Observing Tucson And The Greater Arizona Community

OBSERVER

WEEKLY OBSERVER | MARCH 31, 2010 | ISSUE 1340

Tucson Observer Archives

Palin Helps McCain Campaign Here

PHOTO: Bill Morrow

Last Friday March 26, John McCain held a large campaign rally in Tucson. Sarah Palin, his former running mate for Vice-President, was in Tucson to join the festivities. 4,000 people were present at the Pima County Fairgrounds to hear them speak. Among other speakers were Tucson Mayor Bob Walkup, who has endorsed McCain, radio personality John Justice and former National Rifle Association President Sandra Froman.

General: Gays Would Get Their Own Rooms

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Marine Corps' commandant says he won't force his troops to bunk with gays on base and would give them separate rooms if Congress votes to allow openly gay service, according to the Associated Press.

The comment, by Gen. James Conway is the latest pushback by a small but vocal faction of senior military leaders opposed to a repeal of the 1993 law - "don't ask, don't tell.!"

President Obama says the ban is unfair, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates has launched a lengthy study to determine how to allow gays to serve openly without hurting military effectiveness.

Among the questions to be answered is whether changes to housing policies would even be necessary.

Conway, a known opponent of repealing the law, suggested in an interview published Friday by Military.com that he already knows it would be a logistical hurdle. On base., Marines typically bunk two to a room.

"I Would not ask our Marines to live with someone who is homosexual if we can possibly avoid it," he said. "And to me that means we have to build BEQs (bachelor enlisted quarters) and have single rooms," he said.

Conway's remarks foreshadow the rocky political debate ahead. Gates has asked lawmakers to keep troops "out of the political dimension" of the issue, but some uniformed officers are willingly jumping in.

Earlier this month, a three-star Army general called on troops to "speak up" against allowing gays to serve openly.

Lt. Gen. Benjamin Mixon, who heads Army forces for the U.S. Pacific Command, was publicly admonished by Gates and Chairman of the joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen for using his rank to advocate a political position and challenge the president.

"There's an opportunity in this process for everyone from junior to senior" to have an opportunity to comment, Mullen said.

Groups To Appeal Ruling On Gay Marriage

SAN FRANCISCO (Observer Update) - Two civil rights groups have notified a federal judge that they intend to appeal his decision requiring them to surrender internal documents from their campaign against California's same-sex marriage ban.

The American Civil Liberties Union and Equality California notified U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker while asking him to temporarily suspend his order.

Walker ruled that lawyers for the sponsors of Proposition 8, the 2008 ballot measure that stopped gay marriage, are entitled to review the material because the ban is now the subject of a constitutional challenge in his court.

How Social Media Is Changing LGBT Activism

NEW YORK (Observer Update) - Greg Porter checked his Twitter messages one recent morning and found a very hateful message.

The day before, Porter posted a tweet on his @MU_gay_prof Twitter account asking "#gay why can't we give blood?" with a link to a column on the outdated Red Cross policy that bans gay men from giving blood. The response came the next day. An account for "Ricky Joaquin," who appears to be a Brooklyn resident, tweeted "because we don't want your fag blood."

Porter was angry. He was hurt. The 61-year-old former mass communication professor at Marquette University used social media to respond. He knew a "teaching moment" when he saw one.

"Within seconds, though, my anger turned to sorrow regarding the circle of bigotry," he wrote in a blog about the incident. The link he posted in his response was retweeted several times, exponentially increasing the number of people it reached with each retweet.

"I haven't sent this person a [direct message] yet, but I want to thank him for the inspiration and give him a link," said Porter.

Porter's story is just one way the LGBT community is using social media to further gay rights causes, fight homophobia and promote education. Between blogs, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, activists are using the power of social media to increase the reach of their advocacy messages.

Indeed, social media is the place to be - a survey found that 69 percent of women 17-25 rate Facebook as their favorite site; for men in the same age group, 56 percent called it their favorite site. In all, more than 400 million people use Facebook. This week, industry data showed Facebook generates more hits than Google.

"Social media has had a tremendous impact on all advocacy, for better or worse," said Sree Sreenivasan, a dean at Columbia University's School of Journalism where he teaches a course in social media. "If you are smart, you can use it to amplify audiences, to raise more money."

