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# The Wisconsin Light

## Some Gay Leaders Cautiously Optimistic as High Court Hears Amendment 2 Case

Washington, D.C.—While some Gay leaders in Washington are still saying the eventual decision is too close to call, many others are cautiously optimistic that the U.S. Supreme Court in *Romer v. Evans* will strike down Colorado's anti-Gay Amendment 2.

Suzanne Goldberg, of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and one of the lawyers working on the case, said that she had been "apprehensive" before going before the High Court on October 10. But, she added, based on the questions asked by the justices, she is now "guardedly optimistic that the Colorado Supreme Court's ruling that the amendment is unconstitutional will be upheld.

As reported on the TV evening news and elsewhere in the media, attorneys pleading for the amendment had to take more the a couple of hard rights to the jaw.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, a Reagan appointee to the bench, opined that the language of the amendment was "so broad" that it "would seem to allow a library to refuse to lend books" to Gay people.

Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a Clinton appointee to the High Court, struck hard, asking defense attorneys incredulously "whether in all of U.S. history, there has ever been any legislation like this—that earmarks a group?"

Colorado Solicitor General Tim Tymkovich stumbled, admitting to Ginsburg that Amendment 2 was "unusual."

Ginsburg also pressed Tymkovich to make the analogy between women trying to get the right to vote on the state and local level in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and what Lesbians and Gays are trying to do.

Tymkovich countered saying Colorado couldn't deny women the right to vote because of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Ginsberg chided him mildly, telling him to **TURN TO COLORADO, PAGE 19**

## Clinton Announces His Endorsement of the Pro-Gay Employment Non-Discrimination Act



Jerry Johnson

Stephanie Blackwood, Associate Publisher of "The Advocate," was in Milwaukee recently at the invitation of Jon Martin, principal owner of Landmark Enterprises, Inc., to research Milwaukee and the rest of Wisconsin, which is the 14<sup>th</sup> largest market for "The Advocate" in the U.S. Blackwood said that she was "totally elated" with Milwaukee, Madison, Beloit and the rest of Wisconsin and that, indeed, she will be back. Pictured above l-r are Tony Rhodes, President of the Board of the Cream City Foundation, Blackwood, and Martin.

## Polls Show that Clinton's Action Reflects the Will of the Majority of American People

Washington, D.C.—On Friday, October 20, a top White House adviser announced that President Clinton has endorsed a popular bill that would prohibit job discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Currently, no federal law protects Americans from being fired, refused work or otherwise discriminated against in the workplace for being Lesbian or Gay.

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which was reintroduced in June with unprecedented bipartisan support, is backed by the civil rights community, major employers and voters of all political stripes. Lead co-sponsors in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress are Sens. James Jeffords (R-VT) and Ted Kennedy (D-MA).

The legislation explicitly prohibits job discrimination, quotas and preferential treatment on the basis of sexual orientation. It would not apply to small businesses, religious organizations, or the military, and it would not require employers to provide equal benefits to the same categories of employees.

The United States to announce today the Clinton Administration's support of legislation to protect all Americans from discrimination in the workplace," said Senior Advisor to the President, George Stephanopoulos in a speech to the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. Stephanopoulos said Clinton had written to Kennedy informing the Senator of his endorsement of ENDA.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) in a press release, said it was notable that Clinton had made his pledge of support at a pivotal moment in Gay and Lesbian history.

Only a week after the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments concerning Colorado's Amendment 2 and a few weeks before the citizens of Maine determine the fate of an anti-Gay ballot initiative, NGLTF said that it hoped that the President's message of equality and fairness would "ring across the country."

Public opinion research conducted for the Human Rights Campaign by Republican and Democratic polling firms shows that majorities of voters, regardless of party affiliation, oppose job discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and support equal rights for Gay and Lesbian Americans.

In a poll of people who voted in the 1994 elections, more than 70% said Gays "should have equal rights in terms of hiring and firing." The figure included 65% of Republicans, 71% of Independents and 77% of Democrats.

Polling data also shows that, while most Americans favor preventing job discrimination against Gay people, most are not aware that such discrimination is still legal.

Currently, there are nine states that include sexual orientation as a prohibited category of discrimination in employment. These are: Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Hawaii, Connecticut, California, New Jersey, Vermont, Minnesota, and Rhode Island.

One quarter of the Fortune 500 companies (134) have written sexual orientation non-discrimination policies. These companies are located mostly in the Northeast and West.

A May, 1995 poll by Lake Research found that 74% of Americans favor preventing job discrimination against Gay people, but 80% are not aware that Gay people are not covered by current civil rights laws.

In a survey conducted last year for Newsweek, 91% of Gay and Lesbian people cited "equal rights in the workplace" as the most important issue they face.

## Verveer Rescues MASN City Funding, But "We're Not Out of the Woods Yet"

Analysis by John Quinlan

Madison—For openly Gay Madison alderperson Mike Verveer, the power inherent in having a place at the table has never been clearer. If all continues to go well this month, a series of misunderstandings and misperceptions on the part of his colleagues will have been overcome, and a catastrophic cutback of city funding to the Madison AIDS

Support Network (MASN) will have been avoided.

In tight budgetary times, more than half of the city's funding of the MASN was in danger of being cut by the city's powerful Board of Estimates, of which Verveer is a member.

