

Q Notes

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The Latest Q-POLL Results

Will the beating death of Matthew Shepard have a lasting affect on the human rights movement for gays and lesbians?

Yes	Not Sure	No
46%	10%	43%

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Support for gay equality increases

by Kim I. Mills
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—Tolerance for gay and lesbian Americans has sharply increased in the last three years and most folks support anti-discrimination laws protecting gay people, according to a Human Rights Campaign (HRC) poll conducted by top Democratic and Republican pollsters. The findings, released at a November 18 press conference, reiterate the trend seen in this year's elections in which voters supported moderates over far-right conservatives in races across the country.

"American voters rejected the mean-spirited, anti-gay positions that have been expressed throughout this election season and registered their dissatisfaction at the polls. In most cases where the voters had a choice, they picked the moderate, pro-gay candidate," said HRC executive director Elizabeth Birch.



Elizabeth Birch: "Where voters had a choice, they picked the moderate, pro-gay candidate."

"This should be a clear message to the Republican leadership — extreme right candidates no longer make good candidates, and more and more, Republicans are seeking liberation from a Christian Coalition hold on the GOP."

"This poll is consistent with the election results and the voter's desire for solutions instead of scapegoats. Ninety percent of HRC-endorsed candidates won their races, compared to only 46 percent of candidates backed by Gary Bauer's ultra-conservative Campaign for Working Families. I think this discrepancy says it all about America's increased tolerance for gay Americans," said HRC political director Winnie Stachelberg.

The bipartisan poll, conducted for HRC by the Democratic polling firm Lake, Snell, Perry and Associates (Celinda Lake), and Republican pollsters American Viewpoint, (Linda DiVall), showed that support for gay and lesbian equality was bipartisan and widespread. Among the findings:

A majority of voters (54 percent - 32 percent) say that civil rights laws for gays and lesbians are intended to secure "equal rights" instead of "special rights." This number is up from 1995 when the ratio was 41 percent - 38 percent.

Americans widely believe (64 percent - 13 percent) that US society is more tolerant now than it was a decade ago and over a majority believe that increased tolerance is desirable.

Majorities of Americans (58 percent - 25 percent) support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (56 percent - 23 percent) and strong support extends across all demographic and partisan subgroups.

Majorities of Americans support certain rights and benefits for gay and lesbian partners, including hospital visitation rights (71 percent - 24 percent), inheritance

rights (67 percent - 27 percent) and health care benefits (61 percent - 29 percent).

"This increase in tolerance has mistakenly led people to believe that gay people are already covered by anti-discrimination legislation. Our poll reveals that only 14 percent of people realize that it is still legal to fire gay people in 40 states because of their sexual orientation. Clearly, peoples' attitudes are way ahead of the politicians' and we need to work to clarify this misconception," said HRC communications director David M. Smith.

The poll surveyed 800 adults in the US who indicated they planned to vote or had voted in the general election for Congress. The survey was conducted November 1-3. The sample was drawn using random dial methodology. It was distributed geographically based on the expected distribution of 1998 general election votes. The data were weighted by age, education and gender to reflect the 1998 electorate. The margin of error is +/- 3.5 percent. ▼

Shepard court proceedings begin

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

LARAMIE, WY—Russell Henderson, 21, one of two men accused in the beating death of University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard, waived his right to a preliminary hearing. His arraignment date on charges of first-degree murder, kidnapping and aggravated battery has not been set.

The preliminary hearing for Aaron McKinney, 22, facing the same charges as Henderson, remained scheduled for November 19, after the Q-Notes issue deadline.

At the request of McKinney's defense, Albany County Judge Robert A. Castor signed an order allowing Fremont County Judge Robert B. Denhardt to preside over McKinney's hearing, a court spokeswoman said. One of McKinney's attorneys, Dion Custis, said that he and co-counsel Jason Tangeman asked Castor to step aside.

"There were some reports early on in the media that had involved the judge and so we thought it best to get a new judge," Custis said. "I won't elaborate more.... We just talked to him and he just got a new judge for us."

McKinney is the only one of the four suspects who had not waived his right to a pre-

liminary hearing.

Meanwhile, a judge ruled to keep television cameras out of the courtroom during proceedings for the two women charged as accessories after the fact. In addition, media seating during any trial for the women could be limited to three.

Media representatives had requested courtroom space for four cameras and up to 50 reporters during proceedings for Kristen Price, 18, and Chastity Pasley, 20. However, District Court Judge Jeffrey Donnell ruled that video and audio cameras, laptop computers, cell phones and tape recorders would not be allowed. During jury selection for a trial of Price or Pasley, one member of the Wyoming Press Association and one representative each from the print and radio media would be allowed. Space for 24 media representatives would be reserved during all other proceedings — except those "substantially occupied by trial participants," in which case space would be limited to three at the court's discretion.