Last year, The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force hired Sarah Kennedy just to handle social media for the nonprofit organization. As the interactive media coordinator, Kennedy exchanges tweets daily with the more than 3,000 followers of the Task Force's twitter account. And the group's more than 8,000 Facebook friends see her news posts daily.

"I believe that is the number one key to social media. That it is social. In the past, organizations have sent out newsletters to inform them about their work," Kennedy said. Now there are tweets, posts, blogs and videos to spread the message. "Before LGBT groups had social media, there wasn't always that level of information."

Sreenivasan agrees that some people forget the social aspect. "They use it to broadcast instead of listen," He said. "They use it to point to themselves instead of to point at something interesting about them." He stresses the need for listening to what others say and encouraging an open dialogue.

A new type of social media that is gaining traction is mobile fundraising – highlighted by the success of texting donations to earthquake-ravaged Haiti, which raised millions in just a few days. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is using a similar technology for raising awareness about its Queer the Census campaign. Recent Twitter and Facebook messages urged people to "Text 'Count' to 69866 to order your free Queer the Census sticker!"

For smaller state-based organizations such as New York's Empire State Pride Agenda, the cost of mobile fundraising is too expensive. But networking on social media sites including Facebook and Twitter is connecting the group with individuals across the state. "When we call on our members to do something, it's amazing how quickly they can mobilize," said Stephanie Bergen, the organization's communications coordinator.

"With people on Facebook and Twitter, they many seem more passive but its easier to reach out than ever," she said. "They are building these huge social networks online and we find that does translate [to gay rights activism]."

Sometimes the old way is best (or at least as good)

Pride Agenda also finds that phone banking events are a low-tech social media tool that still has a place in the gay rights fight. At a recent evening in the Pride Agenda office, about a dozen volunteers sat in individual cubicles, dialing constituents to tell them about the Gender

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A Journal Member of the Tucson Gay Museum

UPDATE

Book Club For LGBT Volunteer Fundraisers, April 6

TUCSON (Observer Update) - The first meeting of the Book Club for LGBT Volunteer Fundraisers will be held on Tuesday, April 6. The book is Reliable Fundraising in Unreliable Times: What Good Causes Need to Know to Survive and Thrive (Chardon Press, 2009).

The Club is open to those interested in helping Wingspan and other LGBT groups with fundraising. This book discussion is intended to facilitate learning and sharing ideas on helping grassroots organizations raise money to survive these tough times from a volunteer perspective (those not employed ad development officials).

This first book is available at the public library. It's available on online sellers in $25.00 range. Contact the club if you are interested in sharing a copy. We anticipating meeting every other month, unless the group comes up with a more popular plan. We will meet in the second floor conference room (Santa Rita) at the Downtown Main library from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm on April 6.

Man-2-Man Seminar April 3

TUCSON (Observer Update) - The Man 2 Man Seminar, at SAAF, 375 S. Euclid, 9:00 AM - 5:00 P.M., is a weekend retreat for Men who have sex with Men or are attracted to men. The seminar has been implemented in a few cities throughout the nation. The purpose of these seminars is to share experiences and learn from one another.

The seminars take place on two consecutive days (Saturday and Sunday) and are very interactive and participant driven.

Continental breakfast, lunch, drinks and snacks are offered both days. In addition, each participant will receive a $75 gift card as compensation for their time and other incentives will be raffled at the end of the seminars. The seminars deal with topics ranging from sexual health, to mental health, to spiritual health, to being sexual in the age of HIV/AIDS and other topics focusing on HIV/STD prevention.

For more information, contact Cesar Egurrola, 520-628-7223.

2010 PFLAG Scholarships

TUCSON (Observer Update) - This coming year PFLAG Tucson will again award at least three or four Gene Moore Memorial LGBT Scholarships. Although we have little money in our scholarship fund at the moment, we hope to raise more in the coming months.

Our scholarships thus may be $500 rather than $1000 this year so that we can benefit more students. TucsonLGBT.com is establishing a $250 School Books Scholarship this year specifically for a Tucson low-income gay male high school senior who plans to attend Pima College.

