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national

NATIONAL Smith Introduces Federal Partnership Bill

Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., joined Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., and 19 co-sponsors to introduce legislation Dec. 19 that will extend domestic partner benefits to federal employees.

More than half of Fortune 500 companies and nearly 10,000 other companies provide benefits to domestic partners. So do hundreds of state and local governments—including Connecticut and Oregon—and scores of colleges and universities.

"The federal government should be leading the way rather than following when it comes to providing benefits," Smith said. "Rights and benefits must be afforded to all employees equally. This bill corrects the current inequity."

Under the Domestic Partner Benefits and Obligations Act of 2007, a federal employee and same-sex domestic partner would be eligible to participate in federal health benefits, the family and medical leave program, long-term care, insurance and retirement benefits. Such employees and their domestic partners would also assume the same obligations that apply to married employees and their spouses, such as anti-nepotism rules and financial disclosure requirements.

Lieberman and Smith introduced similar legislation last Congress. Based on the experience of private companies and state and local governments, the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that offering benefits for same-sex domestic partners of federal employees would increase the cost of those programs by less than one half of 1 percent.

Shepard Act, was removed in conference Dec. 6 from the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

The bill would have extended federal grants to local law enforcement agencies to more thoroughly investigate and prosecute domestic terror crimes that target people based on disability, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity. Under existing hate crimes laws, such grants are routinely provided to local agencies for similar crimes that target victims based on race, color, national origin or religion.

Democratic presidential candidates and Sens. Joe Biden of Delaware, Chris Dodd of Connecticut, Hillary Clinton of New York and Barack Obama of Illinois are introductory co-sponsors of the Senate version of the legislation, as was Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio for the House version. Former Democratic Sens. John Edwards of North Carolina and Mike Gravel of Alabama along with New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson also support the legislation.

"Democrats in both the U.S. House and Senate support passage of the Matthew Shepard Act. The Democratic leadership, which guided this legislation to successful passage in their respective chambers, are now burdened with a moral obligation to see their work completed," the National Stonewall Democrats said in a statement. "If the National Defense Authorization Act is not the appropriate vehicle for passage, then we encourage the Democratic leadership to work with our community to find the most expedient way to place this legislation on the president's desk within this Congress."

Matthew Shepard Act Dies

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crime Prevention Act, also known as the Matthew



Osby Davis, the first black mayor of Vallejo, Calif., beat an out gay candidate by only three votes.

CALIFORNIA Recount Ousts Gay Candidate


The city of Vallejo, Calif., appeared to elect its first openly gay mayor.

After a vote recount, the city actually elected its first black mayor. Osby Davis pulled ahead of Gary Cloutier by just three votes during the recount, the Solano County elections office confirmed.

The first results of the Nov. 6 election had Cloutier ahead by five votes. He had come under scrutiny because of a public intoxication arrest outside a Palm Springs bar.

INDIANA Male Student Defends His Prom Dress

In court papers filed Dec. 12 in the Northern District Court of Indiana, Lambda Legal said West Side High School violated Kevin "K.K." Logan's



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