

Rep. Barney Frank talks up ENDA in new PSA

by Wanda Pico
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—An award-winning short film is now being distributed nationwide as a Public Service Announcement (PSA) calling for support of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). The short, entitled "Barney Frankly on ENDA," features openly-gay, US Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA).

After appearing at gay and lesbian film festivals from Honolulu to Hartford, the spot is now being aimed at public access TV outlets in the nation's major markets.

In the three-minute PSA, narrated by former US Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-CO), Rep. Frank urges gay men, lesbians and supportive allies to contact their Congressional representatives and urge them to fight for passage of ENDA.

The bill is designed to protect people from discrimination in the workplace based on their sexual orientation. In 1996, ENDA failed to pass in the Senate by a single vote.

Bill Corey, co-producer of the PSA, said: "We strongly urge anyone with the ability to help disseminate this critical information to do so." Copies of the PSA are being distributed free of charge by the not-for-profit Barney Frankly on ENDA Film and Video Project.

"The exigency of this piece's distribution cannot be understated: On November 3rd, Americans will elect new leaders across the country, and it is critical that we as a nation and community fight to ensure just representation of our peoples," Corey declared. "The time is upon us to act responsibly and fight to establish basic, equal rights for all Americans.

Passing ENDA would provide just such a guarantee."

During the short, Rep. Frank notes that conservative organizations such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) have a long history of effectively organizing community members in important political efforts. He notes: "The key will be, do gay men and lesbians, and the people who love us and care for us, care more about ending bigotry than the bigots care about perpetuating it. If you ask the average member of Congress today, he or she has heard more from the bigots who want to perpetuate the bigotry, than from those of us who want to oppose it."

Short audio and video clips of the PSA, as well as information on how to order free videotapes and fliers, are available on the Internet at <http://members.aol.com/barneyenda/>. ▼

Univ. hate crimes bill expanded

by Wayne Besen
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—By a unanimous 96-0 vote, on September 30 the US Senate approved the Higher Education Reauthorization Act. A part of this bill, which was taken from the Campus Right to Know Act, will require campus police to report incidents of hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation, disability, religion, gender and ethnicity.

According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the nation's largest gay and lesbian advocacy organization, the bill will help GLBT students choose colleges and universities in which they will be safe.

"This legislation sends the clear message that hate crimes are serious offenses and should not be swept under the carpet. This open policy allows gay and lesbian students to know if they may be at higher risk by attending certain schools. This legislation also allows schools with a high incidence of hate crimes to identify their problems and fix them," said HRC political director Winnie Stachelberg.

House legislators passed the bill the day before their Senate counterparts by a voice vote. At press time, the Reauthorization Act was before President Clinton who was expected to sign it into law.

Prior to this legislation, existing federal reporting requirements only mandated that colleges and universities report hate crimes involving instances of murder, rape or aggravated assault. This was inadequate since the majority of campus hate crimes are not so extreme. Most incidents come in the form of assaults or lesser crimes. However, vandalism and intimidation were not designated as reportable incidents in the Higher Education Reauthorization Act.

Despite any shortcomings, however, gay leaders say the bill is a big stride forward. "The first step to solving a problem is acknowledging it exists. This bill will provide the necessary tools for college administrators to recognize that their institutions may be incubators for hateful activity," said HRC senior policy advocate Kris Pratt. ▼

Clemson University is first stop on Spitfire Tour

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

CLEMSON, SC—The Spitfire Tour, the first-ever package tour of musicians, actors and activists speaking out on global affairs made its debut stop at Littlejohn Coliseum at Clemson University on October 1. Approximately 2000 people attended the three-hour event.

Participants included Krist Novoselic of Nirvana who discussed free speech and censorship issues; MTV VJ Kennedy on issues of personal responsibility; actor Woody Harrelson tackled environmental issues and the topic of legalization of marijuana (paired with medical marijuana activist Todd McCormick); Tracey Conaty of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force spoke about the current social and political climate facing GLBT people; and Amy Ray of the Indigo Girls who talked about the recent incident in South Carolina when the duo's performance at a local high school was canceled because they are lesbians.

After a brief video montage that featured clips of Nirvana, Rage Against the Machine, and the Indigo Girls in performance, Novoselic introduced himself as moderator, as the rest of the panel settled into living room furniture placed on one side of the stage. Novoselic then spoke eloquently of his youth, describing his feelings of alienation and the sense of belonging that punk music offered him.



Amy Ray

He also discussed the perils of censorship, specifically focusing on JAMPAC, an organization he founded dedicated to preserving freedom of choice and expression in music.

The most animated speaker of the night was Kennedy who paced the stage while railing against a growing abdication of personal responsibility that pervades the country, or a burgeoning "culture of blame."

The objective of the Spitfire Tour is to expose, enlighten and entertain, while instigating action, using an aggressive and entertaining format including music and video elements. Each artist and activist had 15 min-

utes to speak, followed by a one hour question and answer session with the audience. After the main event, each artist hosted their own private discussions in smaller 100-seat breakout rooms. Members of the South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Pride Movement participated in the small group discussion with Ray and Conaty and talked about their plans to organize an action in Columbia next March as part of Equality Begins at Home.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to raise awareness about the way gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people continue to be scapegoated in this country," said Conaty.

The event was met with scorn by conservative activists who insisted the participants' goal was "to promote homosexuality and recruit students into a gay lifestyle." Four groups — Operation Standard, the Council of Conservative Citizens, Citizens for Traditional Family Values and the Carolina Family Alliance — issued a written statement proclaiming, "Queer rights is the goal, and recruiting is their game plan." Sarah Haynes, one of the tour's organizers, put out her own statement inviting detractors to come to the event and engage in a dialogue. No groups showed up to protest. ▼

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and Brittany Michaels

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