



Give the People Light and they will find their own way.

# The Wisconsin Light

## Wisconsin Election Results Are a Mirror of National Trends

By Bill Meunier

To some extent, the national election results were mirrored in Wisconsin. The State Assembly became Republican for the first time in a generation and an incumbent Democratic Congressman was knocked off by a conservative Christian Coalition Republican.

Governor Tommy Thompson won over Democrat Chuck Chvala by a wide margin. Thompson, who heavily outspent Chvala, won an unprecedented third term as Governor. Chvala, who was expected to lose, was a strong supporter of Gay and Lesbian rights as a legislator. Thompson, while a member of the State Legislature, consistently voted against Gay and Lesbian interests.

Senator Herb Kohl bucked the GOP trend, easily winning re-election over his Republican opponent, Robert Welch. Welch received strong backing from the Christian Coalition.

Kohl had angered many Gays and Lesbians by voting for Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy on Gays in the military. He also voted for several vicious Jesse Helms' amendments. In the month before the campaign, Kohl became a co-sponsor of ENDA, the proposed Gay/Lesbian employment discrimination ban. He also termed his votes for the Helms' amendments "a mistake."

Those votes, however, weighed heavily in the minds of many Lesbian and Gay voters who found it difficult to take comfort in Kohl's victory in an otherwise dismal election night.

The biggest upset came in the 1st Congressional District, where Republican Right Wing candidate Mark Neumann ousted incumbent Democrat Peter Barca. Neumann had the backing of the Christian Coalition and won by less than 1,500 votes.

During the campaign, Neumann was heavily criticized by the media for distorting and lying about Barca's record. When asked if there was any possibility of Gays and Lesbians working with Neumann, Scott Evertz of the Log Cabin Club told *Light*, "I don't know of anyone who thinks that is possible."

Barca had been a supporter of Gay civil rights. During the campaign, the Christian Coalition attacked him on his voting record on Gay issues.

In another race of interest to Gays and Lesbians, Gay Republican Congressman Steve Gunderson won re-election in the 3rd Congressional District. Gunderson was rumored to be in trouble because of recent disclosures that he was Gay.

On election night, he easily defeated State Rep. Harvey Stower. Gunderson had previously announced that this would be his last bid for Congress. As a State Representative, Stower was very supportive of Gay and Lesbian civil rights.

The biggest change in Wisconsin is the loss of the State Assembly to Republican control. Said one legislative aide, "Domestic Partnership won't even get a hearing now."

Tammy Baldwin, the only open Lesbian in the legislature, told *Light* that she will continue to work on Domestic Partnership. "It's a different task for me as a Democrat and author of a bill to get a hearing from a Republican Committee Chairperson. Hopefully, I will be able to work with a Republican Chairperson to get a hearing."

Barb Notestein (D-Milwaukee) told *Light*, "A fair number of the Republicans in the legislature owe the radical right and Wisconsin Right to Life. It is certain that these groups will have significant voice in the Republican Caucus."

It is expected that Wisconsin Right to Life will push for a bill that would mandate waiting periods for abortions and in other ways limit their availability.

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## A Rocky Road Lies Ahead for the Advocates of the Civil Rights of Lesbians and Gay Men

AIDS Funding, Employment Non-Discrimination Bill, Civil Rights Acts in Jeopardy



Dinner Time—Tom Cruise portrays Lestat and Brad Pitt plays Louis in the film based on Anne Rice's novel "Interview With The Vampire." (See a review of the film on page 8).

## The Election of '94 was a Time of Victories and of Defeats From Which We Must Learn

Commentary by Peri Jude Radecic

The history of the Gay and Lesbian civil rights movement is one of many victories and, unfortunately, many defeats. The 1994 elections are no exception. While we rejoice in the defeat of the anti-Gay initiatives in Oregon and Idaho and the victories of openly Gay and Lesbian candidates across the country, we are saddened by the many votes against us.

The Gay and Lesbian community celebrates the defeat of the anti-Gay initiatives in Oregon and Idaho. We congratulate the No On One and No on Thirteen campaigns for their successful efforts in discrediting the Right Wing's deceitful, mean-spirited scapegoating of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual people by showing the public the real face of Gay America.

Today, we also share the concern of Gay men and Lesbians in Alachua County, Florida whose neighbors voted away protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation. The voters of Alachua County voted instead to preserve their special right to discriminate.

The American people voted to hand political control of the Congress and many governorships to a Republican Party more lopsided toward Far Right politics than ever before. Acting out of fear, many voters supported candidates far from the mainstream of the Republican Party.

The real tragedy of these elections is that too many voters believed the lies, accepted the stereotypes and voted against the public interest by supporting anti-Gay, racist or sexist candidates and initiatives. Voters in state after state elected Far Right candidates and supported Far Right agendas that were foreign even to the platform of a conservative Republican Party.