They will award this through the PFLAG Tucson application process. For more information and application forms, go online to pflagtucson.org/scholarships/index2010.htm. Awards will be made at our support meeting on Wednesday, May 5.

Desert Voices Presents 'Sound In Bloom' April 17-18

TUCSON (Observer Update) - A celebration of the beauty of choral art. The chorus, under the artistic direction of Chris Tackett, will be singing some of the finest choral music of the last five hundred years while revealing how singing in a chorus has touched their hearts, changed their lives, and made their community and world a better place.

Performances take place on Saturday, April 17 at 7:30 pm and Sunday, April 18 at 3:00 pm.

Tickets are $15.00 each or 2 for $25.00 and may be purchased from the Desert Voices Box Office (791-9662) and from Antigones Bookstore on 4th Avenue.

Alphabet Soup: EON Youth Event April 8

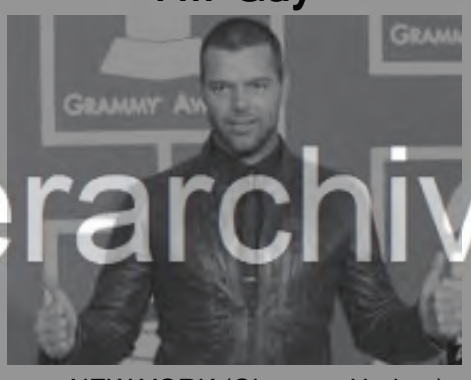
TUCSON (Observer Update) - Think you know everything there is to know about LGBTQ terms, labels and history?

Test your knowledge during this LGBTQ 101 refresher in the Lounge, hosted by Eon staff, April 8, 5 PM, 430 E. 7th St.

This event open to youth ages 13-23. For more information, contact Stephanie Arendt

520-624-1779.

Ricky Martin Confirms 'I'm Gay'

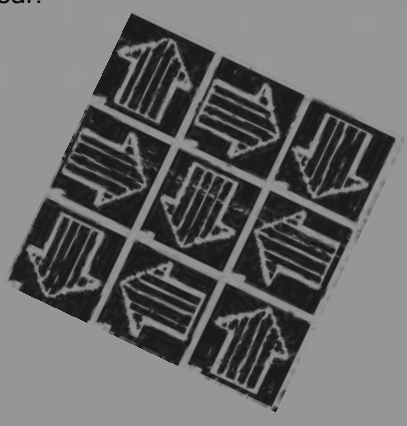


NEW YORK (Observer Update) - After years of refusing to discuss his personal life, Ricky Martin confirmed Monday in a blog post on his website that he is gay, advocate.com reported. The singer wrote in a blog post about his forthcoming memoirs: "I am proud to say that I am a fortunate homosexual man. I am very blessed to be who I am."

Martin writes in the post: "A few months ago I decided to write my memoirs, a project I knew was going to bring me closer to an amazing turning point in my life. From the moment I wrote the first phrase I was sure the book was the tool that was going to help me free myself from things I was carrying within me for a long time. Things that were too heavy for me to keep inside. Writing this account of my life, I got very close to my truth. And this is something worth celebrating."

The singer's personal life has long been the subject of rumors, many of which were addressed by The Advocatein a cover story in July, 1999. Earlier this year, Barbara Walters told Toronto newspaper The Star her one regret as an interviewer was pressuring Martin to come out of the closet. "A lot of people say that destroyed his career, and when I think back on it now I feel it was an inappropriate question."

The singer has been out of the public eye in recent years, focusing his energies on raising his twin boys, Matteo and Valentino. Martin's memoirs and a new album are due later this year.



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Students Rally Against Georgia Prom Decision

ATLANTA (ObserverUpdate) - Although Georgia high school student Derrick Martin has the okay from school officials to bring his boyfriend to prom, not all his fellow students agree with the move. In fact, some students organized a protest.

Protest organizer Amber Duskin, a senior at Bleckley County High School, sent text messages to her fellow students on Wednesday asking them to show up, according to the Macon Telegraph.

"I don't believe in going up there and dancing with gay guys like that," she told the newspaper. "It's also not just him bringing a boy. It was bringing all this attention to it."

