

Congress repeals military HIV ban

WASHINGTON, DC—On April 25 the House and Senate passed a budget bill that included a measure to repeal the discriminatory HIV-discharge provision. The provision, introduced by arch-conservative Rep. Robert Dornan (R-CA), would have ousted 1,049 servicemembers based solely on their HIV-positive status.

The repeal of the military HIV ban was one of the final sticking points during marathon negotiations on the Omnibus Rescissions and Appropriations Act, the long-overdue bill to fund federal agencies for fiscal year 1996. After negotiators ironed out their differences on the measure, the budget bill was passed 399-25 by the House and 88-11 by the Senate.

"Bob Dornan lost today and he lost big because his provision was clearly malicious and unnecessary," said Winne Stachelberg, senior health policy advocate for the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). "Unfortunately, this issue seems to be an obsession for him and he intends to bring it up all over again."

As expected, Rep. Dornan labelled the repeal effort an act of "misunderstood mercy" and exercised his right as National Security subcommittee chairman to attach a variation

of his original measure to the 1997 Defense Department authorization.

The new bill differs from the first in three ways: personnel would be removed within two months of their HIV-positive diagnosis rather than six; they would receive full-benefits upon separation, whereas the original amendment offered none; and superior officers could petition to retain individuals whose skills were considered critical to military operations.

Kim Mills, HRC's deputy communications director, said, "This version is even meaner in that it orders service men and women to be kicked out two months after diagnosis, as opposed to six months. Dornan tried to make it more palatable by allowing these people to retire with full benefits. But we're confident that Dornan's House colleagues will see through this strategy and recognize the provision's innate bigotry."

Unlike Rep. Dornan, the Pentagon has never singled out HIV for special regulation. Servicemembers with the virus are allowed to serve their country as long as they can perform their duties, but they are not deployed

Continued on page 4

Anti-Helms rally to be held in Raleigh

by Wynn Bone
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH—Mothers Against Jesse In Congress (MAJIC) has announced that it is organizing an anti-Helms rally that will take place on the grounds of the State Capitol. The rally will take place on Saturday, May 11 from 2:00pm-4:00pm. According to MAJIC co-founder Eloise Vaughn, the purpose of the rally is "to celebrate true family values."

An oversized, foamcore, Mother's Day card measuring over 6 feet in height and in width, which will be sent to Helms' office in Washington, will be brought to the rally so that everyone will have the opportunity to write a personal message to Senator Helms.

The engraved message on the card will state, "Mother's Day greetings, Senator Helms, on this our day! We wish for you a land without bigotry and with compassion, without judgmentalism and with understanding, without hatred and with love. From the families of North Carolina."

In traditional motherly fashion, MAJIC members will wear aprons and offer homemade baked goods at the rally. A clothesline will be erected at the rally site to allow people to make donations by placing either cash or checks in small bags and, in turn, hanging the bags on the clothesline.

MAJIC has been in dialogue with the cam-

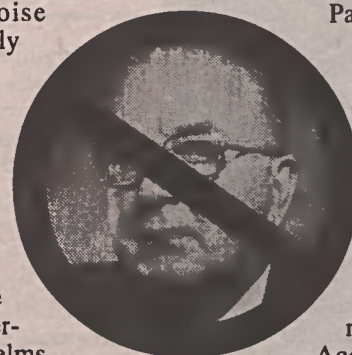
paings of Democratic Senate candidates Harvey Gantt and Charlie Sanders. The offices of both Democratic Senate hopefuls have assured MAJIC that if their candidate wins the May 7th Democratic Primary, he will speak at the rally.

Additionally, MAJIC has contacted Mel White, the gay, ex-speech writer for Pat Robertson. White, who is excited about the event, has informed MAJIC that he is working on rearranging his schedule so that he can come to North Carolina and speak at the rally.

MAJIC has been spreading the word about the rally by networking with groups across the state, doing mass mailings and passing out flyers.

According to Vaughn, Mandy Carter stated that NC Mobilization '96, which will be holding a major statewide meeting in Raleigh on the day of the rally, will take a break from its meeting in order to attend the gathering. Vaughn estimates that several hundred people will attend.

Forthcoming opportunities to further heighten awareness of the anti-Helms rally include upcoming feature stories about MAJIC by Raleigh's *News & Observer* columnist Nicole Brodeur and correspondent Amanda Lamm of WRAL-TV, the Raleigh-based television station where Senator Helms served as editorial commentator before being elected to the US Senate in 1972.



Left to right: Electra, Tamisha Iman and Basia

Tamisha takes the punchbowl

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

Question: You're making your first appearance at a prestigious female impersonator pageant when a glitch in the sound system causes the vocal on your cassette tape to go out in the middle of your talent routine — a fierce dance number — and stay out for almost a minute. Do you: a) stop dancing and leave the stage; b) stop dancing and ask the sound man to start the tape over again; c) dance even more fiercely to the rhythm track that's still booming through the loudspeakers.

