

The measure passed the House of Representatives by a 62-43 vote June 14, and had passed the Senate in April. It granted spousal rights in the areas of social security, health insurance and inheritance to same-sex couples who have been together at least two years.

But in a vote June 19 to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the bill, four senators from Uribe's La Ú party broke ranks and opposed merging the bills, thereby killing the measure. The project's sponsor, Sen. Armando Benedetti, was furious and demanded that the turncoats be expelled from the party.

Although a small number of Latin American cities and states or provinces have passed gay partnership laws, Colombia was the first Latin American nation to do so.

World Record: 3 Million March in São Paulo

About 3 million people took part in the 11th Gay Pride parade June 10 in São Paulo, Brazil, making it easily the world's largest such parade ever.

Nelson Matias Pereira, president of the São Paulo Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transvestite Parade Association, said the march down Avenida Paulista aimed to confront homophobia, machismo and racism, according to the Agência Brasil wire service. Marchers included the mayor, the governor and the federal sports and tourism ministers.

The official attendance figure was provided by police. Last year, 2.5 million people turned out.

According to the British Broadcasting Corp., 70 other Brazilian cities also have gay Pride parades.

The day before the march, about 1 million evangelical Christians staged an anti-gay "March for Jesus." Reports said one participant, Christian pastor André Fabiano, used a public address system mounted on a truck to chant: "Vade retro, Satanism! Vade retro, homosexuality!"—a paraphrase of a medieval exorcism formula.

Jamaican Singers Agree to Halt Anti-Gay Music

Top Jamaican reggae-dancehall singers Beenie Man, Sizzla and Capleton have signed an agreement to stop bashing gays in their music.

Under the Reggae Compassionate Act, written by reggae promoters working with activists from the international Stop Murder Music campaign, the three performers will not release new anti-gay songs or rerelease or perform their earlier gay-bashing material.

The document states, in part: "There's no space in the music community for hatred and prejudice, including no place for racism, violence, sexism or homophobia. We agree to not make statements or perform songs that incite hatred or violence against anyone from any community."

Stop Murder Music's campaigning has resulted in the cancellation in several countries of concerts by the three singers and fellow gay-bashing dancehall singers Elephant Man, TOK, Bounty Killa, Vybz Kartel and Buju Banton, who have not signed the agreement. Some of the singers also have lost sponsorship deals because of the campaign's initiatives.

"This deal will have a huge, positive impact in Jamaica and the Caribbean," said activist Peter Tatchell, who coordinates the campaign from London. "Having these major reggae stars renounce homophobia will influence their fans and the wider



Italian transgender MP Vladimir Luxuria led Rome's Pride parade.

public to rethink bigoted attitudes. The beneficial effect on young black straight men will be immense."

Gareth Williams, co-chairman of the Kingston-based Jamaican Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays, said he hoped the singers who signed the pledge meant it. "We hope it is not commercially motivated by the singers' desire to maintain their concert revenues, but a sincere commitment that will encourage an end to homophobic violence and to all violence against everyone."

ASIA/PACIFIC

Lesbian Japanese Politician Marries

Openly lesbian Japanese politician Kanako Otsuji, 32, and her girlfriend, Maki Kimura, 32, got married June 3 in Tokyo. They wore white dresses and carried roses in the ceremony, which was not recognized legally.

A former member of the Osaka Prefectural Assembly, Otsuji is a proportional-representation candidate for the National Diet's House of Councilors, the upper house of parliament. Under the proportional-representation system, the percentage of votes cast for the Democratic Party and Otsuji's spot on the party's list of candidates will determine if she wins election July 22. She would become Japan's first-ever openly gay MP.

"Ten years ago, it would have been impossible for me to stand as the official candidate of a major party," she told *The Scotsman* newspaper. "I want to give all kinds of minorities in Japan a voice to express themselves in the political world...single mothers, the victims of domestic violence, common-law couples who do not have the same rights as married people—not just gays and lesbians."

Otsuji came out publicly at Tokyo's 2005 Gay Pride parade.

"Homosexual people have often kept silent for fear of discrimination and prejudice," she said at the time. "By declaring I'm homosexual, I would like to highlight the problems and put an end to a vicious circle of discrimination and prejudice."

She later published an autobiography called *Coming Out: A Journey for Finding Your True Self*. ☐

REX WOCKNER has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.

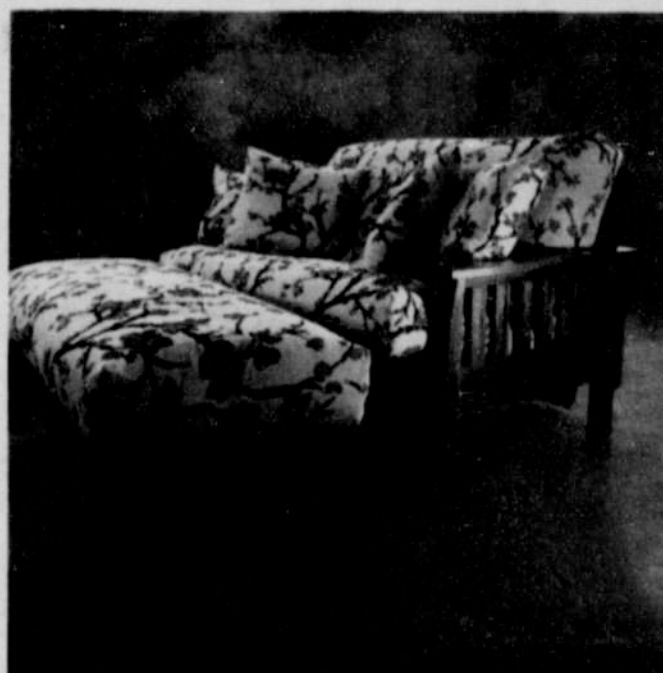
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