

Defending Clinton

Gays Debate Response to President's Stance on Marriage

by Jamie Wolters

Can same-gender marriage become for Democrats the albatross that abortion has been to the Republican Party?

That's certainly the hope of GOP leaders who are pushing through Congress the misnamed "Defense of Marriage Act," or DOMA, an attempt to preempt the future possibility of legal same-gender marriages.

On May 22, President Clinton took the bait by announcing that he would sign the bill if it is passed by Congress in its present form, touching off a series of mixed reactions in the gay and lesbian community.

A lesbian campaign co-chair in Washington state abruptly quit following the announcement, while in San Francisco, Mayor Willie Brown told the president to cancel a scheduled June 9 visit. Clinton ignored the advice and the massive protests Brown warned of did not materialize.

While Stonewall Democratic Club President Eric Bauman said that muted response is a sign that gay men and lesbians won't abandon Clinton over the issue, others are saying the president shouldn't start feeling too certain that the community will quietly accept his decision.

Republicans claim the bill is necessary because of a pending Hawaii court case, scheduled to go to trial in

September, that could end by legalizing same-gender marriages in that state. Because the U.S. Constitution's Full Faith and Credit Clause generally obligates states to honor contracts performed in other states, many believe the ruling essentially opens the door to legal gay marriages across the country. A final decision in the Hawaii case is years off, however.

The issue was a hot topic at a June 10 West Hollywood forum, sponsored by Out There, an entertainment-industry advocacy group.

"Everyone of us must act out of our own individual consciousness," said David Mixner, a former Clinton advisor. "I'm going to work like hell to kick Newt Gingrich out as Speaker of the House and defeat Jesse Helms."

Mixner said he will vote for Clinton, but he will contribute no more money to his campaign. Mixner described an incident of a few years ago when he was in the hospital room with a sick friend and the man's lover of 10 years.

"The family came in with a court order and an armed guard escorted the lover out of the room and didn't permit the lover to re-enter the [couple's] house," Mixner said. "By signing that bill, Clinton is prolonging that pain."

Attorney John Duran, who also attended the forum, said the president

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Maine Equity Fund

ELLSWORTH, ME Over the next two years, as much as \$120,000 will become available for grants to meet the needs of Maine's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities and to address issues of diversity and discrimination shared with other minority communities, through an important new initiative of the Maine Community Foundation.

With the help of a challenge grant from The National Lesbian and Gay Community Funding Partnership, one of sixteen made to date nationally, the Maine Community Fund has created the Maine Equity Fund. MCF will receive up to \$30,000 per year for two years, to be matched by an equal amount of money raised locally to provide a \$120,000 funding pool.

The Maine Equity fund is about to conduct a needs assessment that will inform our ultimate grantmaking strategy and priorities. Our needs assessment process will involve surveying as broad as possible a sample of G/L/B/T individuals, as well as a wide variety of service providers and community organizations currently serving these communities. This survey data, followed by some targeted focus groups, will estab-

lish what needs and issues community members perceive to be most significant, what resources currently exist to meet those needs, what approaches are currently working, and what programs most need our support.

We need your help! We will do our best to get these surveys into the right hands, but we know up front that many important points of view are likely to go unheard unless we get a great deal of help in distributing the surveys widely and in making sure that the surveys are actually returned to us.

Because we know that you all have busy lives, we will do our best to make these surveys concise and to make sure the survey results are put to good use.

Watch your mailbox for the survey, which will be out in mid to late August. If there is any chance that we'll overlook you, or your more hard-to-find friends and colleagues, or if you have suggestions or energy to offer, please call Majorie Love, the consultant coordinating the needs assessment, at (207) 773-6164, or write to us c/o the Maine Community Foundation/Maine Equity Fund, P.O. Box 148, Ellsworth, Maine 04605. ΔΔ

Gay/Lesbian Business Directory published by RBPA

The Rainbow Business & Professional Association has published Maine's first gay/lesbian business & professional directory. RBPA was formed a little over a year ago to promote gay/lesbian owned, operated, and gay-friendly businesses and professionals. In their first year, over 100 people have joined the organization.


The group sponsors monthly meetings on the 2nd Monday of each month.

Dinner meetings are alternated with Networking Sessions. At the dinner meetings, some of the speakers have included Ann Houser, Vice President of Human Resources at UNUM and local doctor Robert McArdle.

The membership directory lists everything from Accountants to Bed & Breakfasts to Electricians to Landscaping to Restaurants to Travel Agencies to Water Bottlers. Directories are available for \$2 each and can be ordered by sending a check, made payable to Rainbow Business & Professional Association, PO Box 6627, Scarborough, ME 04070-6627 or by calling 775-0077. Membership information can also be obtained from either location. ΔΔ

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Mother who was denied custody, wins new hearing.

by Bill Bergstrom

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — A Panhandle mother, ecstatic about a ruling that her lesbian lifestyle didn't justify taking away her child, wished another northern Florida woman luck in a similar custody case next week.

Valerie Maradie was denied custody of her 4-year-old daughter last September. But the 1st District Court of Appeal granted her a new hearing Tuesday, ruling that Okaloosa County Circuit Judge Jere Tolton wasn't entitled to assume without evidence that "a homosexual environment . . . can adversely affect a child."

"The judge assumed something for which there was no evidence whatsoever," her attorney, Michael Webster, said Wednesday. "In fact all the evidence was to the contrary." A court-appointed psychologist testified he saw no evidence that Maradie's sexual orientation hurt her ability as a parent or harmed the child, the three-judge Court of Appeal panel noted in its ruling.

Even so, Tolton had concluded that "the possibility of negative impact

on the child . . . is considerable."

"The court does not have to have expert evidence to reach this conclusion but can take judicial notice that a homosexual home environment is not a traditional home environment and can adversely affect a child," Tolton ruled. In sending the case back to Tolton, the appellate panel disagreed. "We do not mean to suggest that trial courts may not consider the parent's sexual conduct," the ruling said. "In considering the parent's moral fitness, however, the trial court should focus on whether the parent's behavior has a direct impact on the welfare of the child."

In the case of Valerie Maradie and her four-year-old, the mother said, the answer to that was "Absolutely not." "She's four and it's important to spend time with her mother. That shouldn't be allowed to interfere," Maradie said. "Children see, and are a lot more astute than people think they are," the Niceville nurse added. "Prejudice is just talk. They are a lot more accepting of differences. Just because something is different, it's not bad." ΔΔ

First national survey of violence against transpeople being distributed

by Jean Vermette

Whether you are a crossdresser, a drag king or queen, stone butch, a transgenderist, transsexual, or intersexed, and whether you are lesbian, gay, bi, or straight, this is a survey that you should be taking part in.

With hate crimes against members of the transcommunity continuing unabated, the Gender PAC lobby is fighting to have "gender identity/presentation" included in national and state hate crimes legislation.

GenderPAC is hoping to remedy the situation by nationally distributing a

short, anonymous survey for all interested transcommunity members to fill out. All transgendered people are urged to participate, whether they have been the victim of a trans-bi based hate crime or not, so that as wide and accurate a representation of the transcommunity as possible can be gotten.

Transpeople interested in taking part in the survey can request their copy by contacting:

Jean Vermette Maine Gender Resource & Support Service PO Box 1894 Bangor, ME 04402-1894 ph: 207-945-3902. ΔΔ