

CONNECTICUT

Black Lawmaker Comes Out

Connecticut state Rep. Jason W. Bartlett, D-Bethel, came out as a gay man Feb. 19.

The National Black Justice Coalition has deemed the announcement historic. The Washington, D.C.-based gay rights group says Bartlett is the first openly gay black legislator in the United States. He is the sixth openly gay member of the Connecticut State Assembly.

"Jason, just by very calmly and confidently saying, 'I am gay,' means a lot more than words can express," coalition spokesman Herndon Davis told *The Hartford Courant*. "There is a huge sense of pride."

Bartlett is the sixth openly gay black elected official identified by the 4-year-old coalition, Davis said.

Bartlett, 41, is a freshman lawmaker and co-chairman of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign in Connecticut. He announced his sexual orientation in interviews with his local papers, *The Courant* and *The Danbury News-Times*.

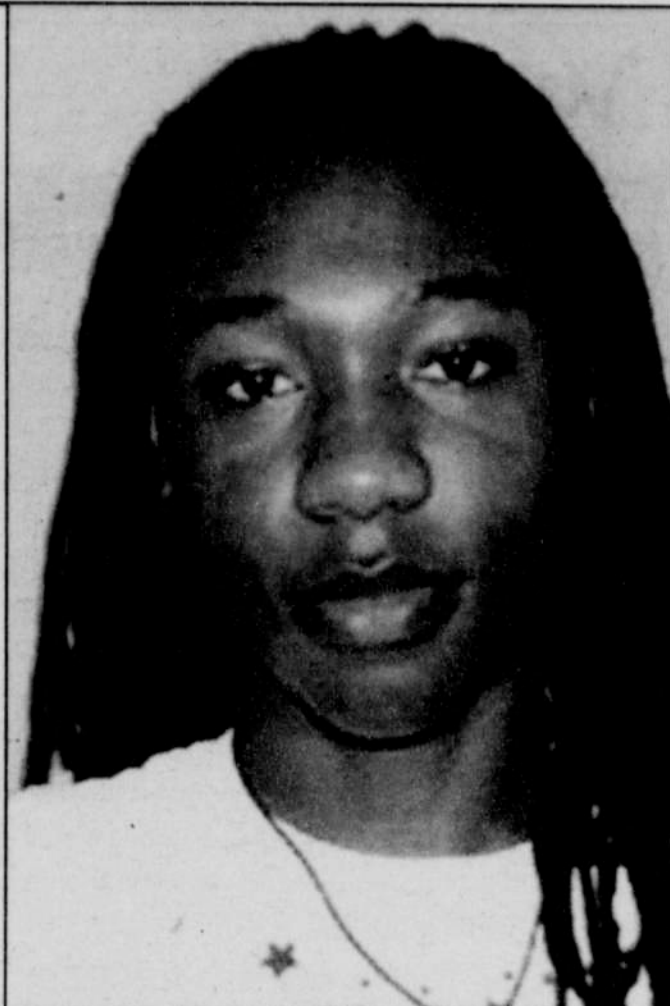
Bartlett said that after two losing and one successful legislative campaigns, he preferred to confirm rumors rather than allow innuendo to prevail. He said that he has always supported gay rights, including same-sex marriage.

FLORIDA

Vigil Honors Hate Crime Victims

A vigil was held Feb. 28 in response to two anti-gay and anti-transgender hate crimes in Florida.

Broward teen Simmie Williams Jr. was mur-



Queer teen Simmie Williams Jr. was gunned down in an alleged hate crime in Broward, Fla.

NEW YORK

Community Center Gains Tax Exemption

The Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center has settled its lawsuit against the city of Kingston, N.Y., concerning the center's property tax exemption.

"We are pleased to have reached this agreement with the city of Kingston and that the city now recognizes the important work that the center does in the community. This agreement will help the center's work to continue and to grow," said Thomas W. Ude Jr., senior staff attorney at Lambda Legal.

The center, which is run entirely by volunteers, was formed in 2005 to provide social services, counseling, education and cultural programs for the region. Attorneys argued that its work squarely entitles it to non-profit property tax exemption under the New York Real Property Tax Law; however, Kingston's assessor denied its application in March 2007, claiming that its activities do not warrant exemption. The center's appeal to the Board of Assessment Review was denied. Left with a bruising tax bill, the center filed suit in court to compel the city to recognize that its activities entitled its property to the exemption.

The city and the center then reached an agreement that the center's activities do, in fact, meet the legal requirements for a tax exemption, and the parties stipulated to a court order saying so. With the entry of that court

order Feb. 20, the dispute is resolved.

"The Hudson Valley LGBTQ Center deserves fair and equal treatment under the law," said Ginny Apuzzo, president of the center's board of directors. "We are engaged in building an important community advocacy and education institution, not just a mere social club, and we are pleased the city of Kingston now recognizes that." 10

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Redone, kitchen, baths, new carpet, lovely landscaping. Tons of space! Four bdrms (incl 2 Masters), large laundry area in downstairs baths. Three full baths. Office has hardwoods. Deck & patio. **\$307,000.** Such a deal! 17796 Tims View, Gladstone

CLOSE IN SE BUNGALOW

Wow, this is a fun home, trendy colors, new tile on fireplace, hardwoods, new paint everywhere, two bdrms on main, two bonus room on lower level, and large media room, redone bath and kitchen. Great back yard. NEW sewerline, and decomm'd oil tank. 5020 SE Brooklyn @ **\$365,000.**

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LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED



Connecticut state Rep. Jason W. Bartlett, D-Bethel, became the first openly gay black legislator when he came out Feb. 19.

dered Feb. 21. Police are investigating the murder as a hate crime based on witnesses' accounts.

Two men were assaulted Feb. 23 outside The Floridian, a historic Fort Lauderdale diner. Witnesses said their assailant used anti-gay slurs during the assault.

The vigil took place at the site of the murder in Fort Lauderdale, and community leaders met for a town hall discussion at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center afterward.