The media will not be allowed to listen to conferences between attorneys, attorneys and their clients, and attorneys and the judge.

Arrestment dates for the two women are scheduled for December 9. ▼

Sound Medicine

ADAP gets \$8 million in NC budget

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH, NC—After several months of leaving the NC AIDS population in doubt about the future of the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), the NC General Assembly included an additional \$8 million for the program in its \$12.6 billion spending plan. That is a huge increase over the \$750,000 currently allocated to ADAP each year.

ADAP distributes life-extending drugs to low income HIV and AIDS patients. It is known as the HIV Medications Program in North Carolina.

David Jones, former co-chair of the HIV Medications Program Advisory Committee, said the increase still falls short. "It is not what we need to fully fund the program, but it is a major and rather dramatic increase in what the state has been providing," Jones said.

Steve Sherman, AIDS policy/advisory coordinator in the NC Department of Health and Human Services, said the funding increase will allow new patients to enroll in the program and existing enrollees to continue to receive their medications.

The \$8 million is half of what Governor Jim Hunt had requested in his budget. The \$16.1 million request was based on a recommendation from the state's AIDS Advisory Council.

The increase will be combined with the \$750,000 in recurring funds and \$4.5 million in federal funds, but it is only a one-year, one-time appropriation. Negotiations for an increase to the recurring funds or another one-time allocation will have to start all over again for the next budget cycle.

The new money means the state can add between 600 and 1000 new patients to the program. However, the most recent estimates show there are a possible 2000 to 2400 qualified enrollees. 1050 patients are currently authorized for ADAP and their authorization will be extended through March 31, 1999.

The increase came with the provision that the Department of Health and Human Services must implement a cost-containment plan by January 1, 1999. The legislature said the plan should include "cost-saving strategies [used] in other states, including but not limited to restrictive formularies, prescription limitations, insurance continuity and insurance purchasing programs, and biannual or quarterly reauthorizations." After the plan is in place, the department must report to the General Assembly by June 30, 1999 on what it has done and whether any additional legislation is needed.

It is, therefore, unclear exactly how ADAP will be structured in NC until the cost-containment plan is finalized. ▼

Gay vote key in Democrat victories

by Doug Case
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chairs Steve Grossman and Governor Roy Romer applauded high gay and lesbian voter turnout as a significant factor for Democratic victories in the elections. They cited strong outreach efforts by the Democratic Party and individual candidates who support issues of concern to gays and lesbians as a key to success for Democrats.

According to Voter News Service (VNS) data, in major races for Democrats around the country, gay men and lesbians made up as much as 5 percent of the vote, with Democratic candidates earning as much as three-quarters of the gay vote in some contests. According to VNS, of voting gays and lesbians, 77 percent supported Representative Charles Schumer for New York Senate, 73 percent supported Gray Davis for governor of California, and 68 percent supported Senator Barbara Boxer's re-election. All three candidates are Democrats.

"These results reminded us of what we already knew," said DNC National Chair Steve Grossman. "Gay men and lesbians are a very powerful voting bloc and grassroots organizing force. When Democratic candidates are actively involved in the struggles of their constituents and committed to the Democratic platform of equality and non-discrimination for gays and lesbians, community members lend their support and their votes."

Democrats have worked increasingly in re-

cent years to support issues of concern to gays and lesbians and to engage them on the campaign trail. This year more than ever before, candidates specifically reached out to gay and lesbian voters through speaking appearances, campaign literature, print media and phone and mail programs.

"The Democratic Party and the vast number of Democratic candidates seek inclusion of gays and lesbians in the electoral process. This is very clear in the relationships shared between candidates and the gay and lesbian community and in their significant turnout and support for Democrats," said DNC General Chair, Gov. Romer.

"It is important to remember that the number of gay and lesbian voters is probably even greater than VNS reports. These numbers represent a self-selected category of voters. In other words, it only measures the number of people willing to discuss their sexuality on a survey at a public polling place," said Mark Spengler, DNC Director of Gay and Lesbian Outreach.

Democratic candidates and the Democratic Party have a long history of supporting employment non-discrimination for gays and lesbians, hate crimes legislation and advances in HIV and AIDS treatment and prevention. Last summer, when extremist House Republicans attempted to repeal President Clinton's Executive Order banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in the federal civilian workforce, 91 percent of Congressional Democrats voted against the repeal. ▼



11th World AIDS Day

December 1, 1998

Don't believe the hype; it's not over.