

The News & Entertainment Paper for N.C.'s Gay Community

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Anti-Gay Bill Put Before Congress

Washington, D.C.(GRNL)—Senator Paul Laxalt (R-Nevada), in a direct attack on gay civil rights, recently introduced a bill that, among other things, would make discrimination against homosexuals a lawful practice.

His bill, called the "Family Protection Act of 1979," (S. 1808) would also prohibit federal money being used for a gay legal service or organizations that present homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. The latter provision is apparently aimed at those lesbian/gay organizations that currently receive CETA funds. It would also have a devastating impact on a number of mental health programs serving the lesbian/gay community that depend on substantial federal grants.

GRNL Board Members Adam DeBaugh (who is also Social Action Director of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches) warned that gays should not take the legislation or those who advocate its passage lightly.

"While we don't anticipate any immediate action on the bill because of its omnibus nature, we have been informed by a number of Congressional offices of substantial constituent pressure to support the bill," said Steve Endean, lobbyist for the Gay Rights National Lobby. "And, of course, it is entirely possible that some of its provisions, including the anti-gay ones, will become floor amendments (to other bills) in the future."

Senator Laxalt, Governor Ronald Reagan's Presidential Campaign Co-Chairman, is considered one of the leading spokespersons in the Senate for conservative causes. His bill also calls for prayer in schools, right-to-work provisions for teachers, no "sex-intermingling in sports," and prohibits legal services funds from being used for school desegregation.

The "Family Protection Act" was first discussed several months ago in a newsletter of Rev. Jerry Falwell, the head of the recently formed anti-gay Moral Majority. The bill apparently was introduced at the prompting of Rev. Falwell's group.

In a letter prepared for Members of the Senate, the Gay Rights National Lobby stated:

"We have a fundamental disagreement with the premises on which the 'Family Protection Act' is based. If bills such as this, which attempt to artificially regulate and enforce a narrowly defined traditional family life, are necessary, perhaps the family is in more danger than we had thought. Surely the institution of the family is not so weak that we must deny justice and basic civil rights to groups in our society in order to ensure its survival."

The three concepts specifically related to gay civil rights are: Concept 36: This prohibits legal services funds for homosexual rights litigation. Concept 37: This section forbids allocation of federal funds under any authority from being awarded to any organization, group or other entity which advocates homosexuality, or presents homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle. Concept 38: This provision would write into a law a statement that discrimination against declared homosexuals would never be considered an "unlawful employment practice."

(Taken from "Concept Summary" from Senator Laxalt's office.)

The Gay Rights National Lobby urged that supporters of basic justice respond in the following ways: (1) Write your Senators urging their opposition to S. 1808 (and send copies to GRNL) and (2) Circulate petitions urging opposition to the "Family Protection Act" and send them to the Gay Rights National Lobby, 1606 17th St. NW, Wash., D.C. 20009.

Gays Meet With The White House

Petitions addressed to President Carter and signed by more than 51,000 people from every state in the Union were presented to top Executive Aides on November 19, by representatives of the National Gay Task Force. The petitions called for an Executive Order banning discrimination in Federal employment and programs, and asks the President to endorse an amendment to the Civil Rights Acts that will bar discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

It was at the initiative of NGTF that the petition drive was begun in the summer of 1979. A copy of the petition appeared in *The Front Page* in the November 8 issue.

A large delegation of gays from around the country was received in the Roosevelt room of the White House. Representing President Carter were Scott Campbell, Director of the Office of Personnel Management (the successor agency to the U.S. Civil Service Commission), Robert Malson, aid to White House domestic policy chief Stuart Eisenstat, and Ann Wexler, Assistant to the President for Public Liason.

The petition was presented by Kay Whitlock, Co-Chairperson of the NGTF Board of Directors and Charles F. Brydon, NGTF Co-Executive Director.

At the conclusion of the meeting, White House representatives made only general promises and essentially remained non-committal. Ms. Wexler said that an executive order and other steps are "under active consideration" to address the problems of institutionalized discrimination in government. She assured participants that the issues raised in the hour and a half meeting are taken seriously by the administration.

Ms. Wexler further indicated that the review of the situation that precedes consideration of a comprehensive executive order is nearing completion, and in the meantime, the administration pledged to be actively involved in cases of anti-gay discrimination. Specifically mentioned were the pending lawsuit against the Federal Bureau of Prisons and monitoring job discrimination within the federal government.

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INS Told By Justice Dept. To Bar Gays

Washington, D.C.—The Justice Department's legal counsel has ruled that the Immigration and Naturalization Service should not admit known homosexuals into the United States until Congress removes a 1952 anti-gay provision from federal laws.

An internal legal opinion from John M. Harmon, Assistant Attorney General and head of the department's Office of Legal Counsel, has ruled that enforcement of the law is required even if the agency no longer received the co-operation of the U. S. Surgeon General and the Public Health Service. That would mean that the certification process would be left in the hands of immigration officials.

According to a report in D.C.'s *Blade*, Harmon's ruling is explicit: "Congress considered homosexuality a disease. Not a word in the statute of its history suggest congressional intent that the Surgeon General is empowered in the future to eliminate homosexuality as a ground for exclusion by declaring his disagreement with Congress's determination that homosexuality is a 'mental defect or disease.'

"Where Congress has classified homosexuality as a disease," Harmon continues, "and requires the exclusion of homosexual aliens on that ground, the Surgeon General is without authority to disregard or to change the statute administratively."

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