

entrepreneurs and is committed to forming a broad-based coalition of queer-owned and friendly businesses, professionals and students of business for the purpose of promoting economic growth and prosperity for its members.

—SD

MAINE LEGISLATORS DEFEAT ANTI-GAY AMENDMENT

By a vote of 88-56, the Maine House of Representatives defeated an effort to amend the state constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage June 14.

"I believe we should not scribble the graffiti of fear and discrimination into Maine's most sacred political document," Democratic House Majority Leader Glenn Cummings said. A last-minute effort by proponents to limit the ban to marriages, not civil unions, only eroded existing support by conservatives, but a petition drive may yet force the matter to a voter referendum.

—SD

TEXAS GOVERNOR INVITES GAY VETS TO LEAVE

Texas Gov. Rick Perry, fresh from a controversial bill-signing session in a church, said June 5 that gay veterans returning to Texas from Iraq could move elsewhere if they didn't like a law banning gays and lesbians from marrying. He was responding to a question from a reporter.

"Gov. Perry's remarks were outrageous and offensive and do not reflect the views of fair-minded Texans who value the service of our men and women in uniform," said Col. Paul W. Dodd, a retired Army chaplain who lives in Texas.

—SD

FRUIT FLIES, GENES AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A single gene is responsible for mating actions and sexual orientation in *Drosophila*, that bountiful font of genetic research known as the common fruit fly.

A pair of articles in the June 3 issue of the journal *Cell* powerfully reinforce the case for the innate biological nature of sexual orientation. After all, distant mothers, weak fathers, "recruitment" and embracing Jesus are not major factors in shaping the "impressionable" fly pupa.

Barry J. Dickson and colleagues at the Institute of Molecular Biotechnology of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna focused on the "fruitless" gene (*fru*), which comes in four variations. They hypothesized that a switch gene for sexual behavior should act to specify either male or female behavior, irrespective of the physical sexual characteristics of the fly.

Through a complex series of gene splicing and breeding, they generated lines of fruit flies that carried one of the four distinct variants of *fru*, then they observed their behavior.

They found that the male flies with the female variant of the *fru* gene were significantly less likely to court and breed with females than were the males with the other variants of the gene, and they were more likely to engage in courtship behavior with other males.

Among female flies, those with the male version of the gene were significantly less likely to mate with "normal" male flies, while more than 40 percent of them engaged in male courtship behavior—a ritualistic series of wing beatings

and body lickings prior to copulation—with "normal" females.

The researchers carefully examined the bodies of the fly lines and could discern no physical changes that might explain these actions. The flies in every way looked like males and females of the species should look, but they did not behave the same as their sexual features would indicate.

The second paper looked at neurons in the fly brain that have been associated with the *fru* gene. It said, "We could not detect any major anatomical differences in this circuit that might explain the different sexual behaviors of males and females, suggesting that the essential difference between the sexes lies in the functioning of this circuit, not its construction."

It also showed how male- and female-specific pheromones—a chemical signaling system that parallels the sense of smell, is wired to the most primitive portion of the brain and regulates sexual attraction—can be affected by male and female *fru* genetic variants.

Dickson says, "We have shown that a single gene in the fruit fly is sufficient to determine all aspects of the flies' sexual orientation and behavior." His findings demonstrate that instinctive behavior can be regulated by the same genetic forces that regulate height or eye color. "The notion of a behavioral switch gene implies that at least some instinctive behaviors develop according to the familiar genetic logic of morphological [body] development."

It does not deny the role of other genes and the environment in strengthening or weakening the influence of that gene in developing patterns of behavior.

—Bob Roehr

NEW JERSEY APPEALS COURT RULES AGAINST MARRIAGE EQUALITY

A New Jersey appeals court issued a 21 ruling June 14 in favor of the state in Lambda Legal's case seeking marriage equality for same-sex couples. The ruling clears the way for the case to move to the New Jersey Supreme Court.

"We are disappointed but not discouraged.

We've always known that this case is headed for the New Jersey Supreme Court, and now we're that much closer to the final word," said David Buckel, director of Lambda Legal's Marriage Project and the lead attorney on the case. "In cases of this magnitude, much like our landmark victory in U.S. Supreme Court striking down sodomy laws nationwide, losses at the lower court levels are typical, and we have seen that the opinion of the dissenting judge often later becomes the law of the land."

Judge Donald G. Colleser Jr. said in his 31-page dissent: "By prohibiting them from a real right to marry, plaintiffs as well as their children suffer the real consequences of being 'different.' While the Domestic Partnership Act gives, at some cost, many, but not all, of the benefits and protections automatically granted to married persons, we have learned after much pain that 'separate but equal' does not substitute for equal rights."

Lambda Legal plans to appeal the decision "as quickly as possible," Buckel said.

The lawsuit was filed against New Jersey in June 2002 on behalf of seven gay and lesbian couples seeking full marriage. In November 2003, a state court trial judge denied Lambda Legal's motion for summary judgment in the case, and the group appealed. The lawsuit is based solely on the New Jersey Constitution, which means the state Supreme Court's decision will be final.

—SD



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