

NATIONAL news

He is one of only six judges that the Human Rights Campaign has opposed out of approximately 200 nominated by Bush.

"Judge Pickering has advanced a body of jurisprudence that does not reflect America's highest values, and the individuals within his jurisdiction deserve better," HRC president Cheryl Jacques said. "A man whose career has been marked by racial divisiveness and anti-gay prejudice cannot be trusted to fairly interpret the laws of our country."

In a speech before the 1984 Mississippi Southern Baptist Convention, Pickering lumped homosexuality with social problems, according to *The Clarion Ledger*. "We as Southern Baptists should lead the way in strengthening traditional moral values," he said, adding that society has been degraded by such things as pornography, homosexuality and divorce.

Also troubling is Pickering's handling of a 1994 hate crime incident involving three men who burned an 8-foot cross on the lawn of an interracial family while using racial epithets. When sentencing one of the defendants, he gave what was considered a "lenient" sentence for the cross-burning, in order to "make the punishment commensurate with the drunken prank that I think it was, even though it did have racial overtones."



Kent Greenfield is one of hundreds of law professors challenging the Pentagon's campus recruiting policy

A coalition of law schools, professors and legal organizations is asking the Third Circuit Court of Appeals to overturn a 1996 law granting the Defense Department unfettered access to university students.

The groups have argued that the law, known as the Solomon Amendment, forces universities to violate nondiscrimination policies that include sexual orientation. Within the past year, Defense Department officials began more rigorously enforcing the law.

The suit says the military's "don't ask, don't tell" ban on queer servicemembers is incompatible with university policies prohibiting campus recruiting by employers who discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Servicemembers Legal Defense Network filed a friend-of-the-court brief Jan. 12 supporting those claims.

"Our military should play by the same rules as other campus recruiters," executive director C. Dixon Osburn said. "Universities have every right to expect that their lesbian, gay and bisexual students will enjoy the same employment opportunities as their heterosexual students. The Solomon Amendment is an unfair attempt to force federally sanctioned discrimination on our

campuses. It violates the very foundation of equal opportunity."

Kent Greenfield, a Boston College law professor leading the suit, told *The Associated Press* in September that Pentagon leaders are "using this law to reach into the core of our educational philosophy and change it."

The coalition includes prominent law schools as well as the Society of American Law Teachers, which has more than 900 members. The schools have organized under the "Forum for Academic & Institutional Rights" banner to protect their identity, fearing retribution from the Defense Department.

NEW JERSEY

New Jersey has become the fifth state to give legal protections to same-sex families and will honor partnerships established in other states. It joins Hawaii, Vermont, California and Massachusetts in moving toward marital recognition for committed gay couples.

Under New Jersey's new law, domestic partners and their children gain access to important family protections such as hospital visitation, making emergency medical decisions, claiming each other as exemptions on state income tax filings and qualifying for exemptions from the state inheritance tax. The bill also requires the state to provide dependent health coverage to state employees with same-sex partners and allows but does not require private companies to do the same. But the law falls far short of providing the full range of tangible and intangible protections accorded through marriage itself.

Evan Wolfson, executive director of Freedom to Marry, hailed the bill signed Jan. 12 by Gov. James E. McGreevey as "a step in the right direction" but noted that "states like New Jersey would do the country and its families a favor if they avoided the detour of separate and unequal and went right to the clarity, security and equality that comes only with the freedom to marry. One of the major benefits of marriage is being able to say to your family, your kids, the community, the government and those you do business with wherever you are, 'I am married.' There is no verb for civil union, and nobody writes songs about domestic partnership."

MARYLAND

Legislation has been introduced in the Maryland General Assembly that would amend the state constitution to say "only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid in this state." A section of Maryland Family Code already contains this language.

Free State Justice, Maryland's queer civil rights organization, decried the legislation Jan. 13, calling it "salt in the wound" for countless thousands of committed couples—many with children—who already are not considered family in the eyes of the government. Sponsored by Delegate Charles R. Boutin, R-Cecil & Harford Counties, House Bill 16 would require passage by three-fifths of the legislators in both houses of the General Assembly and ratification by voters on the November ballot in order to succeed.

"Boutin may feel he is defending marriage, but in actuality, he is tearing down families that the state already discriminates against," executive director Dan Furmansky said. "Furthermore, he proposes to sully our most sacred state document with outright discrimination against his own constituents."



Evan Wolfson calls New Jersey's domestic partner bill a positive legislative step that still falls short

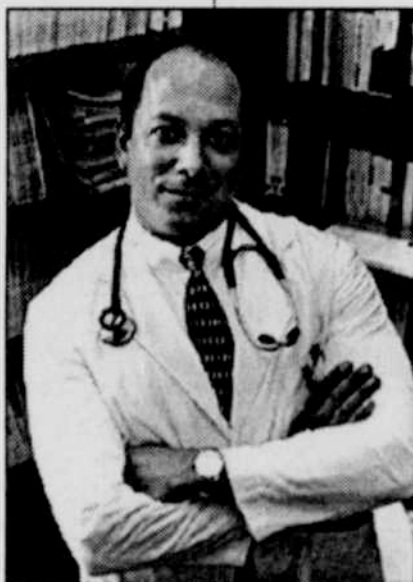
A marriage license confers more than 1,000 federal and state rights and responsibilities, including the right to visit a spouse in the hospital; make medical decisions for a spouse if he or she is ill; take family and medical leave to care for a sick spouse; file joint tax returns; and inherit property, disability and Social Security in the event of a spouse's death.

"Marriage equality is a matter of equal protection under the law," Furmansky said. "The option to marry—or not to marry—is a fundamental right, and to deny us that right is myopic and anti-family."

OHIO

The Franklin County Correction Center is refusing to administer time-sensitive HIV medication to an inmate serving time in the facility, ignoring a letter sent by the American Civil Liberties Union informing administrators of his condition and need for the medication.

"This is very serious," said Dr. Howard Grossman, a highly respected HIV expert in New York City. "A lapse in treatment could cause him to become resistant in only a matter of days and then the drugs won't work."



Dr. Howard Grossman says an Ohio correction center's refusal to administer HIV medication could have serious health consequences for an inmate

The inmate, who does not wish to be identified by name to protect his right to confidentiality, is serving a 10-day jail sentence for driving under the influence. Prior to reporting to the facility to begin his sentence, he contacted the ACLU after he was told not to bring his medications to the jail.

The ACLU sent a letter to the facility on the day the inmate began his sentence, Jan. 14, notifying the authorities of his condition and outlining their legal obligations to provide the necessary medical treatment. Attorneys also called administrators and were assured that the inmate would receive his treatment in a timely manner.

"My son is willing to pay for his crime, but serving a short jail sentence shouldn't be life-threatening," said the Columbus man's mother. "My son is alive today only because he has been extremely careful in taking his medications. I'm really afraid of what this interruption will do to his health." [E]

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

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