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NATIONAL news



Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore shows off his Ten Commandments monument in Montgomery

ALABAMA

The removal of the Ten Commandments monument from Alabama's Judicial Building in Montgomery represents a victory against discrimination as well as victory for state/church separation, Gay and Lesbian Atheists and Humanists said Aug. 29.

"The monument [Alabama Chief Justice Roy] Moore surreptitiously placed in the court building is a stone idol that celebrates his own personal ambition. It is a graven image that hijacks unthinking religious sentimentality for demagogic purposes," chairman Christopher Arntzen said. "The monument is a graven image, an ironic affront to the Second Commandment and an assault on the First Amendment."

Treasurer Tom Klem noted: "Using tax dollars to promote the Ten Commandments discriminates against humanists, atheists and people who believe in many minority religious faiths. The Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution provides important protections for those of us who do not wish to be forced to subsidize other people's religions."

Moore has generated controversy with his homophobia as well as his Christian supremacist ideology. During a case involving a lesbian trying to get child custody, he advocated execution for queers and claimed homosexuality is "abhorrent, immoral, detestable, a crime against nature and a violation of the laws of nature" as well as "an inherent evil against which children must be protected."

"All too often, heterosexist and anti-atheist bigotry come in the same fundamentalist package," Klem said. "The Sept. 11 attacks should have taught everyone the lunacy of religious extremism. Unfortunately, some people still don't get it."

CALIFORNIA

The state Assembly approved landmark legislation Sept. 4 that would grant registered domestic partners nearly all of the rights, benefits and responsibilities currently granted only to married spouses.

The measure—authored by Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg, D-Los Angeles—passed by a 41-32 vote. Gov. Gray Davis already has announced his intent to sign the bill when it reaches his desk.

"We are pleased that a majority of legislators and the governor have now joined a majority of Californians in supporting legal protections for families of lesbian, gay, bisexual and



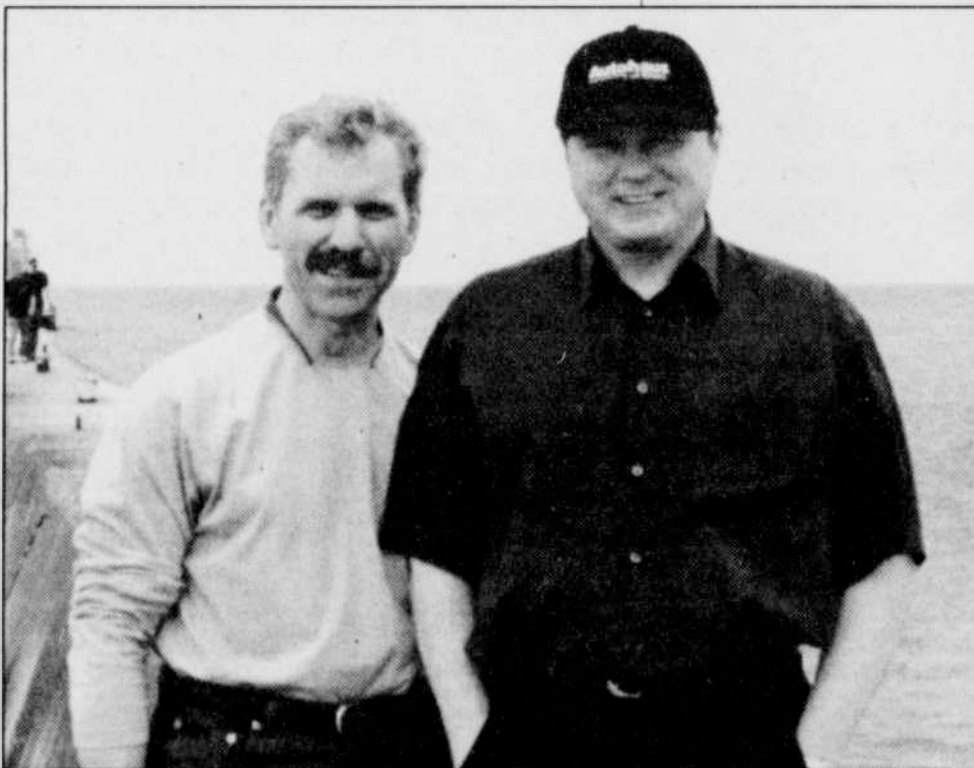
Gray Davis

transgender Californians," said Geoffrey Kors, Equality California executive director. "While AB 205 does not provide true equality for same-sex couples since it does nothing to change California's discriminatory marriage laws, it is an important measure that will provide critical protections for tens of thousands of Californians."

