

NATIONAL news

phrase "if necessary," which brought Bush an onslaught of criticism by anti-gay groups.

The article failed to include the perspective of gay or lesbian couples, whose fundamental rights are at the center of this debate. One quote solicited from the Human Rights Campaign focused on political strategy and process.

The Rochester School Board unanimously adopted new language in its code of conduct Dec. 18 that adds protections for trans students. The change was recommended by a task force put together last year by the board to look into the treatment of queer students.

The action comes amid debate in Albany concerning legislation aimed at making schools safer for learning by requiring them to recognize and address all types of bias-related harassment and violence. In 2002 both chambers of the Legislature got together in an effort to resolve differences between two different versions of bills combating bias harassment in schools, but they could not come to agreement over a small number of differences, including the Senate's failure to provide protections to students based on "gender identity and expression."

"The Rochester School Board is to be congratulated for strengthening their anti-discrimination and harassment policy," said Ross Levi, Empire State Pride Agenda public policy director. "The board was right to recognize that students should not be taunted or attacked because they are perceived as not acting enough like a boy or a girl. New York state government should now follow suit and join the dozens of school districts across the state by passing a statewide law to allow every student in New York to attend school free from bias harassment, bullying and discrimination."

The New York City Council also is debating passage of a bill addressing bias-related harassment and violence in schools. The Dignity in All Schools Act had a first hearing Oct. 7 before the Education Committee and is sponsored by 37 of the 51 councilors.

NATIONAL

In response to a series of misleading anti-gay public service ads appearing in the subway system in Washington, D.C., the Human Rights Campaign Foundation has launched its own series of subway ads promoting equality and fairness toward gay, lesbian, bi and trans U.S. citizens.

The ads are among the last that will be accepted by the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Association after its board voted to end free public service ads in its system. The ads are appearing in 10 lighted dioramas on subway platforms throughout the system, which serves Washington, D.C., and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs.

"When we learned about the misleading and anti-gay ads Metro had accepted, we looked for a way to counter those wrong-headed messages with the truth," said Kim I. Mills, HRC education director. "Thanks largely to District Council Member Jim Graham, we were able to get our ads into the system just as the policy changed."

In October, advertisements appeared in Metro sponsored by Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays, a group that promotes damaging "reparative therapy" techniques, which have been renounced by mainstream professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association and the American Medical Association. As a result of complaints about the PFOX ads, the Metro board subsequently voted to end all free public service ads beginning Jan. 1.

The headline of the HRC Foundation's ads reads: "Equality and Fairness: Fundamental American Values." The text goes on to detail public support for queer issues. According to polling, 90 percent of U.S. citizens support hospital visitation rights for same-sex partners, 85 percent support equal treatment in the workplace and 73 percent want tougher hate crimes laws, including 65 percent who want hate crimes laws to include trans people.



The Human Rights Campaign placed this public service ad at the Union Station subway platform in Washington, D.C.

A new CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll has found that 79 percent of all U.S. citizens believe gay men and lesbians should be allowed to serve openly in the military.

The poll, which was conducted from Dec. 5 to 7, surveyed 1,004 adults. Survey participants were asked, "Do you think people who are openly gay or homosexual should—or should not—be allowed to serve in the U.S. military?"

In August a Fox News poll found that 64 percent of the public believed queers should be allowed to serve openly in the military. Previously, a 2001 survey published by MIT Press found that 56 percent of civilian respondents believed gay men and lesbians should be allowed to serve openly.

According to Geoffrey Bateman, assistant director of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military at the University of California at Santa Barbara, the shift in public opinion might reflect ongoing concern about the firing of nine gay Arabic language specialists during the war on terror. "After 10 years of 'don't ask, don't tell,' the public understands that discrimination undermines military effectiveness," he said.

The center's senior research fellow, Nathaniel Frank, broke the story of the Arabic linguists in a November 2002 *New Republic* story, but the issue resurfaced recently when *The Washington Post* reported Dec. 3 that the military has fired 37 linguists for being gay during the past two years.

MICHIGAN

Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm signed an executive order Dec. 23 banning state employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, making Michigan the 11th state with such a policy.

"Most people already agree that an employee's performance should be measured on the job they're doing, not by any bias an employer might have," said Seth Kilbourn, Human Rights Campaign national

field director. "This policy brings the state much closer to making sure employees get that kind of fair treatment."

A total of 10 other states have similar policies covering public employment: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Montana, Pennsylvania and Washington. Two of those states—Kentucky and Pennsylvania—also explicitly cover gender identity in their executive orders.

"This is a terrific first step in protecting from discrimination," said Sean Kosofsky, director of policy for the Triangle Foundation, Michigan's statewide gay, lesbian, bi and trans advocacy group. "Triangle Foundation will continue to work diligently to ensure that all state employees are covered by this policy, including prohibitions on discrimination based on gender identity or expression."

Detroit Lions president Matt Millen has apologized for an anti-gay epithet he made to former Lions and current Kansas City Chiefs player Johnnie Morton.

The incident occurred Dec. 14 shortly after the Lions lost a game to the Chiefs. Although the comment was made in the locker room and Morton no longer works for the Lions, the comment sparked opinions all over sports talk radio in Detroit and elsewhere.

Morton and Millen had a heated exchange, and Millen responded by calling Morton a "faggot." A reporter for a Kansas City paper overheard the comment.

Millen has apologized for using the epithet, stating: "Unfortunately, I retaliated with a derogatory term directed at Johnnie. I apologize if I offended anyone. It was certainly not meant to do anything other than express my frustration and disappointment over Morton's statement."

The Triangle Foundation—Michigan's leading civil rights group for gay, lesbian, bi and trans people—accepted Millen's apology.

"It is always offensive and unfortunate to hear such anti-gay language, especially from public figures," policy director Sean Kosofsky said. "We are pleased that so many voices in the sports world have condemned the statements, but we feel it unnecessary to call for his resignation, as some have done. He has apologized several times, and for a visible leader in professional sports to apologize sends a strong signal that anti-gay epithets are never appropriate, even in the locker room. Sometimes we all say things we don't mean. We don't believe Millen harbors any animus toward gays or lesbians." J

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



Jennifer Granholm

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Detroit Lions president Matt Millen called former team member Johnnie Morton a "faggot" during a heated locker room exchange