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NATIONAL news

GAY RIGHTS GROUPS DENOUNCE CONFIRMATION OF PRYOR

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Human Rights Campaign denounced the U.S. Senate's confirmation June 9 of former Alabama Attorney General William H. Pryor Jr. to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

The Senate confirmed Pryor for a lifetime appointment by a vote of 53-45, with three Republican senators voting in opposition to his confirmation and two Democrats voting in support. Since his initial nomination by President Bush in 2003, groups advocating for queers in Washington have strongly opposed Pryor's nomination, as he has a demonstrated track record of bias against the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans.

"Pryor has repeatedly proven he is an ideological tyrant of the highest order," said Matt Foreman, NGLTF executive director. "Pryor's extremist views may resonate with the outer fringes, but they have no place on the federal bench. This is an American travesty."

HRC president Joe Solmonese added: "The American people deserve justice, not prejudice. We thank senators from both parties who stood with us and the civil rights community, and we will continue to advocate for fair-minded judges and against radical nominees who would roll back basic civil rights. With judges like Pryor on the courts of appeal, the Supreme Court is more important than ever."

As Alabama attorney general, Pryor consistently demonstrated bias against queers, linking the state Web site to anti-gay advocacy groups. In a friend-of-the-court brief filed in the Lawrence vs. Texas case, he compared homosexuality to bestiality and pedophilia. Last year, after receiving a recess appointment to the 11th Circuit, Pryor cast the deciding vote to deny rehearing a challenge to Florida's anti-gay adoption law.

More than 175 national groups opposed Pryor's appointment, including Log Cabin Republicans, Lambda Legal, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Abortion Rights Action League, People for the American Way, the Sierra Club and the World Association of Persons with Disabilities.

—Sarah Dougher

CHAMBER, FEDS SIGN MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING

In a move that opens doors for queer business to bid for billions in federal contracts, the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Department of the Interior signed a historic memorandum of understanding June 9.

It is designed to increase opportunities for queer-owned businesses. While the chamber launched an initiative for queer suppliers to contract with some of America's top corporations last year, the Interior Department is the first federal agency to sign such a memo expressly aimed at increasing opportunities for queer businesses within the federal government.

The partnership will allow the chamber to provide more opportunities to queer-owned

businesses looking to secure vendor contracts with the department and its eight bureaus: National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Minerals Management Service, Bureau of Reclamation and Office of Surface Mining.

"Through this partnership, the NGLCC will ensure that LGBT businesses have access to bid on the more than \$4 billion in contracts the DOI awards every year, over \$2 billion of which is spent with small and disadvantaged businesses," said chamber co-founder Justin Nelson.

Bob Faithful, director of the department's Office of Small and Dis-

advantaged Business Utilization, added: "Know your neighbor. LGBT businesses are also our neighbors; they are taxpayers and contributors to the economy, as well as our customers. Their participation as small businesses makes the country's economic base stronger."

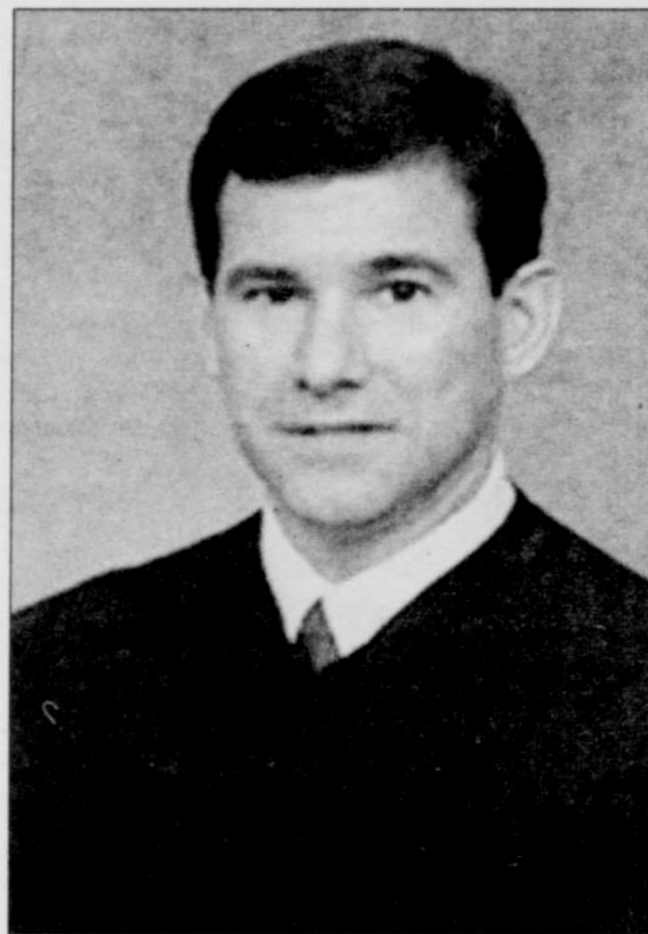
The day's events are also of great benefit to the Interior Department. As a result of the agreement,

the chamber will help the agency enhance its outreach efforts to small businesses owned and operated by members of the queer community. In doing so, the chamber will assist in promoting cooperation and collaborative action on issues involving contract and procurement opportunities with the department.

"We look forward to working with the DOI, while increasing

opportunities for the LGBT community and adding quality suppliers to the department's network," commented chamber co-founder Chance Mitchell on the partnership. "We hope the document we signed today is the first of many with federal agencies. LGBT businesswomen and men need to know there is a difference between the politics in Washington and business opportunities with the federal government. This is a good start."

The chamber is the largest queer business development and economic advocacy organization in the world. It represents the interests of more than 800,000 queer-owned businesses and



William H. Pryor, virulent homophobe, has been appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.



Texas Gov. Rick Perry tells gay vets to scram if they don't like his opinions.