

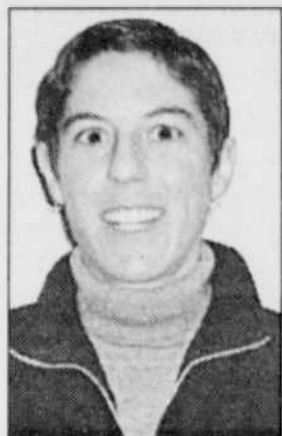
NATIONAL news

lution. "We are very gratified the ABA has taken this step to protect children."

The resolution builds on prior ABA resolutions regarding same-sex parent families. In 1995 it adopted a policy prohibiting the use of sexual orientation in making child custody and visitation decisions, and in 1999 it adopted a policy calling for laws establishing that sexual orientation should not be used to prohibit a person from adopting.

"Support for second-parent adoptions is now official ABA policy," said Courtney Joslin, co-chairwoman of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee of the Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities. "This will send a powerful message to legislatures and courts that second-parent adoptions are sound policy and should be made available to protect children with same-sex parents."

Second-parent adoptions are available by statute or appellate court decision in 10 states and in specific counties in at least 15 other states. Courts in only four states have disapproved second-parent adoptions: Colorado, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin.



Courtney Joslin

Reichen Lehmkuhl, one of the grand prize winners in the summer series *The Amazing Race 4*, has agreed to appear in a documentary investigating the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

The film, set to start production this fall, will span the 10-year history of the policy and follow the building political momentum to overturn it. "As a former Air Force officer and graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, Reichen is the ideal personality to be involved with this important issue and project," director Jonathan Baker said.

The documentary will focus on the "don't ask, don't tell" policy and its impact on national security, taxpayers and individual servicemembers' lives. Since 1993, the federal ban on gay, lesbian and bi military personnel has resulted in more than 9,000 discharges. The Pentagon has also spent more than \$250 million to train replacements for service-members discharged under the gay ban.

"The Pentagon is firing three people every day simply because of their sexual orientation," Lehmkuhl said. "If the same thing were happening in corporate America, most citizens would be rightfully outraged. The fact that our nation's largest employer discriminates against gay

Americans under the sanction of federal law is equally appalling."

Lehmkuhl gained popularity this summer when he appeared on the hit television reality series *The Amazing Race 4* with his spouse, Chip Arndt. The first openly gay couple to win the arduous contest, they also achieved nationwide acceptance and support as viewers tuned in each week to cheer them to victory.

MISSOURI

The Kansas City Council decided Aug. 28 to allow domestic partner benefits for unmarried city employees.

The 11-1 vote establishes a domestic partner registry for city residents and allows for city employees to take family and medical leave for their domestic partners. The council postponed a vote until the spring on whether to allow unmarried city employees to cover their domestic partners on their health insurance plans.

"The Kansas City Council is to be commended for passing these important benefits. But we also encourage them to pass one of the most critical benefits of all for same-sex partners—and that is the ability to cover a partner's health insurance," said Seth Kilbourn, Human Rights Campaign national field director. "This benefit has already been granted in 163 cities and counties across the nation."

Jim McDonald, a member of a coalition of local groups headed by the LGBT Community Center of Kansas City, added: "I'm thrilled. I think the council did the right thing."

HRC and the statewide queer rights organization Promo are doing a series of town halls across Missouri to discuss employment equality, focusing on federal and state legislation that would add sexual orientation to the list of protected categories in employment nondiscrimination law. The state bill's definition of sexual orientation also includes coverage for trans employees.

LOUISIANA

In court papers filed Aug. 14, Lambda Legal joined the city of New Orleans in defending the city's policy extending health insurance benefits to domestic partners of its gay and lesbian workers and protecting the city's domestic partner registry.

In 1997 the city of New Orleans, by executive order, extended insurance benefits to same-sex partners of city employees. The domestic partner benefits policy and the city's domestic partner registry have come under attack by a right-wing conservative group, the Alliance Defense Fund, based in Scottsdale, Ariz.

"The city of New Orleans took it upon itself to do the right thing by its gay and lesbian

employees and their families by giving them access to the same health insurance plans as its heterosexual employees and their families. The city is well within its rights to do so," attorney Brian Chase said.

Lambda represents Peter Sabi, who has worked in the city's Vieux Carre Commission as a senior building inspector for nine years. His partner of almost nine years, self-employed writer Philip Centanni, was paying \$500 a month for health insurance before the city extended benefits to its employees' same-sex partners. Now the couple pay \$50 a month for Centanni's coverage.

Public employers in 11 states, 23 counties and 58 cities nationwide have extended health insurance benefits to the domestic partners of gay and lesbian employees. In four states, 11 counties and 50 cities nationwide, gay and lesbian couples may sign a domestic partnership registry that may or may not carry any direct benefit. Private employers often use domestic partner registries as a way to identify the eligibility of domestic partners of their gay and lesbian employees for health insurance and other benefits.

HAWAII

Outlining a long history of discrimination against trans people, attorneys Aug. 14 urged the Supreme Court of Hawaii to rule that gender identity bias is against state law.

The issue arose when the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission decided that trans people are covered by prohibitions against sex discrimination in a case involving several complaints of gender bias against a company that provides inventory services to retailers. RGIS Inventory Specialist then challenged the commission's decision in court, claiming trans people aren't covered by sex discrimination laws. The commission lost that case and now is appealing it to the state supreme court.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the case outlining the application of sex discrimination laws to cases involving gender identity bias. It told the stories of many trans people who faced egregious discrimination at their jobs but prevailed in court:

- A female-to-male transsexual was considered an exemplary employee for eight years until he began his gender transition. Then his employer began calling him names and stripping him of job responsibilities.

- A female-to-male transsexual who had been hired based on qualifications and experience began his gender transition and his employer gave him false, negative performance reviews, re-assigned him to an office that required a much longer commute, harassed him and later fired him.

- A doctor who was the medical director at an outpatient treatment facility was told, "Go back to your previous appearance!" by a supervisor after she began transitioning from male to female. When she refused, she was eventually fired, and her patients were told lies that she probably wasn't practicing medicine anymore.

- An editorial assistant who was transitioning from male to female was repeatedly told to stop "dressing as a woman" and then fired.

- A male-to-female transsexual was grilled by supervisors who demanded "medical evidence of her sexuality" and then told her that the driver's license, Social Security card and notary public card she had showing her female name weren't enough. The next day, she was fired. 



Brian Chase

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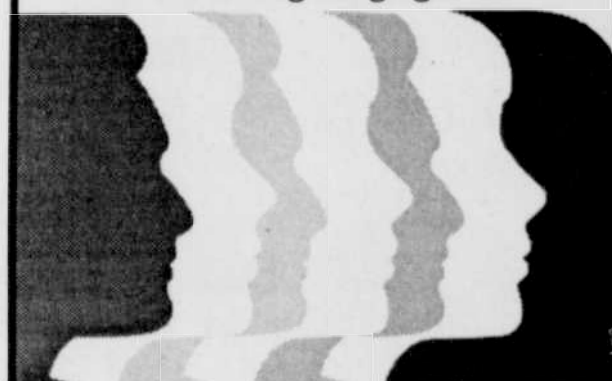


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The *Amazing Race 4* winner Reichen Lehmkuhl (left, with Chip Arndt) is using his newfound celebrity to raise awareness about "don't ask, don't tell"

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