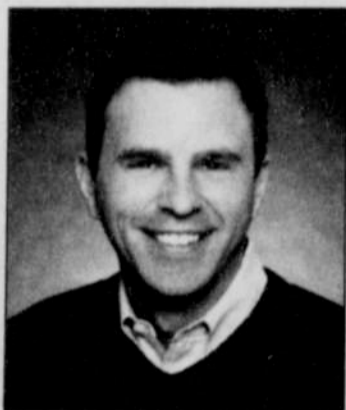


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national

NATIONAL Anti-Hate Crime Bill Introduced

U.S. Sens. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., and Gordon Smith, R-Ore., introduced the bipartisan Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act on April 12. The Senate bill would strengthen the ability of law enforcement officials to investigate and prosecute bias-motivated violent crimes and is identical to a bill in the House of Representatives that was introduced in March by U.S. Reps. John Conyers Jr., D-Mich., and Mark Kirk, R-Ill.

According to polls, this legislation is strongly supported by a majority of Americans. According to a new poll conducted by Peter Hart Research Associates, three in four voters, 73 percent, favor strengthening hate crimes laws to include sexual orientation and gender identity and to give local law enforcement the tools they need to prevent and prosecute these violent acts based on bigotry.

Moreover, large majorities of every major group of the electorate—including such traditionally conservative groups as Republican men, 56 percent, and evangelical Christians, 63 percent—expressed support for strengthening hate crimes laws to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Support also crosses racial lines—with three in four whites, 74 percent, African Americans, 74 percent, and Latinos, 72 percent, supporting the bill.

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act has previously passed both houses of Congress, and more than 210 law enforcement, civil rights, civic and religious organizations support the passage of this piece of legislation.

CALIFORNIA Marriage Bill Advances in Committee

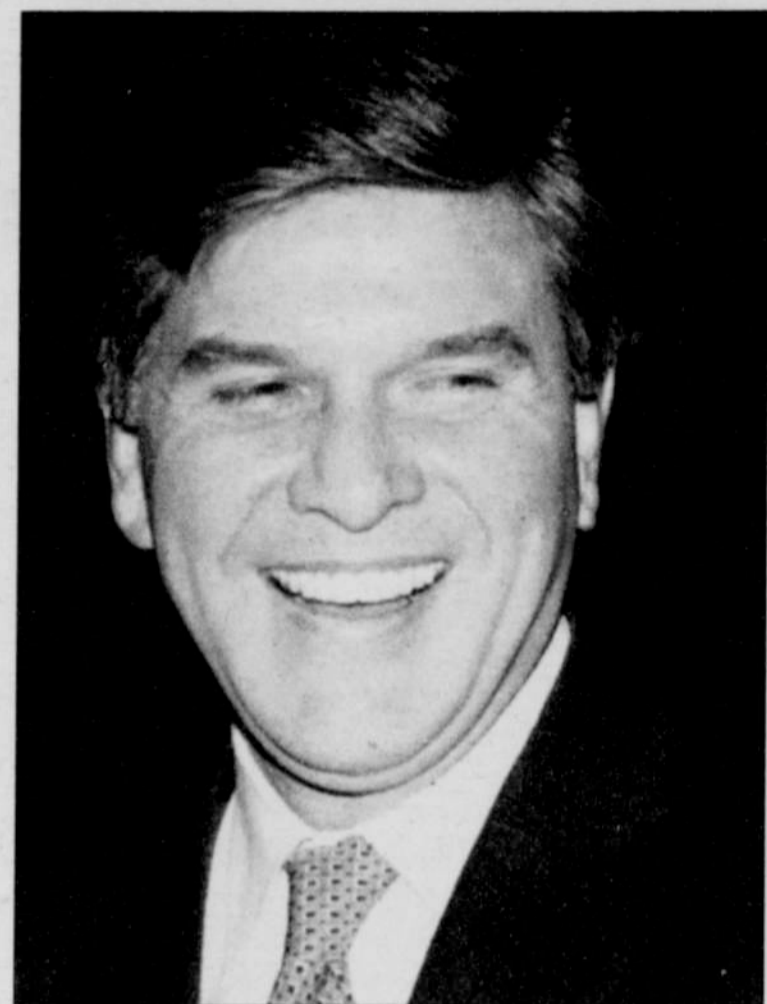
California's same-sex marriage bill cleared legislative committee April 10, but the future of Assembly Bill 43 remains tenuous, with the governor likely to veto.

