

NATIONAL news

connections between organized hate groups and the recent church burning in Virginia," said Clarence Patton, who heads the coalition and is acting executive director of the New York City Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project. "At the very least, there are a number of questions that we in the nation's LGBT community have, including 'Are the local law enforcement agencies working on these cases in communication with each other; have there been other instances of arson targeting gay, gay-friendly and gay-associated sites that haven't yet been identified as such; and finally, what should the role of the nation's premier law enforcement agency be in addressing what is so obviously a crisis for a community already under cultural, political and physical siege?'"

According to the coalition, anti-gay hate incidents reported to its members across the country have risen dramatically in the past two years—8 percent in 2003 and another 4 percent in 2004—and show no signs of decreasing.

PSYCHIATRIC BOARD BACKS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

The American Psychiatric Association's board of trustees voted July 31 to approve a position statement that supports civil marriage for same-sex couples.

The APA Assembly voted at its annual meeting May 22 in Atlanta to approve a statement that reads: "In the interests of maintaining and promoting mental health, the APA supports the legal recognition of same-sex civil marriage with all rights, benefits and responsibilities conferred by civil marriage and opposes restrictions to those same rights, benefits and responsibilities."

CHEROKEE COURT APPROVES LESBIAN MARRIAGE

A tribal court has dismissed a lawsuit that held up a lesbian couple's effort to have their marriage recognized by the Cherokee Nation.

In a ruling filed Aug. 3, the tribe's Judicial Appeals Tribunal said a lawsuit that blocked the filing of a tribal-issued marriage certificate issued to Dawn McKinley and Kathy Reynolds had no standing. The plaintiff could not show that he suffered any harm by the couple's attempt to be recognized as a married couple.

MASSACHUSETTS NEW PLAN TO STOP GAY MARRIAGES

The Massachusetts Family Institute, opponents of gay marriage, submitted a citizens petition Aug. 2, one day before the deadline. If the ballot measure passes, it would amend the state constitution to ban gay marriages. *The Boston Globe* reported that this move casts doubt on the future of another ballot initiative pending in the Legislature.

The initiative would define marriage as between a man and a woman. The Supreme Judicial Court legalized same-sex marriage in 2003.

After the ruling, lawmakers reached a compromise ban that would allow Vermont-style civil unions. That version was passed in one joint session of the Legislature, called the Constitutional Convention. It must be approved a second time.

In June, the Massachusetts Family Institute and a coalition of other groups opposed to gay marriage said they were launching the effort to amend the state constitution and pledged to seek the defeat of the earlier version.

After the new initiative is approved by the attorney general's office, proponents must gather about 66,000 signatures. Then the measure must be approved by two Constitutional Conventions in a row, before it would be put to voters in 2008.

Same-sex marriages have been taking place in Massachusetts since May 17, 2004.

COLORADO

ANTI-GAY VIOLENCE RESULTS IN DEATH

Lifetime Montrose, Colo., resident Kevin Eugene Hale, 36, was killed the morning of July 30 in a city park as he was leaving a pub. Two of the suspects in the case, Jason Fiske and Adam Hernandez, are in custody and being held on charges of first-degree murder.

Family and friends of Hale believe the murder was hate-motivated. "Kevin was very openly gay," said Larry DeVinny, Hale's uncle. "Kevin has endured a great deal of anti-gay harassment during his life here in Montrose."

DeVinny added that Hale had expressed fearing for his safety during the past year. DeVinny recalled Hale expressing concern about one of the suspects in particular, Fiske.

"In many cases of bias-motivated violence, the perpetrators are known to the victim—a co-worker, a fellow student, a neighbor. And often the perpetrator has been harassing and intimidating the victim for a significant period of time, long before they do something severe enough to make headlines," said Avy Skolnik of the Colorado Anti-Violence Program.

Friend Jeannie Phillips noted, "We are concerned that this incident will not be investigated as a hate crime."

Assistant District Attorney Mark Adams told *The Montrose Daily Press* that he may, in fact, not prosecute the incident as a hate crime. "It's a consideration, but the D.A. is not formally filing it as a hate crime," he said.

Veronica Garcia of the Colorado Anti-Violence Program said: "CAVP and Western Equality are strongly encouraging the prosecutors in the case to speak with the family and to examine anti-gay sentiment as a motive in this case. Under Colorado's Victim Rights Act, the surviving family members in a murder case have a right speak with the district attorney's office and make their concerns known."

Skolnik added: "Perpetrators of anti-gay violence frequently try to justify assault and murder by claiming that the victim made sexual advances. Perpetrators assume that police or the courts will absolve them of all charges and see assault and, in this case, murder as justified. It's the oldest trick in the book." □



C. Dixon Osburn, executive director of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, informs members of the military that being out to anyone at anytime can end their career.

Compiled by SARAH DOUGHER



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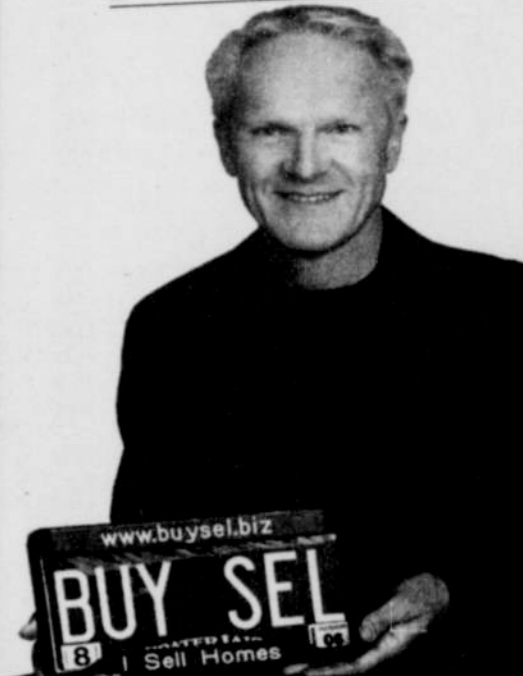
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