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The Wisconsin Light

ROTC Records Requested from UW System

[Madison]- Michael S. Dixon, Co-President of the Ten Percent Society, the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual organization at UW-Madison, has filed a request under the Wisconsin Open Records Law to view every document in the University's possession pertaining to the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and the issue of sexual orientation.

In accordance with controversial Pentagon policy, the ROTC program does not commission openly Gay or Lesbian officers. The UW Student Association, the Faculty Senate and the Board of Regents have all condemned ROTC, and the UW System has a clear non-discrimination policy regarding sexual orientation. Despite this, ROTC remains on UW campuses.

"For too long we have been told by the Chancellor, Donna Shalala, and the Board of Regents that they refuse to end the University-sponsored discrimination in the form of the ROTC because they are working so diligently and making such progress on the national level," said Dixon, speaking for the Ten Percent Society.

"If this is indeed true, the University's documents will bear their words out, and we will be able to see all the contacts they have made with policymakers in Washington and all of this wonderful progress they claim to be making," Dixon declared.

"The administration has nothing to fear from this request," said Dixon, "unless their own records prove that their claims about their constant lobbying and incredible progress are hollow."

The formal request for ROTC records was sent to Kathryn Lyall, Acting President of the UW System, on October 21. It asks for all documents related to ROTC and sexual orientation dating back to February, 1988.

The request was reviewed by legal counsel familiar with the Wisconsin Open Records Law to ensure that it met all legal requirements. Dixon stated his intention to pursue the request to the fullest extent of the law, including the filing of a lawsuit against the University, if necessary, to obtain the information.

"This is yet another step in our continuing battle to be treated equally by the people whose salaries we pay and who we trust to enforce the anti-discrimination policies of the State and the Board of Regents," said Dixon.

"We had fun playing games with the Board of Regents in September," said Dixon, referring to a spirited disruption of a Regents' meeting September 6. "But now, playtime is over...If they haven't been doing their homework, the next meeting we attend won't be fun and games at all."

Stronger Hate Crimes Bill Passed by Wisconsin Assembly

[Madison]- Enforcement of Wisconsin's law against hate crimes will be strengthened under legislation sponsored by Rep. David Clarenbach (D-Madison), which passed the Assembly in the third week of October, 1991.

Assembly Bill 507 was endorsed on a voice vote and sent to the State Senate.

Clarenbach proposed the changes to help police and prosecutors who have been seeking tougher penalties for crimes motivated by bigotry. Wisconsin's Hate Crimes Act, which Clarenbach authored in 1978, allows a judge to add up to five years to a criminal's sentence, if the jury finds that the victim was chosen because of his or her minority status.

"This new legislation intensifies our commitment to fight hate crimes — including Gay-bashing, anti-Semitism and racial attacks — by making sure that the law works as it was intended to," Clarenbach said.

Law enforcement officials have encountered several obstacles in enforcing the law, Clarenbach said. In some cases, criminals have escaped the hate crime penalties because they were

School Board Endorses Report On Support For Gay Teens

By Jamakaya

[Milwaukee]- On October 30, the Milwaukee School Board, without debate or comment, unanimously approved the report of a task force established to examine the unmet needs of Gay and Lesbian youth in the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).

The report's overall theme is that all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, must have an equal opportunity for quality education in a safe and nurturing environment. It recommends that "curriculum materials, teaching strategies and school policies" include non-judgmental information on sexual orientation, and that sexual orientation be addressed within the high schools' health curriculum.

The report also recommends that all MPS personnel receive sensitivity training regarding sexual orientation, that harassing and deprecating remarks regarding sexual orientation be prohibited, that drop-out prevention strategies be targeted to Gay and Lesbian teens, and that school and community-based services be made available to address the special needs of Gay youth.

The report was unanimously approved earlier in October by the Board's Instruction and Community Relations Committee. Several citizens testified before the Committee about how difficult their high school years had been because of lack of support from school personnel and because of harassment and abuse from fellow students.

Committee members Joyce Mallory, Jared Johnson, Christine Sinicki and Mary Bills seemed moved by the testimony and strongly endorsed the report. Sinicki went so far as to suggest that the recommendations be implemented in the middle schools as well as the high schools.

Bills said: "I've always felt that the main purpose of education is to eliminate fear and ignorance, and it depresses me greatly to see the increased attacks and violence occurring not only against Gays and Lesbians but in our society as a whole. One of our purposes is to help these young people feel worthy of dignity and feel, no matter what their sexual preference or their racial orientation, they are a contributing member of society and they are valued."

