

# Q Notes

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## Focus is on "home" work

by Tracey Conaty  
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—Next month, thousands of GLBT people will launch an unprecedented national week of action for gay civil rights. The campaign, dubbed "Equality Begins at Home," is a major initiative to push state lawmakers to support a platform of equality. Several high-profile events are being organized in NC to tie in with the effort.

"The battleground for equality has moved to the states and so have we," said Paula Ettelbrick, Equality Begins at Home national coordinator. "We are throwing down the gauntlet and demanding that state officials resist the right wing's efforts to deny us our basic rights as citizens."

From Montana to Maine, GLBT people will come out during the week of March 21-27 and speak up in simultaneous events nationwide. These actions will, among other things, build support for laws that counter hate violence, ban employment discrimination, provide for safe schools for all students, ensure the right to adopt and become foster parents, and address health

issues including HIV/AIDS.

Equality Begins at Home is being administered by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) and organized by the Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Statewide Political Organizations (Federation). As part of its coordinating efforts, NGLTF gave Federation member groups \$5000 each to support their organizing campaigns and hired Ettelbrick to oversee the event. Dozens of other national organizations have signed on in support, as well.

In NC, statewide political action and lobbying group NC Pride PAC (which announced a name change to Equality NC PAC as this issue was going to press) is coordinating Equality Begins at Home activities after soliciting



Ettelbrick (l) and Nadine Smith (Federation co-chair)

input from the community. Three mid-January meetings were held in the Triangle for this purpose and another was scheduled in the Triad for February 22. (No meeting had been confirmed for Mecklenburg County at press time.)

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## US Dept. of Ed. issues school bias guidebook

by Roger D. Murphey  
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—The US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the National Association of Attorneys General Bias Crime Task Force Education Subcommittee has issued a valuable report entitled *Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crimes, A Guide for Schools* to help school officials deal more effectively with instances of harassment and violence in elementary and secondary schools.

The guide is intended to: offer strategies for longterm solutions; increase awareness of the need for organizing school/parent/community partnerships; offer information that will help schools write, revise and enforce written anti-harassment policies; help school personnel recognize harassment and respond effectively to stop escalation or recurrence; review support strategies for victims; provide advice to schools

## 5000 couples expected to "marry" at 2000 March

by James N. Birkitt, Jr.  
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—The world's largest-ever celebration of same-sex marriage will be one of the highlights of the Millennium March on Washington for Equality in April of 2000, one of the world's first human rights marches of the new millennium.

Losses in the 1998 elections in Alaska and Hawaii have fueled a new emphasis on same-sex marriage rights, according to Rev. Troy D. Perry, founder and moderator of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), the world's largest and oldest GLBT spiritual organization.

"The setbacks in the last election were only temporary setbacks in a long journey toward full civil rights for all people," said veteran hu-

man rights activist Perry. "We're going to continue to raise the visibility of this issue over the next two years."

As part of that strategy, Perry has announced plans for "The Wedding: Now More Than Ever," a public celebration and blessing of same-sex marriage.

Perry conducted "The Wedding" for 2600 couples at the 1993 March on Washington. That event currently stands as the largest same-sex wedding celebration in history.

"Based on early response, I anticipate that more than 5000 couples will take part in 'The Wedding: Now More Than Ever,'" Perry said.

"Participants will not only be able to celebrate their love and commitment in a memorable event, but we're going to make a powerful statement to the world and we're going to

make history," he added.

"The Wedding: Now More Than Ever" will take place in front of the Internal Revenue Service Building in Washington, DC on Saturday, April 29. The event is open to all couples who wish to publicly make their wedding vows or wish to renew their wedding vows.

For a \$25 registration fee, couples' names will be registered in a permanent historical archive of "The Wedding: Now More Than Ever" and a limited edition, personalized certificate of participation suitable for framing will be prepared. There is no charge for those who wish to participate without registering for the archive and certificate.

For more information or to register for this historic event, visit "The Wedding" web site at <http://www.ufmcc.com/wedding1.htm>. ▼

"Our schools owe students a safe environment that is conducive to learning and affords all students an equal opportunity to achieve..." — US Sec. of Ed. Richard W. Riley

on ways to establish formal reporting and complaint procedures; and provide information to schools regarding when and how to refer incidents to law enforcement authorities.

"Our schools owe students a safe environment that is conducive to learning and that affords all students an equal opportunity to achieve high educational standards," US Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley stated in a letter distributed with the guide to schools. "Harassment and hate crimes undermine these purposes and may cause serious harm to the development of students who are victimized by this behavior."

The latest FBI crime statistics indicate that there were more than 8000 bias-motivated crimes reported in 1997. Of these, more than 10 percent (848) occurred in schools.

*Protecting Students* gives practical step-by-step advice on the most effective ways to deal with persistent episodes of harassment of students and hate-motivated threats and violence.

Specifically, the guide encourages school officials to: develop written anti-harassment policies; identify and respond to incidents of harassment; develop formal complaint procedures; create a school climate that values diversity; address hate crimes and conflicts in school and the community.

The guide discusses various federal, state and local laws that address discrimination or criminal acts directed at students because of their race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, and/or religion. School officials are encouraged to take immediate and appropriate steps to stop such harassment and prevent its recurrence.

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## Gay military discharges hit record high in '98

by David Stout  
Q-Notes Staff

WASHINGTON, DC—The number of enlistees discharged for being gay from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps increased 14 percent to 1145 in 1998, according to new Pentagon figures obtained by Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), an independent legal aid and watchdog group that monitors implementation of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy.

The Pentagon adopted "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" in 1994 after a protracted battle between President Clinton and Congress. The new law mandated that commanders could no longer ask about nor investigate servicemembers' sexual orientation without specific types of corroborative evidence. However, it retained the old policy's requirements for secrecy and celibacy as a condition of service.

In 1998, the Air Force

fired a record 414 people for being gay. That number represents a 130 percent increase in Air Force discharges since "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" was adopted. The figure also represents the largest number of Air Force gay discharges in more than two decades.

The Army also set a record last year, firing 310 soldiers for being gay, up 62 percent from

the 194 discharged in 1997. The Army's discharge numbers are the highest since 1987.

Discharge totals for the Navy (345) and Marine Corps (76) in 1998 were in line with figures from the previous year, in which the Navy discharged 413 servicemembers and the Marines 73.

Although SLDN had been asking the Pentagon to release the discharge figures since they were tallied in December, the totals weren't disclosed until Friday, January 22 after 5:00pm — likely timed to lessen media coverage.

C. Dixon Osburn, co-executive director of SLDN asked, "Why is the Pentagon hiding the ball with the discharge figures? It is because the numbers are awful. They appear to show that 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue,' rather than providing some relief for gays serving our country, has been used to target gays even more."

An investigative article by Richard Parker of Knight Ridder newspapers seemed

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Costs of Training Replacements for Servicemembers Discharged Under Gay Policy

Year	# Discharged	Cost
1980-1990	16,919	\$498,555,244
1991	949	\$27,964,355
1992	708	\$20,862,764
1993	682	\$20,096,617
1994	597	\$17,591,907
1995	722	\$21,275,305
1996	850	\$25,047,104
1997	997	\$29,378,780
1998	1145	\$33,739,923
Total	21,722	\$640,086,115