And his parents, who dislike the media attention, kicked him out of the house. He is currently staying with friends. Ironically, Martin's father is a math teacher at Bleckley County High and is the school's Teacher of the Year.

Martin said the school is considering abandoning the traditional "walk-through" where couples are announced as they enter the dance. He also said some students discussed having a separate prom.

RNC Party At WEHO Club Prompts Calls For Steele To Resign

WEHO (Observer Update) - The political consultant who charged the Republican National Committee nearly $2,000 for a night out at a West Hollywood club known for its risqué gay nights has said he plans to return the money, CNN reported.

Erik Brown is the president of Dynamic Marketing, Inc., which counts companies including Century 21, Ford, Honda, and the Salvation Army as clients. His company organized the event at West Hollywood nightclub Voyeur and billed the RNC for the party. The firm was reimbursed $1,946.25.

RNC Chairman Michael Steele is facing calls for his resignation following reports of his freewheeling spending, including the club event, reported advocate.com. According to DailyCaller.com, the February evening out at West Hollywood club Voyeur was part of an effort to groom young Republicans. A formal event at a Beverly Hills hotel preceded the Voyeur after-party.

How Social Media Is Changing LGBT Activism

Continued from Page One

Equality Non-Discrimination Act, a bill that proposes to protect transgender individuals from discrimination in housing, employment, credit and education.

Caprice Bellefleur, who identifies as mixed-gender, sat in one of the cubicles, a phone attached to her ear and a list in front of her. She called Long Island residents in State Sen. Ken LaValle's district to discuss support for gender equality protections in New York.

Her voice was chipper as she read the script. "I'm calling because you are a constituent of Sen. LaValle. Sen. LaValle needs to hear from his constituents regarding the Gender Equality Non-Discrimination Act. I need you to call Sen. LaValle and tell him to support GENDA." She smiled when the man on the other end of the call agreed.

Hanging up the phone, she said, "He said he'd call tonight." She made a notation for each person who agreed to call the senator. She also noted when a voicemail is left or whether a call back is necessary. It's all a familiar part of the phone banking ritual for which Bellefleur is a veteran.

Bellefleur is a strong believer in grass roots activism – and she finds phone banking a very effective tool. "Obviously, politicians don't get too far going against the will of their constituents," she said. "Phone banking does make a difference."

Whether it's through high-tech strategies or low-tech tools, social media is changing the nature of activism.

"It's all about having a plan about new technology rather than jumping down rabbit holes," said Sreenivasan. "You have to do everything you did before. This is something you need to add into the mix."

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Gay Divorce Denied

PHILADELPHIA (Observer Update) - Carole Ann Kern and Robin Lynn Taney, a lesbian couple who wed in Massachusetts in 2009, filed for divorce recently in Pennsylvania. Berks County Common Pleas Court Judge Scott E. Lash denied the divorce based on the fact that Pennsylvania does not recognize the marriage in the first place. The couple would have filed back in Massachusetts where the same-sex marriage was granted, but there is a one year residency requirement for filing for divorce there. The couple's only recourse at this point is to have the court declare their marriage void.

The judge's opinion in this case as reported by Law.com says that Pennsylvania's law "represents a reasonable protection and a proper and lawful exercise of the police power of the Commonwealth, which is available to preserve the public health, safety, welfare, and morals of its citizens."

This is not the first time that same-sex divorce has come up. Other couples who were married in Massachusetts have been seeking divorces in their home states for a few years already.

Angelique Naylor and Sabina Daly were married in Massachusetts in 2004 and recently filed for divorce in Texas. Naylor and Daly have a four year old son. The question of voiding the marriage came up in the Texas court as well, but District Judge Scott Jenkins granted the divorce citing the full faith and credit clause of the U.S. Constitution.

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German Leader To Open Gay Games VIII

Guido Westerwelle

COLOGNE (Observer Update) - Germany's foreign minister and vice chancellor, Guido Westerwelle, will preside over the opening ceremony of the 2010 Gay Games, according to a news release from the sports organization, reported advocate.com.

Westerwelle, who has been out on the job since 2001, will open the eighth Gay Games, held this year in Cologne, Germany.