Although many, like Assemblyman Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, view the bill as a civil rights issue that can no longer be ignored, others see it as an attempt to redefine marriage against the will of California voters, who approved a same-sex marriage ban in 2000.

The Assembly Judiciary Committee, however, sided with Leno, voting along party lines with seven Democrats in favor and three Republicans opposed. The bill now moves on to the Appropriations Committee, chaired by Leno.

Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed an identical measure last year, stating that voters had already spoken on this issue in 2000. His spokesman, however, said April 10 that he has not taken a position on AB 43.

In a show of support from both houses, 41 lawmakers have signed on as co-authors of the bill, and polls show an increased openness toward marriage equality from Californians, according to Leno. Critics, however, insist that it is unconstitutional to overturn laws enacted by voters, such as Proposition 22, the same-sex marriage ban.



U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., introduced an anti-hate crime bill with U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass.

COLORADO Second-Parent Adoption Passes in Senate

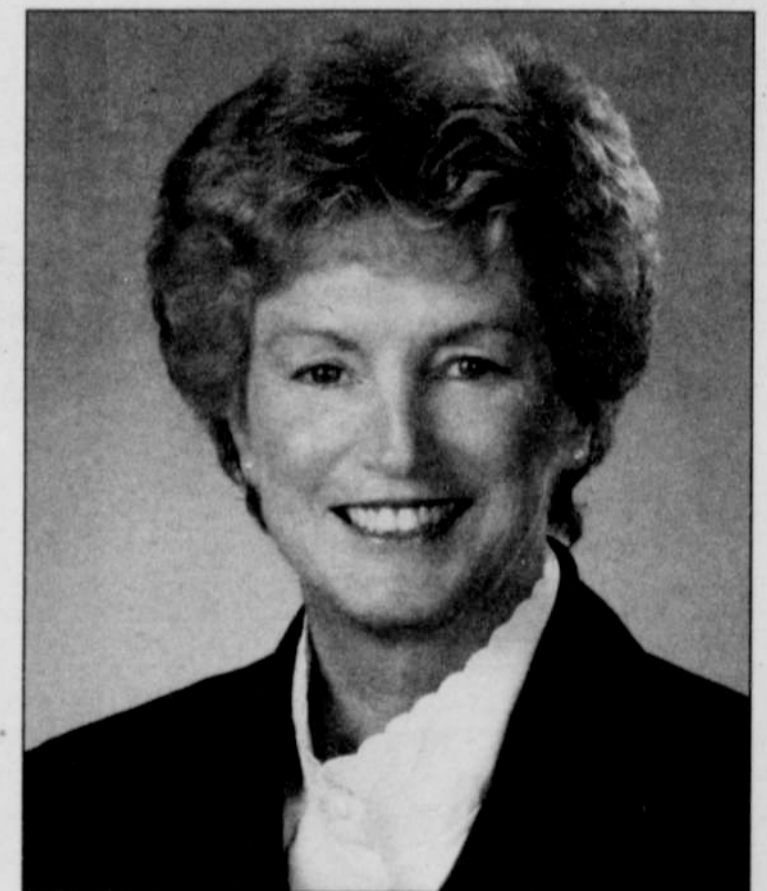
Despite objection from some lawmakers, a measure allowing gay couples to adopt won the Colorado Senate's approval April 11.

A critical state Sen. Scott Renfroe, R-Greeley, said the second-parent adoption bill was a ploy to advance the "homosexual agenda." The bill, however, was approved on a party-line vote, with Democrats arguing that the bill protects non-traditional families.

