NATIONAL

President Bush issued a proclamation Oct. 3 declaring Oct. 12 to 18 "Marriage Protection Week." The announcement was made one day after a coalition of ultra-conservative groups held a press conference in Washington, D.C., to publicize the anti-gay effort.

"Marriage Protection Week provides an opportunity to focus our efforts on preserving the sanctity of marriage and on building strong and healthy marriages in America," Bush said in the proclamation. "We must support the institution of marriage and help parents build stronger families. And we must continue our work to create a compassionate, welcoming society, where all people are treated with dignity and respect."

During the coalition press conference, Family Research Council executive director Tony Perkins warned that U.S. citizens are facing what he calls "the Black Plague." He said, "From the Pledge of Allegiance to the Ten Commandments to the Do-Not-Call campaign—and now to the very institution of marriage—unelected judges in black robes are not only ruling against the wishes of the American people, they are overturning laws passed by the elected representatives of those people."

Focus on the Family executive director James Dobson said that by extending civil marriage licenses to same-sex couples, "What you're doing is undermining the whole legal definition, the underpinnings of the institution of the family, and when that goes, everything goes with it, including the stability of the country...and the future of Western civilization."

ILLINOIS

The fifth annual Matthew Shepard March, named after the gay Wyoming student brutally murdered in 1998, rallied for same-sex marriage Oct. 4 in Chicago. Activists were reacting to President Bush's decision to join a coalition of ultraconservative groups by issuing a proclamation declaring Oct. 12 to 18 "Marriage Protection Week."

"The Netherlands and other areas have instituted equal marriage rights for lesbians and gays without the sky falling in," said Andy Thayer, co-founder of the Chicago Anti-Bashing Network, which organized the event. "Those who raise these ridiculous arguments against gay marriage have a far more serious reason for opposing our marriages: hatred of gays and a desire for us to continue to have second-class citizenship."

PHOTO BY CHRISTINE GEOVANIS/CHICAGO INDYMEDIA

Marchers rally against right-wing attacks on gay rights Oct. 4 in Chicago

NEW YORK

U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., blasted President Bush and the Republican leadership Oct. 9 for the direction they are taking the United States, likening it to a rollback of the clock to a time when "they didn't have to deal with women or gays or anybody else."

She made the comments during a dinner in New York City that raised almost $650,000 for the Empire State Pride Agenda, a queer rights organization. In a 20-minute speech interrupted by frequent applause, she predicted the anti-gay Federal Marriage Amendment will be at the "center of the presidential election next year" and will be used by people "who try to drive wedges" between U.S. citizens.

"They deserve to be turned out of office, and they're going to look for any way to stay in power," Clinton said. "If the administration and their allies want to make a campaign issue out of amending the Constitution, we will not only stand against it, but we will point out that they'd rather talk about taking away rights and undermining the ability of Americans to live their own lives, to have their own families, than to talk about the miserable economy, to talk about their miserable foreign policy, to talk about their rollback of environmental laws and workers' rights, education and health care!"

Meanwhile, her husband, Bill, made his strongest denunciation of "don't ask, don't tell" to date in a statement coinciding with the anti-gay policy's 10th anniversary. "Simply put, there is no evidence to support a ban on gays in the military," the former president wrote.

Clinton signed the policy into law Nov. 30, 1993, after promising during his campaign to lift the previous ban and let gay and lesbian U.S. citizens serve openly. Since the current law went into effect, almost 10,000 servicemembers have been discharged on the basis of sexual orientation.

"Discrimination is unfair, and it unfairly restricts the talent pool available to the military—and that diminishes our security," Clinton added. "If you can serve as a police officer, an FBI agent or a member of Congress, there is no reason why you cannot serve as a soldier, sailor, airman or Marine."

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Ah, remember the good old days?

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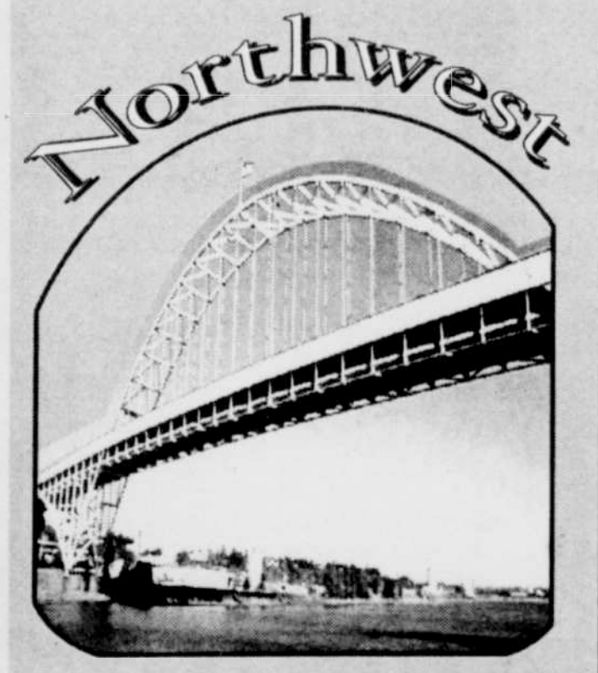

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