

Critics urge lawmakers to repeal state bans on oral sex

■ Fifteen states currently have laws explicitly banning anal or oral sex.

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PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Because of Americans' ho-hum attitudes about supposed sex acts between President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, some critics of dusty old state bans on oral sex are hoping those laws will be repealed.

Fifteen states, including Rhode Island and North Carolina, have laws banning oral or anal sex outright, while six others have statutes forbidding the sex acts between homosexuals, according to the American Civil Liberties Union. The laws have various names: "Unnatural and Lascivious Acts," "Unnatural and Perverted Sexual Practices," and "Crimes Against Nature."

The statutes rarely are enforced and some are on hold pending court challenges, but critics say leaving them on

the books opens people to the possibility of being prosecuted.

Critics hope the fact many Americans are unconcerned with Clinton's sex life will persuade lawmakers to erase the laws.

"Surveys show that a vast majority of us don't care what the president does as long as it is consensual," said Democratic state Sen. John Roney, who has submitted a bill to eliminate Rhode Island's law against "Abominable and Detestable Crimes Against Nature."

"If you engage in oral sex in Rhode Island with your wife, you are subject to a felony prosecution and conviction," Roney said.

Aside from Rhode Island, states with laws banning certain sex acts between heterosexuals and homosexuals are: Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Michigan, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia, according to the ACLU. Louisiana's law has been temporarily

blocked pending a trial, Alabama's doesn't apply to married couples, and courts in Michigan and Massachusetts have indicated the laws don't apply to consensual sex.

Same-sex bans are on the books in Arkansas, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas, the ACLU says. Court challenges are pending in Arkansas, Kansas and Maryland, while a Texas court has said the law probably would be declared unconstitutional if challenged.



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Clinton mourns lives lost to tornadoes, pledges aid

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Quoting from the Bible and stroking the hand of a shaken survivor, President Clinton mourned lives lost to Florida tornadoes and pledged federal help in rebuilding "brick by brick, home by home."

The president also voiced interest Wednesday in an early warning system that could use existing U.S. satellites to forecast tornadoes.

"Americans are praying for you and pulling for you, and whatever it is within our power to do to help you return to normal lives, we will do," Clinton told survivors and rescue workers.

A \$3 million Department of Labor grant for temporarily unemployed Floridians marked the first of millions of dollars in federal aid to the state in response to the twisters that cut through central Florida on Monday killing at least 38 people.

Clinton, whose helicopter circled low three times over the Winter Garden area outside Orlando, held his chin in his left hand as he viewed the aftermath: an upended ranch-style house, its lower half dissolved into a wreck of shards shoved into the ground; an American flag fixed to a stubby pole in the lawn outside a flattened home.

He said his own home state, Arkansas, is too familiar with tornadoes' random, deadly power.

"No matter how many of these I have seen over the last 20 years, I don't think anybody can fail to be moved and awestruck by ... the lives and the treasures that can be taken away in a matter of just a few seconds," Clinton said at the destroyed Ponderosa Park Campground.

Mad cow disease effects European Union beef ban

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Butchers could no longer sell T-bone steaks and lamb chops in some countries under the latest European Union proposal to stop the spread of mad cow disease.

The European Commission, the executive body of the 15-nation European Union, on Wednesday proposed expanding the list of banned meat products to include meat on the bone. But it suggested exempting countries with no history of the brain-wasting ailment in cattle. Seven countries have already applied for exemptions.

The commission also proposed rules requiring governments to give prompt notice of the emergence of the disease in their herds. The proposals must be approved by EU member countries.

Mad cow disease — bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE — has been linked to a similar brain ailment in humans, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. Creutzfeldt-Jakob has killed a dozen people in Britain, which has had the vast majority of BSE cases in the EU.

The EU's current list of banned parts, believed to pose the highest risk of mad cow transmission, includes the skull, brains, eyes, tonsils and spinal cord of cattle over 1 year old and the spleens of sheep and goats.

The European Commission wants to add the pituitary gland, intestines and the entire vertebral column.

Many of these parts are used to make pharmaceutical and cosmetic products.

Castro re-elected, vows socialism will continue

MEXICO CITY — Elected to a fifth term as president, Fidel Castro vowed socialism in Cuba will outlive him and denounced a U.S. aid proposal for the island.

Castro's seven-hour speech to the opening of a new session of parliament ended shortly after midnight Wednesday — its marathon length reminiscent of his speeches in the early years after his 1959 revolution.

The 601-member parliament, elected in January, opened its five-year term Tuesday by re-electing Castro and other top members of the Council of State, which works in conjunction with the Cabinet. Castro was the only presidential candidate, and all the deputies were elected unchallenged.

In his wide-ranging speech, Castro, 71, declared Cuba's single-party communist system "untouchable" and said those who predict a "post-Castro transformation" are wrong.

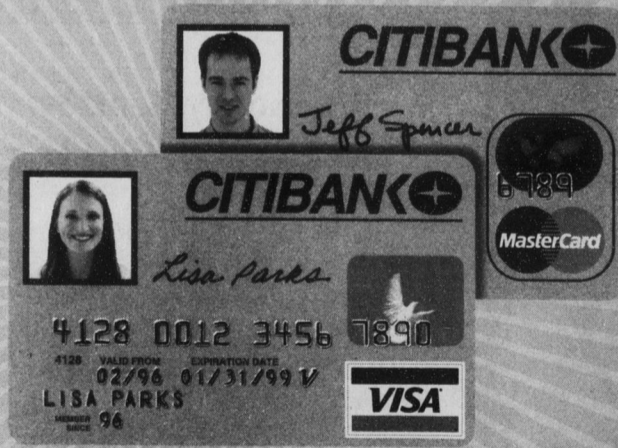
"To suppose that the death of one individual could liquidate the work of a people ... is really ridiculous," Castro said. His remarks were relayed by reporters in Havana and by the Cuban government's Prensa Latina news agency, monitored in Mexico City.

Castro also denounced a proposal before the U.S. Congress to distribute limited aid through U.S. charitable organization as "humiliating. We accept with dignity that any country wants to help us," he said. "But we are not disposed to play the role of beggars."

He ridiculed those who believe that easing the U.S. embargo of Cuba would help topple socialism by bringing greater contact with Americans.

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