

TENNESSEE

The Legislature has passed a discriminatory amendment to the Tennessee Constitution that would deny marriage to same-sex couples.

Just a week after the House approved House Joint Resolution 990, the Senate voted 28-1 in favor of the measure May 19. The marriage ban must receive a two-thirds majority vote in both the House and Senate in 2005 or 2006 and would not go to voters until 2006.

"Our state constitution is there to protect the rights of all Tennesseans. The fact that a group of legislators are attempting to use it as a tool of discrimination is unconscionable," said Barb Neligan, a member of the Human Rights Campaign's board of governors who has been working against the measure. "We have our work cut out for us. At a minimum, every GLBT citizen in Tennessee needs to contact his or her legislators between now and the next session and tell them that using the state constitution as a tool of discrimination is unacceptable."



Jeff Wunrow hopes Missouri voters will reject a discriminatory amendment to the state constitution

MISSOURI

A proposed constitutional amendment to deny marriage to same-sex couples in Missouri will appear on the ballot in August or November 2004.

The Senate passed the measure Feb. 29 by a 26-6 vote. The House, in the last five minutes of the legislative session May 14, passed the bill 124-25.

"We are appalled that so many legislators feel same-sex relationships have less value than opposite-sex relationships," said Jeff Wunrow, executive director of the statewide group Promo. "However, we feel that Missouri will disagree, and we look forward to talking to voters all the way to Election Day."

MINNESOTA

The Minnesota Legislature adjourned May 17 without passing a discriminatory amendment to the state constitution. The proposal would have banned same-sex marriage, civil unions and domestic partnerships.

"This is a great day for Minnesota," said Ann DeGroot, OutFront Minnesota executive director. "The defeat of this constitutional amendment bill means that the possibility that discrimination could be enshrined in our state's most precious and fundamental document will not see the light of day this year."

ALABAMA

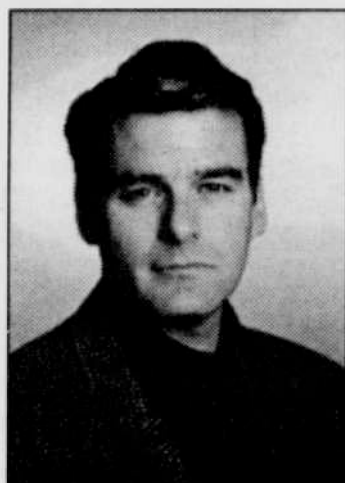
Six same-sex marriage bans died when the Alabama Legislature adjourned May 17—including one constitutional amendment that had passed the full Senate and a House commit-

tee.

"The fight for equality isn't limited to inside Washington's Beltway," said Cheryl Jacques, Human Rights Campaign president. "It's in the back yard of every American."

GEORGIA

Armed with a favorable Equal Employment Opportunity Commission decision, attorneys filed a federal lawsuit May 20 on behalf of a 45-year-old Georgia man after he was unlawfully fired from his job because he has HIV.



Attorney Greg Nevins represents a Georgia man who was unlawfully fired from his job because he has HIV

Joey Saavedra is a skilled auto glass installer who has worked in the industry for nearly 27 years. During an interview with Nodak Enterprises for a position installing auto glass, he disclosed his HIV status to the company's district manager.

After he was hired, Saavedra also told his direct supervisor. Three months later, after news of his HIV status made its way up to the company's leadership, he was fired—even though he did his job well and his direct supervisor wanted to keep him on staff.

"Joey Saavedra was fired out of fear and bigotry—not sound science—and that is against the law," said Greg Nevins of Lambda Legal. "Joey presents no risk to other employees or customers. Even with medical advances that allow many people to live longer, healthier lives, the social stigma and baseless fears about HIV still exist."

In an unusual move, Nodak gave Saavedra a termination notice on the day of the firing documenting its own illegal actions that said, "HIV status is a direct threat to the safety of others...it is in the best interest of this company to terminate employee at this time." The suit is based on the Americans with Disabilities Act, a federal law prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities if they pose no real risk to themselves or others.

FLORIDA

Sheila Ortiz-Taylor and Joy Lewis, who were denied admission to Westminster Oaks Retirement Community because they are a same-sex couple, have reached an amicable resolution of their housing discrimination claim.

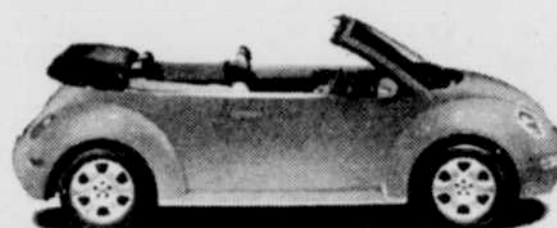
The Tallahassee couple said May 25 that they are looking forward to moving into the home. "We are pleased that [Presbyterian Retirement Communities Inc.] has made clear that all qualified applicants have equal access to its facilities."

CONNECTICUT

Republican Gov. John Rowland signed a bill May 21 extending anti-violence laws to cover crimes committed against trans and disabled citizens. Jerimarie Liesegang, Connecticut Trans Advocacy Coalition director, called the passage "a powerful and empowering message to our community and its people."

A total of 30 states have hate crimes laws on the books, and about half of them include the disabled. Connecticut now becomes the eighth state in the nation with hate crimes laws protecting trans citizens. **J**

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



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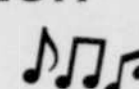
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