

2005. The law would provide registered domestic partners with basic protections and responsibilities including communal property, parenting rights and obligations, mutual responsibility for debt and the right to claim a partner's body after death.

Now Gay365.com reports that the Campaign for California Families, a conservative Christian legal activist group, has announced a bid to unseat McMaster on the grounds that



Jamaican Forum for Lesbians,
All-Sexuals and Gays Logo
(more info at jflag.org)

his ruling implies marriage by another name. The judge ruled Sept. 8 that there was nothing in the language of Proposition 22 that "restrict[s] the grant of rights and benefits to persons who have registered as domestic partners, even if those rights closely parallel the rights enjoyed by married couples." **J**

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GODSPEED, YOU BASTARD

Attorney General John Ashcroft resigns by Bob Roehr

Controversial U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft announced his resignation from the Bush administration Nov. 9. Reports are that the White House did not encourage him to stay. It will take effect with the confirmation of his successor.

The social conservative drew fire from the political left from the start. The Human Rights Campaign was among those who vocally opposed his nomination. As a senator from Missouri, he had garnered a zero rating from that organization.

Log Cabin Republicans closely followed the confirmation process and ended up not taking a public stance on the nomination. Its executive director at the time, Rich Tafel, said: "The key for us was what he kept saying during the hearings, 'This will not be John Ashcroft's attorney generalship, this will be President Bush's attorney general' and reflect the administration's position.... The most important thing for us was that his statements were looking forward, not looking backward."

Eight Democrats joined all of the Republicans in the Senate in confirming Ashcroft 58-42.

The position of attorney general traditionally is thought suspect by civil libertarians. The post-9/11 passage of the USA Patriot Act, and Ashcroft's tactics in implementing it, provided ample fodder for such criticism from across a broad swath of the political spectrum.

Ashcroft won grudging praise for his indictment of Darrell David Rice for the brutal murder of two lesbian hikers in Virginia's Shenandoah National Park in 1996.

The victims, Julianne M. Williams, 24, and Laura S. "Lollie" Winans, 26, had met the previous year in Minneapolis and had established a household in Vermont. They were on a five-day backpacking trip through the Virginia mountains when their naked bodies were discovered bound and gagged, their throats slashed.

At a dramatic news conference April 10, 2002, Ashcroft announced the indictment of Rice for the murders of the two women. He invoked a federal sentencing enhancement for victims of hate crimes that could bring the death penalty. It was the first time that provision had been used in a queer case.

However, the indictment was withdrawn in February 2004 when some of the initial evidence was found suspect.

In June 2003, senior officials at the Department of Justice told DOJ Pride, an organization of queer employees, that they could no longer hold planned Gay Pride activities at agency facilities. When news of the decision created a public stir, those officials backtracked, saying that the event could be held but that the agency would not officially sponsor it and that DOJ Pride would have to pick up any costs associated with using the room.

In March of this year, Ashcroft was hospitalized for pancreatitis and had emergency surgery to remove his gallbladder. He was away from the office for about a month and has maintained a lower profile since returning.

White House counsel Alberto Gonzales has been nominated to succeed Ashcroft. He served on Bush's staff in Texas and on that state's Supreme Court. He will be the first Hispanic to lead the Department of Justice and is seen as a political moderate. **J**



Ashcroft shown in front of a partially nude statue he had covered with an \$8,000 cloth



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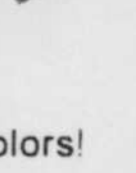
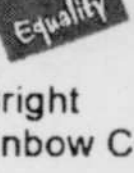
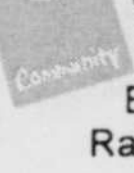
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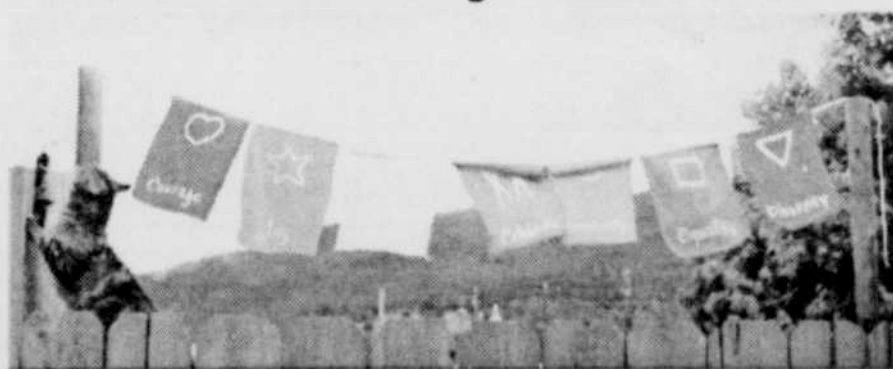
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