A majority of the group's members were skeptical about funding MASN. As the board looked for dollars to help fund a new south side clinic, the MASN money was targeted because of the perception that MASN was an organization that could easily make up the funds through its superior fundraising efforts.

The money that might have been cut goes to provide condoms and educational outreach in Madison's Gay bars and public venues where unsafe sex is likely to occur.

While an important project, it is not the type of project for which private money is raised easily, Verveer told his colleagues. And, given the possible passage of Sen. Jesse Helm's amendment that would specifically prohibit federal funds to be used for AIDS education targeted at the Gay community, it was important to retain this money.

While the city's \$25,820 contribution to the overall \$1.2 million MASN budget is relatively small, that amount funds an important outreach to Gay men who are most at risk due from unsafe sexual behaviors, Verveer pointed out.

After a couple of years when concerns about potentially unsafe sexual behavior in city Gay bars and parks has been pervasive, Verveer reminded his colleagues about the importance of reaching people there who may be most at risk.

Through a series of votes and maneuvers, Verveer repeated his arguments. On the morning before a crucial vote, he had a long conversation with Madison Mayor Paul Soglin, who was moved by Verveer's tenacity and well-argued rationale.

Eventually, it was Soglin who broke the 3-3 tie when MASN funding came before the Board of Estimates.

Verveer is hopeful that the money will also clear the Common Council when it deliberates about the city budget in mid-November. However, he expresses concern that conservative colleagues may move to delete money targeted for MASN's Gay outreach and needle exchange programs.

While the opportunity for public hearings is now over, Verveer urges community members to contact their alderpersons in support of MASN funding. They can be reached through the Common Council offices at 608/266-4071.

After hours, a voice mail system allows constituents to leave a message for their respective council member.

## National Coalition of Foundations Conference Draws Attendance Nationwide

Milwaukee—The Third Annual Conference of the National Coalition of Gay and Lesbian Foundations was held in Milwaukee over the weekend of October 13-15 in the Park East Hotel.

The conference was hosted by Milwaukee's Cream City Foundation and co-hosted by Madison's New Harvest Foundation and the Philanthrofund of Minneapolis.

It was attended by representatives from six other foundations including: the Pride Foundation, Seattle, Washington; the Horizons Foundation, San Francisco; the Equity Foundation, Portland, Oregon; the Dade Human Rights Foundation, Miami, Florida; the Uncommon Legacy Foundation and the Astraea Foundation, both of New York City.

Attendees and guests were given a gracious reception on Friday, October 13, at the beautiful lakeside home of Robert Starshak and Ross Draegert, partners for 25 years.

Both Starshak and Draegert are known for their numerous benefactions to the Cream City Foundation and through it, to the community at large.

Guests mingled easily amidst federal surroundings, getting to know one another, meeting some of Wisconsin's Lesbian and Gay leaders, and enjoying an un-typically balmy Autumn night.

During the reception, Tony Rhodes, President of the Board of the Cream City Foundation, presented a gold plate to Tom Reed, Director of Public Affairs of Miller Brewery.

Under Reed's direction and influence, Miller has supported the community without stint. The Brewery's grants go to support everything from the Cream City Foundation's efforts to PrideFest and a great deal more.

It was in recognition of his yeoman service to the community that Rhodes presented the gold plate. Since Reed was unavoidable detained, the award was accepted by his partner, Jon Martin.

The Conference itself got underway at 8:30 a.m., Saturday, October 14, meeting in the Park East. This was the first such conference held in the Midwest.

Miller Brewery, inspired by Tom Reed, also provided a \$10,000 grant. Thanks to Reed, Rhodes said, Miller has become the sponsor of the nationwide National Coalition of Gay and Lesbian Foundations.

Because of Miller's match, the Gilmore Foundation granted \$12,000, continuing their support because of Tom Reed, Rhodes said.

With the conference successfully concluded, Rhodes said that he was tired, but "elated at all the efforts of the Cream City Foundation Board as well as the boards of the New Harvest Foundation and the Philanthrofund."

Rhodes praised the three foundations for "helping to provide a forum in which, not only CCF, but all the other members of the Coalition as well, gained new and valuable insights" that will help each foundation to better serve its Lesbian and Gay community.

Rhodes praised the two new members of the Coalition, Legacy of New York and the Dade Human Rights Foundation. He noted too with enthusiasm the fostering of two brand new foundations, one in Philadelphia and one in Charlotte, North Carolina. "We are pleased to welcome them to our network of foundations," he said.

"On behalf of the Board of CCF," Rhodes said, "I thank the efforts of Tom Reed, the entire CCF Board, New Harvest, the Philanthrofund and an extra special thanks to Dr. Robert Starshak and his partner of 25 years, Ross Draegert."

According to Rhodes, the purpose of the conference is to allow each of the foundations to share ideas, telling each other what works in their particular city and what does not.

The national conference was formed through the efforts of Nancy Cunningham of New York's Working Group and Doug Braeley, Executive Director of San Francisco's Horizon Foundation.

The first conference was held in San Francisco. The second took place in New York, in the Empire State Building, with the help of a \$10,000 matching grant from the Joyce Mertz Gilmore Foundation.