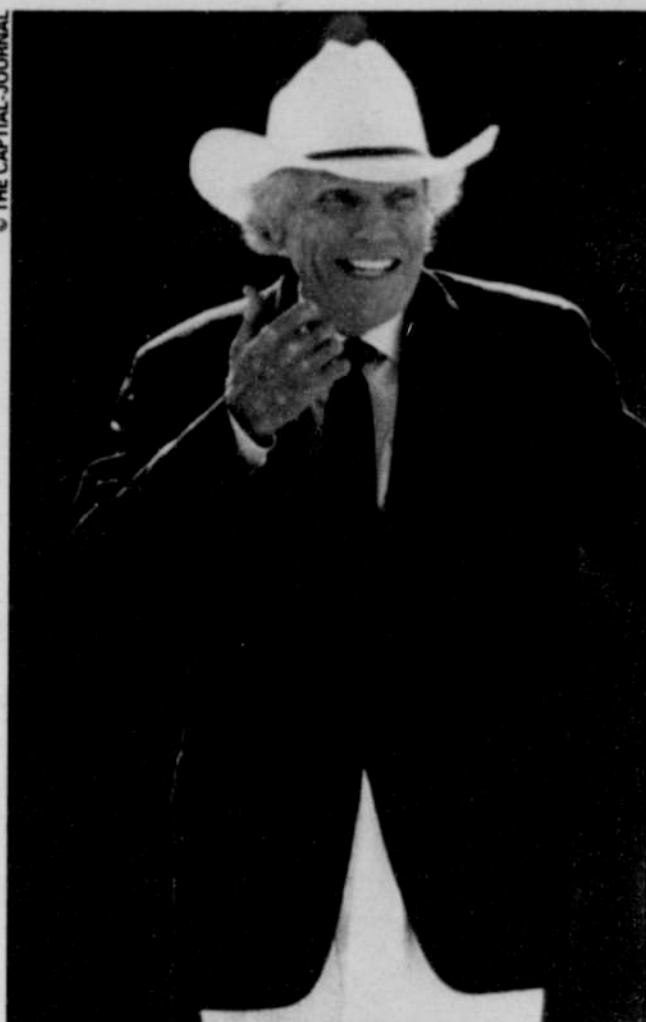


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Fred Phelps, pastor of Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan., said a higher court would overturn the \$10.9 million his church is ordered to pay the family of a dead Marine.

harassment and discrimination when he was a sergeant. The settlement led to his reinstatement to the force, but he was later suspended.

Grobson soon filed a second lawsuit, charging the city and numerous police staff with violating the settlement agreement as well as his federal and state constitutional and state statutory rights. The Oct. 31 settlement supersedes his 1993 settlement, which required the city and the LAPD to halt discriminatory practices targeting gay and lesbian employees and applicants.

FLORIDA Gay Witch Hunt Continues

A Daytona Beach high school teacher and a former city commissioner were the latest public figures whose careers hang in the balance because of a police sting set up to catch gay men soliciting sex in a public restroom.

Former commissioner and mayoral candidate Mike Shallow and Seabreeze High School teacher David Behringer were caught in the sting Nov. 1 at a bathroom in the Volusia mall, which also netted seven others, including a registered sex offender. The men were charged with lewd and lascivious conduct and exposure of a sexual organ.

Behringer resigned the following day.

MARYLAND Westboro to Pay \$11M

A federal jury in Baltimore awarded \$10.9 million in damages Oct. 31 to the family of a Marine from Maryland whose funeral was disrupted by members of Fred Phelps' Westboro Baptist Church.

Members of the fundamentalist church have picketed the funerals of servicemembers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, carrying signs

reading "God Hates Fags" and other anti-gay slogans. The fundamentalist church believes that God is punishing the United States for its tolerance of gays.

Phelps, the lead pastor, referenced his church's First Amendment rights to express its religious views. He said his church would appeal the ruling.

In the lawsuit, the family of Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Snyder argued that it had suffered invasion of privacy and infliction of emotional distress. Snyder, of Westminster, Md., died in a vehicle accident March 3, 2006, in Anbar province.