Answer: If you're Tamisha Iman, and the contest is the 1996 Miss National FFI (For Female Impersonators) pageant in Miami Beach, you choose "C" — then walk to the podium to pick up your crown (a "punchbowl" in dragspeak).

Superbad Tamisha didn't win a single category (according to the score sheets, but I think she took three), yet she stunned the two-dozen contestants, judges and audience members alike when she pulled an upset out of her wig by beating two previous national titleholders from other systems: Electra, a former

Entertainer of the Year, and Jacquelyn DeVaroe, a former Miss America FFI.

Going into the Easter-weekend fete, the smart money was on one of these latter two to snag the coveted rhinestone bonnet. And with good reason. Electra and Jacquelyn are both "pageant queens" — that rare breed of female impersonator who shines brightest under the intense pressure of competition (i.e. Tommie Ross: Miss Gay USofA 1988, Miss National FFI 1994 and possibly — probably? — Miss Continental later this year). And as expected, both came prepared with fabulous talent routines, lovely creative costumes and exquisite gowns. In fact, the performances of either of these two could have won many national contests that I have seen in the past.

But on this weekend, Tamisha was simply too consistent. Her creative costume — a centaur (a mythical creature with a human torso and horse body) — was among the most creative and best-realized of the bunch; she remained poised throughout the on-stage question competition; her talent routine was superior in every way (the technical problem only enhanced the performance by underscoring

Continued on page 4

SC Pride draws record attendance

by Matt Tischler
Special to Q-Notes

COLUMBIA—Saturday, April 27 saw South Carolina's Seventh Annual Gay and Lesbian Pride March and Festival draw the largest gathering of our community in the history of South Carolina. GLPM organizers estimated attendance at better than 4,000 in what, for the third year in a row, was also the largest political march and rally in the state for any group. Columbia also played host to a number of related events, ranging from a "Welcome the Marcher Party" at the SC Gay and Lesbian Community Center to a concert by Elaine Townsend, a midnight movie showing of *The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love*, a workshop on making same gender marriages work and a closing ceremony to remember everyone who was unable to come out and participate in the weekend Pride activities.

Renovations at the South Carolina State House forced organizers to make a few changes this year. The march started in the same place as usual, on Calhoun Street, but only continued for two blocks on Main Street before turning right on the way to the river. This new route did afford the opportunity to pass several landmarks, however, including Columbia's City Hall, the Strom Thurmond Federal Building and the Governor's mansion... "Hey Hey, Ho Ho, Strom and Beasley have got to go!" "2, 4, 6, 8 Gay is just as good as straight; 3, 5, 7, 10 it's great to be a Lesbian!" "Gay, Straight, Black, White, same struggle, same fight" and "What do we want? Equal Rights! When do we want them? Now!"

With whistles blaring and voices loud, the residents of the neighborhood were sure to hear the crowd of marchers. Continuing on to Riverfront Park, a sea of rainbow flags, signs, and proud faces wound their way down the path and across the canal to the rally stage. A

glance at the signs saw "Columbia, a great place 2 B queer," "GLPM four thousand plus strong," "Equal rights for every American," and "Keep your laws out of our bedrooms!" Said Derrick Gunter, GLPM's Upstate SC representative, "I'm really excited about the great turnout from the Upstate. I hope this portends greater community involvement in our area. I'm exhausted, but it was worth every bit of the effort."

The rally featured a superb lineup of speakers this year, including such nationally known figures as Chastity Bono, Roberta Achtenburg, Bob Bernstein and emcee Mandy Carter. Bono, a writer for *The Advocate*, National Coming Out Day Spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign and well-known daughter of Cher and Rep. Sonny Bono, related the process of her coming out. She said that her mother's publicist informed her that she was going to be outed by *Star* magazine before it happened. Bono said that the incident initially drove her further into the closet, but eventually led to her coming out — which she called one of the most liberating experiences of her life.

Achtenburg, an advisor to President Clinton and a former San Francisco mayoral candidate, talked about the need for more LGBT visibility in Washington, DC. She said that there are plenty of good folks on the Hill, but they simply can't shoulder all of the load themselves; it's going to take a joint effort to bring about change in the nation's political arena. Achtenburg also expressed surprise at the size of the community in SC.

Bob Bernstein, author of *Straight Parents, Gay Children* and former PFLAG national vice-president also addressed the throng of attendees and was well received.

As always, Mandy Carter was a warm and spontaneous emcee for the rally. Mandy is

Continued on page 7