After the full Board approved the report, Michael S. Lisowski, Director of Gay Youth Milwaukee, was jubilant: "I've been waiting for this moment for ten years. It's great to see that the School Board is courageous enough to tackle this issue."

Citing examples of physical violence and verbal slurs experienced by members of his Gay Youth group, Lisowski said: "My main concern has been that the kids feel safe. Kids can't learn if they don't feel safe."

Kathy Herbst, a Training Specialist with Planned Parenthood who also facilitates a support group for young women dealing with their sexual identity, said that in helping to draft the report she was impressed with the support she had found among MPS staff for the special needs of Gay teens.

But she cautioned that many details are yet to be worked out and worried that "all good intentions can sometimes get lost in the shuffle."

In fact, many steps remain before the proposals can be fully implemented. The School Board has referred the report to the MPS Administration for its response and directives regarding implementation. That response will be reviewed by the Instruction and Community Relations Committee at 7 p.m. November 13 at the School Administration Building, 5225 W. Vliet Street. Lisowski noted that there will be an opportunity for public comment and encouraged supporters to attend.



Hundreds of costumed characters could be seen throughout Wisconsin during this Halloween season. Pictured above are the winners in the annual costume contest at Milwaukee's This Is It bar.

President Bush Signs Law Broadening Hate Crimes Mandate

[Washington, DC] - Building on its historic victory last year when the Federal Hate Crime Statistics Act was passed, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) has scored another legislative victory that changes the way the U.S. Government responds to hate crimes, including anti-Gay and Lesbian crimes.

On October 28, President Bush signed into law HR 2608, the Departments of Commerce, State, Justice and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for 1992. Included in the massive piece of legislation was "report language" drafted by NGLTF Legislative Director Peri Jude Radeck.

The report language broadens the Department of Justice's (DOJ) mandate to include religious and homophobic incidents in its response to bias crime, secures a grant for DOJ training on working with victims of hate crimes and allows the FBI to continue to fund law enforcement hate crime training in 1992.

Specifically, the language instructs the Community Relations Service (CRS) of the

DOJ to respond more fully to hate crimes — including Gay bashings and religiously-motivated crime — and corrects inequities in the way the CRS has treated homophobic incidents in the past.

Prior to the report language, the CRS mandate excluded sexual orientation and religion. The CRS Hate Crimes Hotline (1-800-347-HATE), for example, originally refused to take calls on Gay bashings. Reports produced by the CRS on hate crimes omitted anti-Gay and religiously motivated attacks.

Furthermore, when the Jeffrey Dahmer serial murders exploded in Milwaukee and anti-Gay homicides occurred in Houston and elsewhere earlier this year, the CRS was reluctant to become involved.

But because of the new NGLTF-initiated report language, CRS can now exceed its mandate and programmatically respond to anti-Gay and Lesbian incidents.

"This is a substantial victory for activists who work on hate crimes on a daily basis," said NGLTF's Radeck. "They can go to the U.S. Government to help reduce tensions and resolve disputes. In the past, we had to build an elaborate coalition of lawmakers on Capitol Hill and activists around the country to pressure the CRS every time we wanted them to respond."

In addition to changing the way CRS responds to hate crimes, the language also secured for the DOJ a \$150,000 Congressional grant to develop a model training curriculum for criminal justice and victim assistance professionals on dealing with victims of hate crime.

The language also commends the FBI for its work on implementation of the Federal Hate Crime Act, including its training program. NGLTF earlier this year worked with the FBI to train local police departments on how to identify, track and respond to bias crimes. NGLTF Anti-Violence Project Director Kevin Berrill helped the FBI plan and deliver nine training seminars around the country and booked Gay and Lesbian activists on FBI panels.

Victims of anti-Gay and Lesbian attacks are urged to contact the U.S. toll-free Hate Crimes Hotline, 1-800-347-HATE, as well as notify their local law enforcement agency and Gay and Lesbian community group.

wrong about the victim's minority status; in others, they have been cleared because bigotry was only part of the motivation for their crime.

"We owe it to our police and prosecutors — and we owe it to the victims of hate crimes — to close these loopholes," Clarenbach said.

Assembly Bill 507 makes two changes to address the problem. First, it would allow a jury to find that a hate crime has been committed if the criminal acted "in whole or in part" because of the victim's status.

Second, it would clarify that the law applies to the criminal's "belief or perception" about the victim's status, whether or not that belief was correct.

"These may sound like small changes, but they are very important," Clarenbach said. "Our police and prosecutors are trying vigorously to enforce the hate crimes law, but they need our support to get the job done. AB 507 will add muscle to their efforts to protect us from those criminals who make victims of us all by attacking who we are."