

by her and the Foundation is an honor we are both proud and thrilled to accept."

State group defeats biased bills

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah — National gay leaders are applauding the impressive accomplishments of Equality Utah, a statewide LGBT political advocacy organization, that successfully turned back several anti-LGBT bills introduced in the 2006 Utah Legislature.

Only one of the five measures opposed by Equality Utah was passed by the Legislature, and that bill — which would

have blocked courts from granting caretaking rights to non-biological parents, in turn hurting many nontraditional families including LGBT families — was vetoed March 21 by Gov. Jon Huntsman, Jr.



Matt Foreman (pictured), executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, said, "The dogged determination of our grassroots ally Equality Utah, its executive director Mike Thompson, and all Utahans who took action against the discriminatory, anti-LGBT bills put forth in the Utah Legislature is extraordinary and serves as a model to us all. Congratulations on this amazing success."

International >

Proposed anti-gay law condemned

ABUJA, Nigeria — A proposed law mandating five years imprisonment for anyone

who "goes through the ceremony of marriage with a person of the same sex; performs, witnesses, aids or abets the ceremony of same-sex marriage; or is involved in the registration of gay clubs, societies and organizations," is being condemned by a coalition of human rights groups.



An open letter opposing the proposed measure, undersigned by 16 organizations including the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Watch, has been delivered to Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo (pictured). The letter contends that the bill violates the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and greatly hampers efforts to fight AIDS.

"This draconian measure will only intensify prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation," said Scott Long, director of the LGBT Rights Program at Human Rights Watch. "The bill criminalizes public expressions of love and any defense of lesbian and gay rights, denying fundamental freedoms that should be enjoyed by all Nigerians."

Group preparing U.N. campaign

GENEVA, Switzerland — Two months after being denied official observer status by the U.N. Economic and Social Council — in a surprising vote that saw the U.S. stand alongside human rights violators Iran, China and Zimbabwe — the

International Lesbian and Gay Association convened its world conference March 27-April 3 with a vow to "protest this injustice" and "not allow this issue to be pushed off the agenda."

At the conference, timed to coincide with a meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, ILGA spokesman Stephen Barris said his group is gearing up for a campaign to convince the UN to recognize LGBT civil rights as one of its international causes. He added that the world body should be embarrassed that it has consistently ignored the plight of gay and transgendered people.

Two previous efforts to add sexuality to the list of categories protected by the U.N. have failed.

Opposition from the Vatican and Arab countries in particular have been difficult to overcome.

Gays blamed for bird flu cases

JERUSALEM, Israel — An influential Kabbalah cleric is blaming gays for Israel's first reported cases of bird flu. Rabbi David Basri, head of the Magen David Yeshiva, says God is punishing Israel because the liberal Meretz Party has been running election ads supporting same-sex marriage.

In a written statement, Basri said, "The Bible says that God punishes depravity first through plagues against animals and then in people." Basri has a history of attacking gays. In 2004, he excoriated Jerusalem Pride, saying, "[Homosexuality] is not a disease or a deviation, but a straight-out abomination. Even animals

don't behave this way... There is no place in the Holy City for such a phenomenon."

Basri is currently under investigation by Israeli police for hate speech against Arabs, which is illegal. Hate speech against several classes is banned by law, but gays are not protected. Kabbalah, a form of Jewish mysticism, has drawn international attention thanks to such celebrity converts as Demi Moore (pictured) and Madonna.



Young gays at economic risk

LONDON, England — Early findings from The Equalities Review, a study commissioned by the government to assess socio-economic opportunities for various classes of British citizens, reveal that gays are among those at risk of "chronic and persistent" disadvantage. Although the preliminary data was released March 21, the final report isn't due until fall.

During the presentation of the interim findings Trevor Phillips, chairman of the study, explained that many young gays and lesbians are dropping out of school as a result of anti-gay harassment and discrimination. The result for them is a future of lower paying jobs and less productivity.

Other disadvantaged groups identified in the study are black teens, particularly males, and women with children, who have the bleakest economic outlook overall. The estimated cost to the British economy of this inequity and lost potential is thought to be around \$80 billion a year.

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