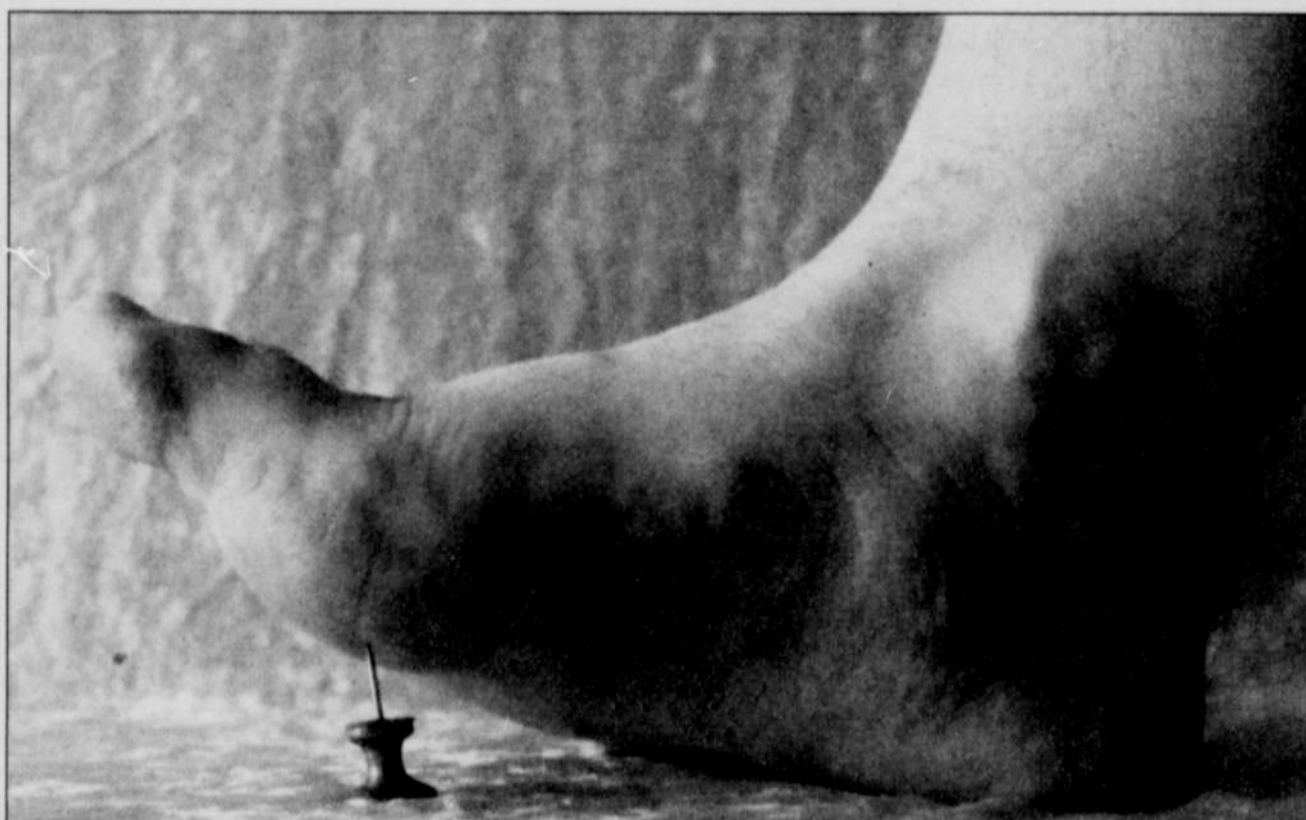
The bill's sponsor, state Sen. Jennifer Veiga, D-Denver, argued that same-sex couples and their relatives already have a difficult time getting government benefits, including health coverage, to children they're raising because of the state's strict adoption law, which only allows married couples or single parents to adopt. She insisted this is a separate issue from the more controversial marriage equality debate.

CONNECTICUT Marriage Bill Sees Gains

After a lengthily and emotional debate April 13, the Connecticut House Judiciary Committee voted 27-15 in favor of same-sex marriage.



It is unclear whether Connecticut Gov. Jodi Rell will veto the state's proposed marriage bill.



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