

**NATIONAL news**

Continued from Page 19

legal marriage to non-marital relationships between persons of the same sex or different sexes."

Republican Gov. Bob Taft has said he will support the measure. According to a Jan. 21 article in *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Republican Attorney General Jim Petro said he opposed Ohio House Bill 272, saying it was "a little too broad" and "a little unfair."

"It's a sad day for Ohio, to write discrimination into the laws of our state," said Tim Downing, Ohioans for Growth and Equality chairman. "Even

the attorney general of Ohio believes that this law is not necessary and seriously flawed. It's reprehensible that more public officials didn't join him in opposition to such a biased law."

The measure—which passed the Senate by an 18-15 vote and the House by a 69-23 vote—prevents state employees from ever receiving health insurance benefits for their unmarried partners. Additionally, out-of-state same-sex couples who are both legal parents of their children may see these adoptions invalidated or not honored when they visit or move to Ohio.

**PENNSYLVANIA**

The American Civil Liberties Union filed notice Jan. 21 that it is appealing a recent



Ohio Gov. Bob Taft has threatened to ban marriage and marriage-related protections for same-sex couples

decision by a trial judge preventing gay and lesbian employees from going forward with their challenge to University of Pittsburgh's policy of denying them access to health insurance and other employee benefits for their domestic partners.

"Pitt may be breathing a sigh of relief that it can continue to discriminate against its gay employees, but this fight is far from over," attorney Chris Bian-

cheria said. "We expected all along that this case was headed for the appeals courts."

A Jan. 12 decision by the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County prevents the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations from deciding whether Pitt is in violation of a city law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. The ACLU originally brought suit in 1996 before the commission on behalf of seven current and former employees who were unable to obtain health insurance for their domestic partners because of the university's policy.

Before the case could be heard, Pitt went before the court and got a temporary order preventing the commission from hearing the case. Now that order has been made permanent.

**FLORIDA**

Andrea Zimbardi, a catcher who was released from University of Florida's varsity women's softball team shortly after alleging sexual orientation discrimination, has reached an agreement with the institution that includes policy changes and a program to educate about harassment and discrimination of queer students and athletes.

As part of the agreement, the university will provide training to combat homophobia in sports to its entire athletic department, including directors, coaches and staff. The university also will encourage team captains to attend.

"I am thrilled that we have reached an agreement that will enable us to put this all behind us," Zimbardi said. "My goal from the very beginning has been to help ensure that other gay and lesbian athletes at UF feel welcome, accepted and judged solely on their talent. I love UF and am more proud than ever to be a Gator."

Pat Griffin, a University of Massachusetts professor and leading expert in the field of homophobia/heterosexism in sport, helped conduct the first phase of the training Jan. 26. "I was impressed by how willing the coaches were to engage and really talk about these difficult issues—this was clearly a group of coaches who cared about their athletes and were interested in making athletics accessible for everyone," she said.



Pat Griffin

**CALIFORNIA**

The federal government's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which for months has been investigating Cirque du Soleil

for firing performer Matthew Cusick because he has HIV, concluded Jan. 30 that the company likely engaged in illegal discrimination. The commission's Los Angeles District Office handled the inquiry and will now attempt to resolve the matter before it reaches court.

"This is a major development," said Hayley Gorenberg of Lambda Legal, which represents Cusick. "The federal government has looked very carefully at Cirque du Soleil's actions, and its investigation confirmed there is evidence that Cirque engaged in unlawful discrimination."

Gorenberg said commission investigations don't reach beyond deciding whether there's "cause to believe" an employer discriminated. "This is the most serious determination the government can reach at this level."

The Assembly passed a bill Jan. 29 that would create a commission to deal with veterans groups officially recognized under California law, including queer veterans.

The panel will be responsible for creating a memorial to gay, lesbian, bi and trans service-members who died while serving their country. Assembly Bill 1520 now heads to the state Senate, where the Veterans Affairs Committee will review the legislation.

"For so many brave soldiers who fought and sometimes died for our nation, it is time that their sacrifice is forever remembered," said lesbian Assemblywoman Christine Kehoe, D-San Diego, the measure's author. "Now women, veterans of color and LGBT veterans are one step closer to having an official means for recognition." □

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