



Election 2000: Sizing Up Presidential Candidates

From Brown to Nader, a Look at How Gay-Friendly (Or Unfriendly) They Are

BY JESSE DAVIDSON

This November 7, Americans will go to the polls and cast their vote for president. During this next four-year term, the president will most likely seat several new Justices in the Supreme Court. The influence of these Justices is important to the gay community because many legal battles about gay marriages, adoption, and overall rights will pass through the court. It is important to know each candidate's stance on gay rights in order to make a wise decision.

Presidential candidate Harry Brown for the Libertarian Party is partial to gay rights overall, but some of his views are not completely gay inclusive. The Libertarian Party believes in a small government in which citizens have the right to make decisions for themselves. On the topic of gay marriages or domestic partnerships, Brown feels that the government should treat same-sex marriages as they treat opposite-sex marriages. He also believes that government employees should be able to choose whomever they want for health benefits. Brown told and interviewer at "PlanetOut," "Marriage is no business of the state whatsoever. It is between two individuals ... [The government] should allow any two people who want to be married to be married. But in the final analysis, what I would prefer to see is the state not providing any legal benefits or detriments to people based on marital status." Brown personally believes that gay and lesbian parents should be able to adopt children, but he does not want the government to make any laws governing this and thinks that the mother or private agency should make the decision. Brown wants a much smaller military, but believes that any homosexuals who wish to serve should be allowed to serve openly. He opposes all civil rights laws including GLBT hate crime legislation. He also opposes any employment nondiscrimination (END) because he feels that private companies should have the right to hire and fire whomever they choose.

Candidate Pat Buchanan, for the Reform Party, strongly opposes gay rights. He declares that homosexuality is an infringement upon "traditional family values." Buchanan is against same-sex marriages and adoption. He said on "Crossfire" in 1994, "I don't think two homosexuals can really be parents." He

also objects to the current "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy because he feels that homosexuals should not be in the military at all. He opposes all hate crime and END legislation. Buchanan does not agree with any AIDS prevention or treatment funding because as he told the Los Angeles Times in November 1986, "Homosexuals have declared war on nature and now nature is extracting an awful retribution."

Republican presidential candidate George Bush has been dubbed by the media a believer in "Compassionate Conservatism." Since his acceptance of the nomination as GOP presidential candidate, he has not changed any of his anti-gay stances, though. Bush is against gay marriages but has not stated an opinion on domestic partnerships, even though as Governor of Texas he did not grant domestic partnership insurance benefits to state employees. He opposes all gay and lesbian adoption and supported a Texas bill preventing homosexuals from adopting. Bush supports the "Don't Ask,

"Bush ... does not support funding for AIDS prevention and education other than abstinence."

Don't Tell" policy, but believes that it needs to be better executed. He opposes all hate crime legislation and is against END legislation because he thinks that protection for homosexuals is unnecessary and only creates "special rights." He also does not support funding for AIDS prevention and education other than abstinence.

Current Vice President and Democratic Presidential Candidate Al Gore has been consistent in supporting pro-gay stances. He does not feel that same-sex marriage should be legal, but he does think that they should be given a "separate but equal" status. "Separate but equal" would give same-sex couples the same legal and economic benefits as opposite-sex couples, but could hinder securing immigration and other marriage rights. Gore supports gay and lesbian parenting but will do nothing about discrimination in adoption agencies. He will try to prevent gay and lesbian adop-

tion from becoming illegal, though. He thinks that the current military "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is insufficient and wants to make it legal for homosexuals to serve in the armed forces. "It is unacceptable that patriotic men and women who serve their nation with distinction are not only discharged, but suffer persecution and even violence. They should be allowed to serve their country without discrimination," he told the Associated Press in September. Gore also strongly supports END and hate crime legislation as well as funding for AIDS research and prevention and education.

The Green Party candidate, Ralph Nader, strongly favors gay rights and completely supports the Green Party platform of giving legal rights to same-sex partnerships equal to those of opposite-sex marriages. He also believes that same-sex couples should have the same adoption and child custody rights as opposite-sex couples. Nader wants to slash the military budget and use that money on preventative measures such as diplomacy while also making it legal for homosexuals to serve openly. He strongly endorses all civil rights legislation, such as employment nondiscrimination for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders, as well as hate crime legislation. Nader also wants to make anti-HIV drugs more readily available to people by controlling either the production of the drugs or placing caps on how much drug companies can charge. Currently Ralph Nader is not on the ballot in North Carolina, so in order to vote for him in NC, it must be a write-in vote if the state does not allow the Green Party onto the ballot by November 2000.

The next four years are very important for GLBT issues. Many laws may be passed which can either benefit or hinder the rights of queer citizens in the United States. The presidential outcome of this election will control placement of several Supreme Court Justices on the bench as well as lead the nation into the new millennium. Be sure that you register to vote and make it to the polls this November 7. For more information about the candidates please see:

<http://www.planetout.com/>
<http://www.greenparties.org/>
<http://www.presidentmatch.com/>

Jesse can be reached at
 jwdavids@email.unc.edu.