NEW JERSEY Official Declares Civil Unions a Failure

The *Star-Ledger* of Newark, N.J., ran a story Nov. 2 about the inability of civil unions to live up to its promise of providing the same protections as marriage, according to the state's top official for enforcing civil rights.

The article quoted civil rights director Frank Vespa-Papaleo as saying, "To me as a commissioner, the testimony revealed overwhelmingly that the civil union law has been a failure."

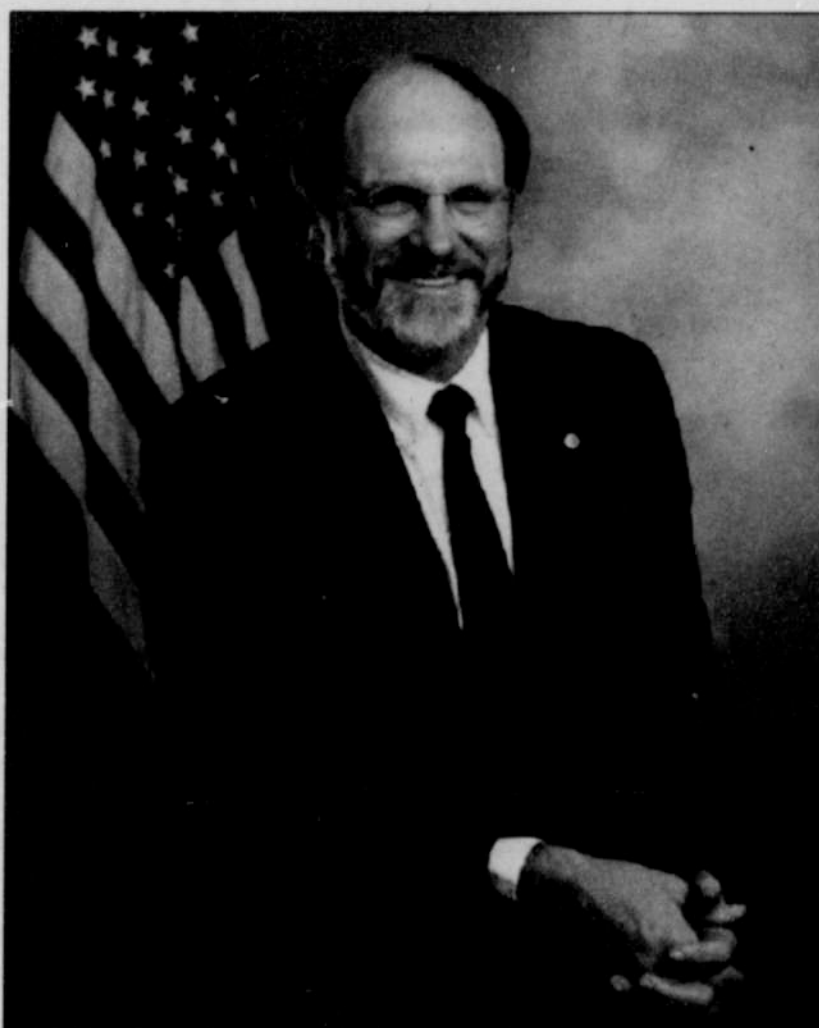
He told *The Star-Ledger* that it is not working as well as if the word "marriage" had been used.

Democratic Gov. Jon Corzine is known to be open to discussing same-sex marriage in 2009 but does not want to discuss it during the presidential election.

In the article, Vespa-Papaleo gave examples of the limitations of civil unions by recalling the initial refusal of United Parcel Service to provide health care to the partners of employees in New Jersey. The position was ultimately reversed. He gave three other examples of couples who were "civil unioned" but were denied rights given to married couples.

Garden State Equality received 369 complaints of civil unions being dishonored, according to Chairman Steven Goldstein, who is also vice chairman of the Civil Union Review Commission. 10

Compiled by JAYMEE R. CUTI



New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine is open to discussing same-sex marriage after the presidential election.

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