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WORLDnews

AMERICAS

CANADA LEGALIZES SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Canada's House of Commons voted June 28 to approve legislation allowing gay couples to marry. The vote was 158-133. The bill received its first reading in the Senate on June 29 and is expected to pass. Supported by most members of the Liberal party, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party, the vote makes Canada the third country in the world, after the Netherlands and Belgium, to officially recognize same-sex marriage.

The vote came at a price for Paul Martin's minority government. Joe Comuzzi, the minister responsible for Northern Ontario, resigned from the Cabinet so he could vote against the bill. Conservative leader Stephen Harper says if his party forms the next government, the law will be revisited.

Gay marriage is currently authorized in eight provinces and one territory; it remains in legal limbo in two additional jurisdictions.

GUADALAJARA GAY RADIO PROGRAM DUMPED

Guadalajara University in Mexico has terminated the Guadalajara Gay Radio program that aired on the campus radio station, Reporters Without Borders said June 13.

"It is hard to imagine a radio program still being censored for such archaic reasons as sexual discrimination in the 21st century," the press freedom organization said. "This type of...violation is a dangerous step backwards."

Guadalajara University Radio director Carlos Ramírez Powell told program host Miguel Galán that higher-ups ordered him to ax the show as part of a politically motivated overhaul of the station's programming.

ARGENTINE ACTOR DENIED U.S. VISA

Prominent Argentine actor and comedian Fernando Peña was denied his visa renewal by the U.S. Consulate in Buenos Aires because he is HIV-positive, Immigration Equality reported June 22.



Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (left), Deputy Prime Minister Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega (right) and members of Spain's Parliament cheer the vote to legalize same-sex marriage.

"Our parliamentarians have said that the Canadian thing to do is to end discrimination and to extend full citizenship to lesbian and gay people," said Alex Munter, spokesman for Canadians for Equal Marriage. "We call on the Senate of Canada to give speedy passage to this legislation."

FORMER SOCCER STAR COMES OUT

A former Uruguayan soccer star, who also played for teams in Venezuela, Guatemala and El Salvador, came out of the closet in the June issue of *Gay Barcelona* magazine.

"It is only now that being gay is 'in fashion,'" Wilson Oliver Elías told the magazine. "We are on the TV soaps, publicity ads, in all media. Society has begun to understand that gays are normal, regular people."

Oliver said his mother is OK with his sexuality but his father isn't.

"One day my mother, as I came home from one of my trips as a player, said to me, 'You know, someone came and told me you were gay.' And I said, 'Well, Mom, and what did you say in return?' And, amazingly, she said, 'Well, if it's not a daughter-in-law it'll be a son-in-law!' That's when I found my mother accepted me, something that gave me a great deal of peace. But with my father it's different; we don't talk to him. He is part of a rigid society and a culture where machismo is exacerbated."

Oliver now lives in Barcelona with his partner.

Peña had a U.S. travel visa most of his life, using it to visit relatives and to perform at events such as the Latin American MTV Video Music Awards.

The United States bans nearly all openly HIV-positive visitors because immigration law classifies HIV as a "communicable disease of public health significance." In certain instances, brief waivers of the ban are granted.

"The United States should be the world leader in fighting the HIV epidemic; instead, we continue to perpetuate stigma and misinformation about how HIV is transmitted," said Victoria Neilson, Immigration Equality's legal director. "Not only are the laws discriminatory, they are also ineffective in terms of prevention."

ANGLICANS GIVE AMERICANS, CANADIANS THE BOOT

The Anglican Consultative Council on June 21 told the U.S. Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada to leave the council because they're too gay-friendly. The vote was 30-28.

The U.S. church installed an openly gay bishop—Gene Robinson in New Hampshire—and the Canadian church has allowed blessings of same-sex unions, in British Columbia.

The Consultative Council is the worldwide Anglican Communion's central administrative body. The punishment will remain in effect until 2008.

The issue of the acceptability of gay sex