

NATIONAL news

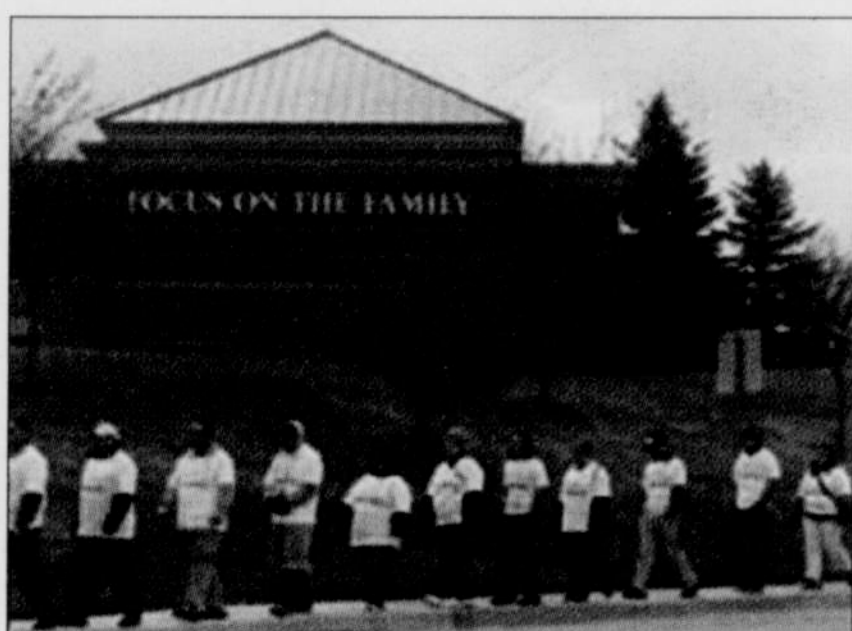
add sexual orientation as a protected category. Today all but a handful of schools do so.

Noting that the Pentagon's policy known as "don't ask, don't tell" discriminates against gays and lesbians in employment, the law schools said they would bar military recruiters from campus.

The backlash began in 1994 when U.S. Rep. Gerald Solomon, R-N.Y., offered the first in a series of amendments and then a law to force the schools to help military recruiters or lose access to all government-funded programs, including student loans.

A coalition of law schools organized as FAIR and sued to block the law. A 3rd Circuit appeals court sitting in Philadelphia agreed with their arguments. Writing for the 2-1 majority, Judge Thomas L. Ambro drew heavily upon two Supreme Court decisions that at the time were seen as defeats for gay rights advocates.

One case is Boy Scouts of America vs. Dale, where the court said the organization did not have to admit an openly gay scoutmaster because it would "significantly burden the Boy Scouts' desire to not promote homosexual conduct as a legitimate form of behavior."



Soulforce protesters march around the Focus on the Family headquarters and deliver 1,000 letters.

Ambro applied that same logic to this case, writing, "The law schools believe that employment discrimination is inconsistent with their commitment to justice and fairness" and should not be compelled to accept military recruiters. He called the Solomon Amendment an unjustifiably blunt weapon to assist the recruitment effort; "it could barely be tailored more broadly." The Pentagon has other less intrusive and burdensome methods by which to recruit lawyers.

Furthermore, "The government has failed to proffer a shred of evidence that the Solomon Amendment materially enhances its stated goal." It may plausibly be argued that it has generated such ill will that it "actually impedes recruitment."

The U.S. House of Representatives reacted by passing a "Sense of Congress" resolution when it returned in February. It reaffirmed the Solomon Amendment and urged an appeal to the Supreme Court, though it had no binding legal power. The vote was 327-84, with strong Democratic support.

While not a party to the FAIR lawsuit, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network filed a brief in support of that position during the Philadelphia appeal. It is likely to do so again now that the matter is before the Supreme Court.

—BR

SOULFORCE PROTESTS FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

About 1,000 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals, couples and families, their allies and clergy took on Focus on the Family, a conservative Christian church and media source, by picnicking and praying in front of its headquarters May 1 in Colorado Springs, Colo. Portland was represented at the protest by Bonnie Tinker of Love Makes a Family.

