

a basic and important document for every child, and today's ruling means this young boy should finally have his."

Cheri Goldstein and Holly Perdue took their son home when he was discharged from a Mississippi hospital eight days after his birth. The Vermont adoption was finalized in April 2000, and a request was made to have Mississippi amend the child's birth certificate to include his adoptive parents' names and his new name.

The Mississippi Board of Health repeatedly denied requests to reissue the certificate because the child's parents are lesbians. Attorneys argued that the state was in violation of its own law requiring officials to honor valid out-of-state adoptions and provide amended birth certificates. They also said the state's actions violated the Mississippi Constitution's guarantee of equal protection.

This ruling came just a week after a New Jersey court ordered that state to list both lesbian mothers on the birth certificate of a child they intend to raise together. "All across the country—from the Northeast to the Deep South—courts are increasingly recognizing that children with gay parents are entitled to the same protections as every other child," Nevins said. "Today's ruling is an important milestone in this trend."

Goldstein and Perdue live with their son and other adoptive children. The couple have been sought out by Vermont officials when special-needs kids have needed adoptive homes.

NEW MEXICO

The Legislature passed a landmark civil rights bill March 21 prohibiting discrimination in employment, public accommodations, housing and credit based on sexual orientation and gender identity. At a press conference March 13, Gov. Bill Richardson asked lawmakers to send him the measure so he could sign it.

This will make New Mexico the third state to cover gender identity in its anti-discrimination statute. Only Minnesota and Rhode Island have such laws, along with 53 cities and counties across the country.

In addition, the House passed a state hate crime act covering sexual orientation and gender identity March 20 with a vote of 39-27. It adds sections to the criminal code allowing judges to increase sentences when the crime was committed because of the victim's actual or perceived race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Richardson has said he will sign the bill. New Mexico now joins 27 other states that

cover sexual orientation in hate crimes laws and becomes the sixth to include explicit trans language, the most recent being Pennsylvania, which added protection last year.

CALIFORNIA

The Assembly's Labor & Employment Committee passed March 19 a historic civil rights measure to prohibit housing and workplace discrimination based on gender characteristics. Assembly Bill 196, authored by Assemblymember Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, now goes to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

The Gender Nondiscrimination Act of 2003 clarifies that the state's prohibition of sex discrimination also prohibits discrimination based on gender-related characteristics, including trans status. Kate Kendell, National Center for Lesbian Rights executive director, explained that courts, as well as California's Department of Fair Employment and Housing, usually interpret sex discrimination laws to include discrimination based on gender stereotyping.

"The insidious nature of discrimination based on gender nonconformity has been recognized and redressed by many courts," she said. "Amending California law to protect all citizens from this type of discrimination is long overdue."

Geoffrey Kors, California Alliance for Pride and Equality executive director, added: "This bill is good for business and property owners, as well as employees and tenants, because it will explicitly clarify what constitutes illegal discrimination. AB 196 will help everyone understand the law by making clear the rules that already exist."

California made history March 24 when gay Assemblyman Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, named San Francisco Human Rights Commissioner Theresa Sparks the Woman of the Year from District 13. She is the first trans person to receive the honor, which recognizes outstanding women who have made significant contributions across the state.

Sparks was appointed to the commission after years of advocacy on behalf of the community. She served as a founding member of the city's Transgender Civil Rights Implementation Task Force and helped secure an agreement by the San Francisco Police Commission to adopt standards of treatment of trans people previously recommended by the Office of Citizens Complaints. She additionally became the first trans woman elected as chairperson of the Alice B. Toklas Democratic Club.

"Commissioner Sparks is a stellar individual who has been a true trailblazer for our community," Leno said. "I am proud to name her Woman of the Year." 

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



New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson has promised to sign two pro-gay bills into law



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