

June Is Pride Month! Celebrate Your Pride In Who You Are!

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THE TRIANGLE

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Serving Orlando's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community

Supreme Court Ruling Important Decision on Colorado

The effort in Colorado to legally bar gays from protection from discrimination was thrown out by the Supreme Court and this is a boost for our community. But we cannot permit our excitement to overshadow our common sense.

It is easy to understand the enthusiasm expressed by Carol Bartsch but the statement attributed to her, "We have won, and the battle is over," must not lead us to complacency. We have only won a battle - a major battle - but the war continues.

Hoping this ruling will discourage other states from initiating similar efforts is a fool's dream. Individuals already involved in such pursuit, including those here in

Florida, are even now regrouping and revising their tactics. It is our responsibility to monitor their efforts enabling us to neutralize their attacks.

The Supreme Court ruling is cause for celebration. But it is not a time to relax our efforts in pursuit of full rights of citizenship. No court decision can end bigotry or hatred for these are emotions of individual. This court has given the gay community a precedent - an important tool in pursuit of the future.

Those opposing full citizenship for gays let neither the truth nor the provisions of The Constitution stand in their way. It is doubtful a court decision will either.

Senate Passes Repeal of HIV Discharge Measure

The U.S. Senate unanimously agreed to an amendment to repeal the discriminatory HIV-discharge provision of the recently enacted Department of Defense authorization. Led by Sens. William Cohen (R-Maine, and Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.). Fifty-six Senators had agreed to co-sponsor the repeal legislation, but decided to put it forth as an amendment on a stopgap spending measure with the agreement of the Senate leadership. That measure passed a vote of 79-21.

The amendment repeals the provision that singles out HIV-positive service members for mandatory discharge and cuts off health benefits to their families. Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz), Sam Nunn (D-Ga), Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) and Alan Simpson (R-Wyo) were among the bill's co-sponsors according to the Human Rights Campaign, which has been leading the effort to repeal the provision.

"The U.S. Senate closed ranks with the Pentagon, veterans and military organizations to overturn this pernicious and discriminatory measure," said Willie Stachelberg, HRC's senior health policy advocate.

The discriminatory measure, authored by Rep. Bob Dornan (R-Cal), forces the

discharge of the 1,049 HIV-positive service members currently in the armed forces. A similar effort to repeal it in the House currently has more than 145 co-sponsors.

The focus now shifts to the conference committee that will hammer out differences between the House and Senate versions. "Given the unanimous support of the U.S. Senate, the prospects are good for the repeal amendment to prevail in the conference committee," said Stachelberg.

The Dornan provision singles out service members with HIV and treats them differently from those with other chronic medical conditions. Prior to its enactment, service members with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, were allowed to serve their country as long as they could perform their duties, but they were not deployed overseas. The same policy applies to service members who have other chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart disease or cancer.

The Pentagon has said that about half the HIV-positive service members are married and on average, have served for a decade. Nearly 20 percent of them are officers

AIDS Test Available At Home Florida One Of The First States Approved For New Test

This month begins the test market in Florida, along with Texas, for the new do it yourself AIDS test. This new effort is testimony to the concerted and continuing efforts to get control of this disease that threatens to reach unprecedented worldwide proportions. This test is estimated to be close to 100% accurate so it offers some hope for the future.

But it is not without controversy. Some fear the reaction by some people without appropriate counseling immediately available could be devastating. Others are concerned that the test could be applied against one's will in the course of seeking employment or insurance, for example. Even parents could conceivably coerce their children to submit to this test. Any of these circumstances would violate the confidentiality that is recognized by the state.

This new approach to diagnosis could open a Pandora's Box of legalities that have been avoided under the anonymous test-

ing programs available to date. At the same time, it will probably encourage many to determine their HIV status - those who did not trust that system. Unfortunately it cannot provide assurance that those testing positive will change their behavior to stem the increase of passing the disease.

A recent incident in Apopka and reported locally appears to confirm the reality of that fear. Even the current procedure of offering anonymous testing offered no assurance that those infected with HIV would not risk the health and lives of others. This new do it yourself test will probably increase the number of individuals that discover they are HIV positive. But there is no guarantee they will change their habits.

For those who wish to take advantage of this test, a home-test kit is available by telephone. The number to call is 1-800-843-8378, and have a credit card available.

Adieu, Adios & Goodbye

By Jo Ann F. Weigel

There is an empty chair forever in the Parliament House dressing room. This recent May 21, Todd "Tasha Diane" James passed away, taken by that dragon disease that snatches life all too quickly. Those of us fortunate enough to be counted as his friends carry in our hearts, a special memory known only to each individual.

For me it was his unconditional love of children, his nieces and nephews (*his children* he referred to them) were his true joy. Being able to spend time with them was an important part of his life. On a more personal level, the moments I was able to witness that he spent with my granddaughter will stay with me forever. Jenna, with her arms around "Mr. Todd's" neck is a picture that never could be captured on film.

For the adult friends he leaves behind, we can only say that the love and dedication that he imparted to us is returned one hundred fold. Todd, it is our turn to say,

"You are our everything. We will always love you."



See HIV, Page 7