Some of the significant new benefits to be granted same-sex registered domestic partners include custody and child and spousal support obligations, the right to make funeral arrangements, community property and mutual responsibility for debts. About 20,000 same-sex and senior opposite-sex couples have registered with the state during the three years that the domestic partner registry has been in place.

Two of the nation's top progressive think tanks recently released a study concluding that AB 205 will have a positive impact on California's budget. Because it will cause the income of a person's domestic partner to be included when determining eligibility for benefit programs, the state could save between \$8.1 million and \$10 million a year.

The Williams Project of UCLA School of Law and the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies also found that AB 205 would potentially increase sales tax revenues from tourism and decrease state income tax revenues but would have only a minor effect on administrative costs, state employee benefits and the state court system. They reached results similar to studies done about same-sex civil union legislation in Vermont and Connecticut.



United Parcel Service employee Daniel Kline (left) and his partner of 27 years, Frank Sories, nearly were forced to live apart because of a discriminatory policy favoring straight, married couples

Lambda Legal filed a lawsuit last month against United Parcel Service in California state court on behalf of Daniel Kline, who has worked for the company for more than two decades, and his partner of 27 years, Frank Sories. In January, Sories was transferred from San Francisco to Chicago by his employer, United Airlines, when its office in San Francisco closed.

Kline applied for a transfer to UPS's Chicago branch under the company's policy that lets employees relocate to avoid having their families broken apart when their loved ones have job transfers. Just hours after the lawsuit was filed, UPS released a statement saying that it has changed its policy to include domestic partners and that Kline's transfer application had been approved.

"This policy exists to keep families intact, and we filed this case to make sure all families are included. We're encouraged by UPS's public statements, and we're committed to making sure the company follows through on its promises to this couple and others like them," attorney Jon W. Davidson said. "We're in discussions with UPS now and hope to resolve this soon—but, for now, our lawsuit is moving forward."

The case alleges that by excluding the couple from its transfer policy, UPS is in violation of state laws that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, marital status and sex. The lawsuit also includes breach-of-contract charges against UPS, since the company has adopted policies promising its employees protection against sexual orientation discrimination and assuring them that they will be treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

NATIONAL

Two trans women were murdered and another trans woman was brutally attacked last month in the nation's capital. The incidents come one year after the unsolved murders of Stephanie Thomas and Ukea Davis, trans teens who were gunned down Aug. 12, 2002, in Southeast Washington, D.C.

An unnamed male-to-female transsexual was found beaten and shot Aug. 21 in a field in Southeast Washington. In Northwest Washington, police found another trans woman shot and in serious condition Aug. 20.

Police also are investigating the Aug. 16 murder of Elvys "Bella Evangelista" Perez, a popular drag performer, as a hate-motivated crime. Antoine D. Jacobs, 22, was arrested for the killing in Northwest Washington, which authorities believe occurred after Jacobs paid Perez to have sex and later shot Perez to death upon learning she was biologically male.

According to a news release issued by the Metropolitan Police Department's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit,

officers "are working to keep the community informed regarding the recent violence." There is also increased police visibility in areas "known to be frequented by members of the transgender community."

"This is beyond sad. It is outrageous," said Matt Foreman, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director. "Sadly, however, transgender people are routinely brutalized across this country, and almost all these attacks go unreported and unnoticed."

The only way that anything good can come out of these tragedies is if they are used to rally our community, our allies and government to respond in positive ways—by helping the police apprehend the at-large perpetrators, by strengthening the district's hate crimes law to explicitly cover transgender persons, to get private and government support for transgender health and human service programs."

The American Bar Association, the nation's largest legal group, approved a resolution Aug. 12 to support laws and court decisions permitting second-parent adoptions, a procedure by which both members of a same-sex or other unmarried couple can establish legal parental relationships with their children. The vote took place during the ABA's annual conference, which was held this year in San Francisco.

"This is a very important step forward for children who deserve legal protection for their familial relationships," said Mark Agrast, chairman of the ABA Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities, which sponsored the reso-