sen. [Michael J.] Jungbauer wisely retreated from his efforts to eviscerate the Minnesota Human Rights Act."

The first indication that the bill was in trouble came when its sponsor replaced the original, lengthy text with a proposal to permit people to ignore the law based on religious beliefs. Supporters then attempted to amend this language to bar discussion of sexual minority people or issues in schools. This effort was turned back, and eventually the entire bill was "laid on the table."

"By ending discussion of this destructive bill, the Senate has moved swiftly to preserve the fundamental civil rights all Minnesotans enjoy," said Ann M. DeGroot, OutFront Minnesota executive director. "We strongly appreciate the outspokenness of committee members in addressing the real issue here, namely protecting the basic commitment to fairness for all."

Because of lengthy committee debate on the bill, DeGroot was the sole person to speak in opposition. Only two people, aside from its author, testified in favor.

"The Senate Judiciary Committee saw this bill for what it was: a mean-spirited effort to endorse discrimination," DeGroot said. "Even though its supporters claimed they bore no ill will to GLBT people, stripping us of basic civil rights protections is nothing short of a cruel attack."

MISSISSIPPI

A Mississippi judge March 19 ordered the state to issue a birth certificate for a 5-year-old boy who was born in Mississippi and adopted by a lesbian couple from Vermont.

Lambda Legal sued the state in 2001 for refusing to issue a birth certificate listing the child's two parents, leaving him without any documentation of his name, parents' names, birthdate or birthplace.

"This is a very significant victory," attorney Greg Nevins said. "This child was punished because his parents are gay. A birth certificate is



Michael J. Jungbauer

PHOTO BY ERIC DRAPER