Our challenge at the federal level will be unprecedented. Pushing proactive AIDS, health care, anti-discrimination and hate crime measures in an increasingly hostile environment will be daunting. At the same time, we will be fighting to fend off proactive Radical Right measures. In all the years of an active Gay and Lesbian civil rights presence on Capitol Hill, there has never been a wholly Republican Congress.

What is of even greater concern than the loss of Democratic seats to Republicans, is

what these results indicate about the mood of the nation's electorate. We are concerned about the growing influence of the Right Wing on American political, economic and cultural life. The Republican Party—newly invigorated by Right Wing infiltration—dominates Congress. In local communities, anti-Gay and anti-choice measures are being joined by measures that limit basic government services, persecute immigrants, censor our schools and libraries and remove protective environmental and labor laws.

The cultural warriors, Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson, are sounding their battle cries against immigrants, strong sexual harassment laws, welfare and other entitlement programs. Having created a mess with trickle down economics, they are proposing to mop up the mess with new immigrants, Gays and Lesbians, the poor, women, the disabled and all those who do not fit their mold.

The victories of the Far Right are the product of years of practice. They've practiced their divide and conquer strategy for years in campaigns against abortion, school desegregation, pay equity for women and a great deal else.

On the national level, they've expended millions of dollars on voter research to learn how to turn American voters against one another so that theocratic special interest groups can turn back basic rights for everyone and reserve special rights for themselves.

As Gay America comes out of the closet, NGLTF will be there building the infrastructure for a grassroots mobilization that will introduce us to our communities on door knocking campaigns, in PTAs, in neighborhood groups, unions and every other sector of society. And one day we will finally create a place for us at the table of national politics that can no longer be sacrificed to political expediency.

Editor's Note: The writer is the Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

### New Deadline

Due to the Thanksgiving Holiday, Wisconsin Light will be published on Monday, November 21.

By Bill Meunier

It was a watershed election. It was a landmark election. For advocates of Gay and Lesbian rights, it was a disaster. Across the country voters sent Republicans to Congress in numbers that hadn't been seen since the 1950's.

While some found reason to cheer Senator Chuck Robb's victory over the homophobic Oliver North, others familiar with the political scene were stunned by the loss of so many staunch Gay civil rights supporters. Not only did many of those who had supported Gay civil rights lose, they lost to Radical Right Wing Christian Fundamentalists backed candidates.

Senator David McCurdy, an Oklahoma Democrat and a Gay civil rights is a good example. His Republican opponent, Rep. Jim Inhofe, attacked him for his support of Gay civil rights. Inhofe won by a wide margin.

Radical right wing candidates didn't just get elected in the South. They also did well in several large states in the North. It was troubling to many activists to see the number of losses in large states. This trend, according to them, does not bode well for the next round in 1996.

For example, Pennsylvania Senator Harris Wofford, a Democrat, and Gay rights supporter, lost to Republican Rick Santorum, a Christian Coalition candidate. Santorum, won even though the widow of the late Republican Senator John Heinz denounced him heatedly.

In Tennessee Jim Sasser, the incumbent Senator and a Gay civil rights supporter went down to defeat at the hands of Republican Bill Frist. Meanwhile actor Fred Thompson, a radical right wing Republican, beat moderate Democratic Congressman Jim Cooper for an open seat.

In Ohio and Indiana and Wisconsin, Christian Coalition backed candidates either ousted incumbents or took over open seats formerly held by Democrats.

The list of the casualties was not confined to the Senate and House.

In Texas, Governor Anne Richards, a Gay and Lesbian civil rights supporter was beaten by George W. Bush, son of the former President. In New York Governor Mario Cuomo, a staunch supporter of equality for Gays and Lesbians was defeated by State Senator George Petiak. Petiak helped block a state-wide Gay civil rights law in the New York State Senate.

Whatever the reason for the GOP sweep, it is clear that a rocky road lies ahead for advocates of Gay and Lesbian rights. The new Speaker of the House will be Newt Gingrich.

Gingrich is well known as a man whose homophobia in Congress is exceeded only by that of Jesse Helms and Congressman Dannemeyer (R-Cal).

There is little doubt that ENDA, the proposed federal law which would have banned employment discrimination against Lesbians and Gays is dead. AIDS funding is in jeopardy. Washington act-ivists say that

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## Be A Secret Santa

(Milwaukee)—The Milwaukee AIDS Project (MAP) is currently seeking individuals interested in making a difference in the holidays for over 300 children affected by HIV disease and AIDS. The agency is offering the opportunity to be a Secret Santa to one or more children who are either infected with HIV or are affected through the infection of a parent, sibling or loved one.

High medical costs and reduced income due to illness often hinder HIV infected families from being able to provide presents for their children, prompting the need for MAP's holiday gift drive.

People interested in being a Secret Santa can request a gift tag from the Milwaukee AIDS Project by calling Vince at (414) 225-1574. The children make the gift buying a little easier for the Secret Santas by providing gift suggestions on each gift tag.