Three people, Philip Reitan, 57, Randi Reitan, 54, and their son, Jacob Reitan, 23, all of Eden Prairie, Minn., were arrested as they attempted to deliver a letter to James Dobson, the head of Focus on the Family. They were arrested on trespassing charges and released, according to *The Rocky Mountain News*.

The Reitans are part of Soulforce, a national gay advocacy group that came to Colorado Springs to protest what it calls "hurtful rhetoric" on homosexuality from Dobson and Focus on the Family. The ministry was closed to visitors May 2.

In the letter that the Reitans attempted to deliver to Dobson, they wrote:

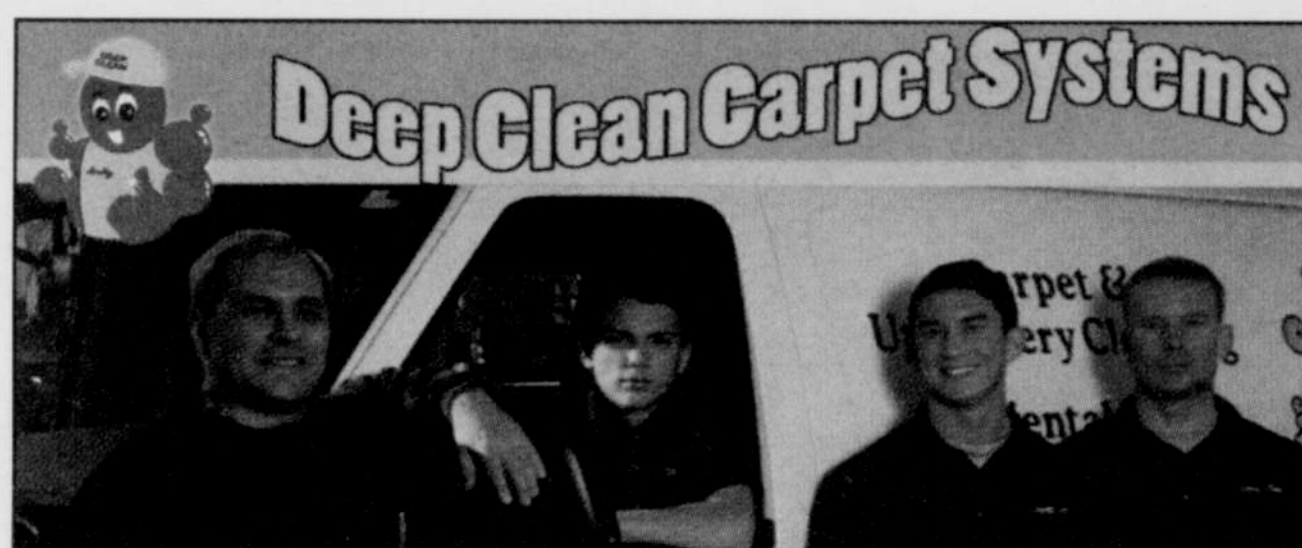
"Phil and I have a gay son, Jake. When Jake first came out to us, we knew nothing about homosexuality. We had to educate ourselves. We read many books, but more importantly, we talked to psychologists and psychiatrists about understanding homosexuality. We were told to love and accept Jake as a gay man. We were told that reparative therapy is harmful. We listened to their advice, and we began a new journey of understanding as parents.

"There was never a moment we did not love or accept our dear son. But we struggled with how best to see the day Jake is loved, accepted and understood by society. As parents and Christians, we felt called to work for justice for all in the gay community.... We know that God loves Jake just as he is...a gay man. We know that Jesus is with Jake each day as Jake works to see the day all in the gay community are respected and given the same rights and privileges we all enjoy. We pray that day comes soon. And as we read in Micah 6:8: 'What does the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk

humbly with thy God?'"

In response, Focus on the Family held a press conference to reaffirm its stance that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian Scripture. Additionally, Exodus International, an organization that "saves" homosexuals through "conversion" back to heterosexuality, reminded the press that, in its view, homosexuals choose their lifestyles.

—SD



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Colorado Springs police officers arrest Jake Reitan and his mother, Randi, along with his father, Phillip, as they attempt to deliver a letter to James Dobson.