

# The FRONT PAGE

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## Lawmakers Nix Two Bills

RALEIGH (AP) — North Carolina lawmakers nixed two gay rights measure in as many days, rejecting a proposal to expand the state's hate crimes laws to include sexual orientation by a vote of 58-48.

The proposal to expand existing hate crimes laws was prompted by the brutal murder last year of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming. The measure would also have broadened state hate crimes laws to include crimes based on age, gender or disability.

The next day, the lawmakers overwhelmingly voted to reject a long-standing request by the Orange County, N.C., commissioners to expand its own anti-bias ordinances to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation.

But only 36 state legislators voted for the measure, while 67 lawmakers voted against it. The commissioners vowed to continue to ask the legislature for permission to expand its anti-bias laws.

### Measure on hate crimes defeated in House

The hate crimes bill, sponsored by Rep. Verla Insko, a Chapel Hill Democrat, and Rep. Paul Luebke, a Durham Democrat, fell short with 48 votes in favor, 58 against. Forty-eight Republicans and 10 Democrats voted to defeat it. Forty-six Democrats and two Republicans voted yes.

The state House on rejected a bill that proposed to expand the definition of hate crimes in North Carolina to include acts committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, sex, disability or age.

Insko said hate crimes have two victims — the person who is targeted and the community. "Hate crimes are acts of terrorism directed toward groups that we value less," she added.

North Carolina's current hate-crimes law has enhanced penalties for crimes targeting a person because of race, color, religion, nationality or country of origin.

Rep. Mickey Michaux, a Durham Democrat, said the bill recognized people as people whatever their differences. "I have experienced hate, venomous hate," Michaux told the Raleigh *News & Observer* (4/23/99). "I'm black. You can't ignore that."

"The whole thing about this bill is we are people," he said. "I don't care if you're gay, black, white. I don't care if you're polka-dot. We're people. We ought to have some civility in ourselves to not allow this to occur in North Carolina."

Rep. Zeno Edwards, a Washington Democrat, said he could not support the bill because it dealt with sexual orientation.

"You do realize that many of us can support 90 percent of this bill," Edwards told Luebke during floor debate. "The sexual orientation is a deep-founded conviction of many of us who cannot support the bill for that reason."

### Orange County Bill Nixed

The state House also killed a local bill that would have allowed Orange County to bar discrimination against gays.

"This does not make any illegal acts legal," said Rep. Insko, who sponsored the hate crimes bill and the local measure. "This was sought by the county commissioners, who want to add sexual orientation to their civil rights ordinance."

The Orange commissioners asked the legislature for permission to broaden that law, a request the board has made since Insko was a county commissioner in the early 1990s. The governing boards of Chapel Hill and Carrboro also supported the idea.

Margaret Brown, chairman of the commissioners, said the board would keep making the request.

"It's one of those bills that needs time to get a wide range of people  
continued on page 24



Jean West, right, and Margaret Keller, left, raise signs during a pro-choice demonstration outside Genessee Hospital in Rochester on April 21, just days before the National Lesbian Summit was convened. Sponsored by the National Organization for Women, the April 23-25 event in Washington, DC explored the strong but sometimes difficult relations between heterosexual and lesbian feminists. Patricia Ireland, president of NOW, says that her organization has been on record for lesbian and gay civil rights issues longer than most national gay organizations. See stories, page 9. (AP Photo/Dave Duprey)

## Creech Defies Methodists

**The United Methodist minister may be defrocked for performing another same-sex union.**

CHAPEL HILL (AP) — A United Methodist minister who was dismissed from one church for blessing the union of two women has officiated over another same-sex ceremony, and may be defrocked, officials of the church said.

The Rev. Jimmy Creech of Raleigh officiated April 24 at a union of two men, Jim Raymer and Larry Ellis. The two men said they chose Creech not to make a statement but because he was a friend and another minister had a scheduling conflict.

"Basically, this is a public declaration of our love for each other before our family and friends and God and our church," Ellis said.

"This is a matter between Jim and me and our love for each other," said Ellis, a former Assemblies of God

pastor. "This is to show our support of each other and to recognize this as part of the union."

Ellis, 48, and Raymer, 42, attend the United Church of Chapel Hill, which is affiliated with the United Church of Christ. A pastor at the United Church, the Rev. Jill Edens, officiated with Creech at the ceremony.

"It was not a tough decision at all," Creech said. "I was honored that they asked me and very glad to do it. I realize that the church right now is in a very legalistic and moralistic frame of mind. It has taken a position that I think has institutionalized bigotry. It was not difficult at all for me to take a stand against that."

Creech was narrowly acquitted in a United Methodist Church trial last year after officiating at a ceremony for two women at the First United Methodist Church in Omaha. He was dismissed from the church.

Creech, who now lives in Raleigh, is on a leave of absence from the United Methodist Church but remains under the church's authority, particularly that  
continued on page 24