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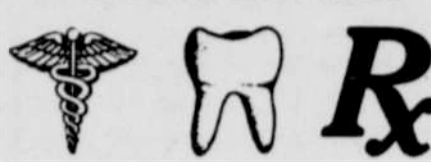
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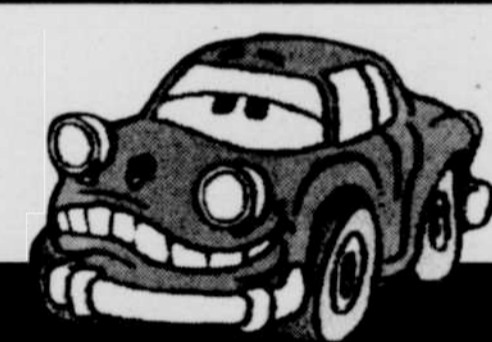
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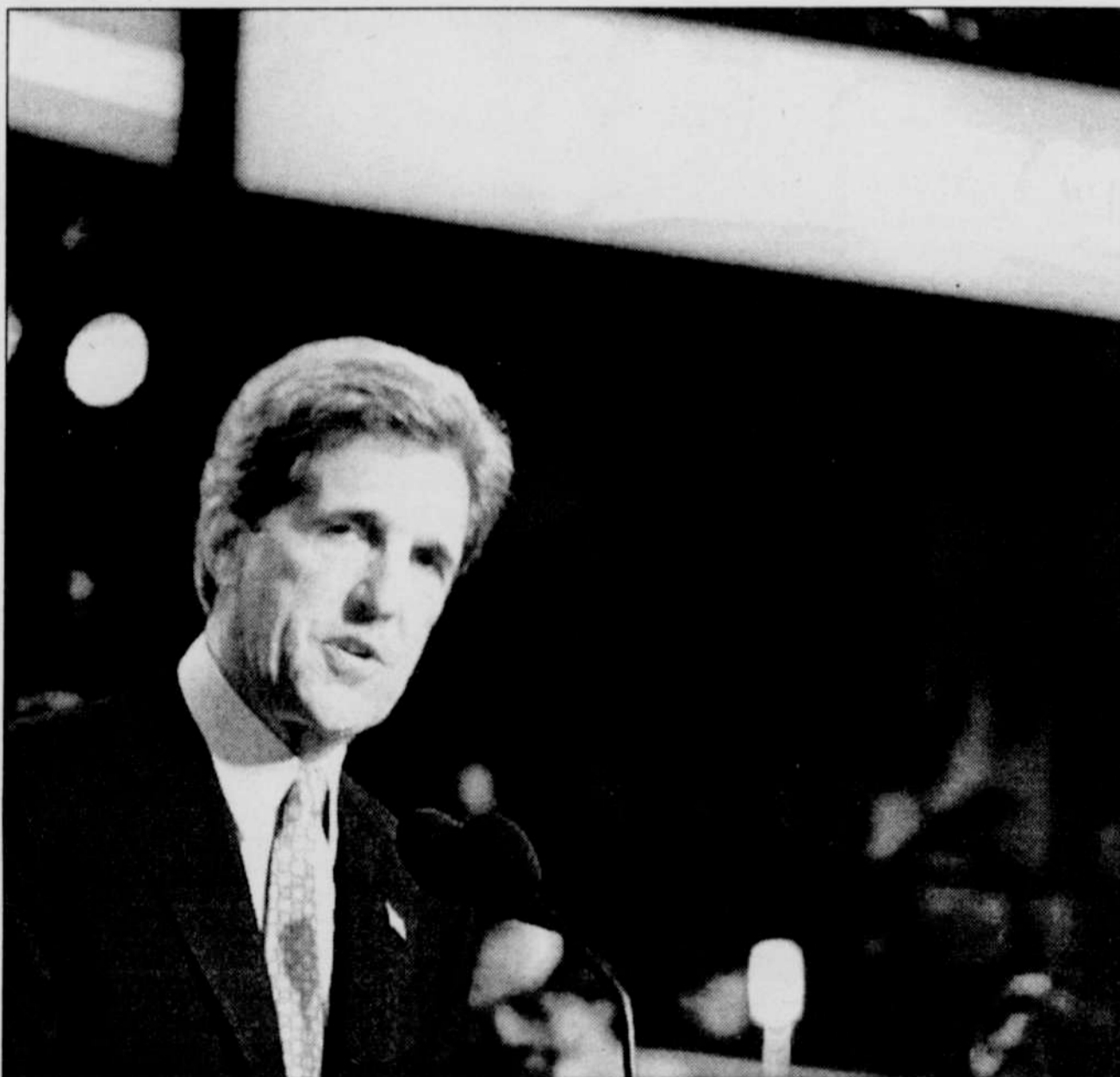
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**NATIONAL news**

**GAY DEMS UNITED FOR KERRY**

**Candidate denounces marriage amendment from podium; politicians and celebrities address queer caucus; Frank dumps TelePrompTer, wings it on marriage**

by Rex Wockner



John Kerry's reference to the Federal Marriage Amendment elicited a loud outburst of cheering during his nomination acceptance speech July 29 in Boston

While many of the 255 queer delegates to the Democratic National Convention held July 26 to 29 in Boston expressed disappointment concerning presidential candidate John Kerry's opposition to same-sex marriage and his support for amending the Massachusetts Constitution to ban it, they were nonetheless united in their conviction that four more years of President Bush will be a disaster for the sexual minorities community. And they said Kerry has taken the right position on nearly every other issue of concern to queers. The Massachusetts senator supports same-sex civil union laws that grant the rights of marriage and opposes amending the U.S. Constitution to ban same-sex marriage.

"I want to address these next words directly to President George W. Bush," Kerry said in his nomination acceptance speech. "In the weeks ahead, let's be optimists not just opponents. Let's build unity in the American family, not angry division. Let's honor this nation's diversity. Let's respect one another. And let's never misuse for political purposes the most precious document in American history: the Constitution of the United States."

That reference to the anti-gay Federal Marriage Amendment elicited the second-loudest outburst of cheering of Kerry's 47-minute speech.

Outside the convention hall, GLBT Caucus meetings were addressed by a cavalcade of politicians and celebrities who proclaimed their support for queers.

"The gay and lesbian community is no

longer put on the sidelines," New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson said. "You are an essential part of the Democratic Party."

Actor-activist Rob Reiner added: "There will be a time—and it won't be so long in the distant future—where gays and lesbians will have all the rights that every American has. And we'll look back at this time as being...what was the issue? What were we even thinking about?"

Actor Ben Affleck seconded that emotion. "I really look forward to looking back on this aspect of our convention with some degree of embarrassment for how antiquated it was, where we even have to stand up here and mention that we have some friend who's gay," he said. "Guess what, folks? Everybody has a friend, a brother, a family member who's gay.... You're entitled to every god-damned right that every other American is."

"If you want to defend marriage," Affleck said, "find somebody and love that person and care for that person and be faithful to that person and commit your life to that person, and don't worry about your neighbor's marriage.... As somebody who, to be perfectly frank, has enough trouble figuring out who to marry, I don't need the federal or state government telling me who I can marry."

The loudest welcome at the GLBT Caucus meetings was reserved for Kerry's wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry.

"I am grateful to you because you symbolize family, you symbolize strength and hope, you symbolize persistence," she said. "Because things