"We are so pleased to have found such a prominent advocate. With his commitment, Dr. Guido Westerwelle sends an important signal for more tolerance and acceptance of gays and lesbians in our society," said Annete Wachter, chief executive officer of Gay Games Cologne, said in a statement.

The Gay Games are expected to attract 12,000 athletes from 70 countries. At least 34,000 spectators are expected to watch the opening ceremonies. The goal of the Gay Games is to foster tolerance for the LGBT community.

Florida Lawmakers Drop Gay Exclusion In Film Bill

TALLAHASSEE, FL (Observer Update) - The Florida Legislature removed language from proposed tax credit bills that provided incentives for filmmakers only if they avoided depictions of "nontraditional family values."

The original bills provided tax credits for films that excluded scenes with gays, lesbians and even single-parents. Legislative committees removed the language this week from both the Senate and House versions of the legislation.

Florida Together, a coalition of more than 80 organizations in the state that support equality, led the fight to remove the discriminatory "nontraditional family values" language from the bills.

"We support bringing film jobs to Florida," Georg Ketelhohn, chair of Florida Together, in a statement. "We just don't think literally paying someone to reinforce negative stereotypes is good public policy."

"I am proud the Legislature saw the difference between creating jobs in Florida and rewarding discrimination. Florida Together did good work keeping this issue in the spotlight and working with us to fix it," said Senator David Aronberg, in Florida Together's news release.

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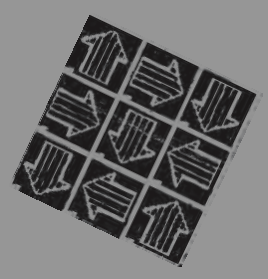
Boxer Introduces Domestic-Partner Cobra Bill

WASHINGTON, DC (Observer Update) - U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer of California introduced a bill this week that would require employers to provide the same health insurance coverage to both domestic partners and spouses of those who lose their jobs.

Currently, federal law does not require companies to offer COBRA coverage to the domestic partners of departing employees, even if the corporations provide domestic-partner benefits. Meanwhile, the federal government requires that married spouses be offered the COBRA coverage.

Boxer's law would require all companies that offer domestic-partner benefits to offer the COBRA coverage to the unmarried partners.

"This is a question of fairness," Boxer said in a statement. "Every family deserves access to health insurance, especially in this tough economy. This bill ensures that domestic partners and their families will have equal access to health coverage after a job loss."



COMMENTARY. . . .

by Deb Price

Imagine No 'Don't Ask'

Imagine an America where an openly lesbian Navy officer is specifically reached out to by her ship's commanding officer to ensure she knows she's welcome to bring the guest of her choice to a party at his home, just like her shipmates. The lesbian officer brings her partner. And they're warmly greeted by the ship's commander and his wife. The lesbian couple comfortably mingles with the spouses and dates of the rest of the crew. In fact, the lesbian officer feels so overjoyed by the evening that she later recalls: "We were the life of the party! It was very normal. My shipmates were very supportive of me."

A John Lennon-esque utopian dream? Something far, far away? Hardly. This was the real-life experience of Jenny L. Kopfstein, a Naval Academy graduate who served openly in the Navy for more than two years before she was discharged as a lieutenant junior grade. Before coming out on the USS Shiloh, she had been upset by the conflict between the self-protective lies and half-truths required by "don't ask, don't tell" and the core Navy values of honesty and integrity. After coming out, as she told the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 18, she won medals, a ship-handling contest, and the respect and support of her shipmates. Her two commanding officers testified – futilely – against her being discharged for being openly gay.

"I had come out in my letter officially, and I came out slowly over time to my shipmates," she told senators. "I expected negative responses. I got none. "My open service had a positive impact on the ship's morale. I was able to treat my shipmates like human beings, and we could interact on a personal level," she said, asking to be allowed to return to duty.

Kopfstein offered senators a peek into how being open can boost a military unit's cohesion and morale. Senators got a different peek – into the ugly side of the policy – from Michael D. Almy, a decorated Air Force major: Discharge proceedings started against him after his personal e-mails, sent while serving in Iraq, were read during a routine search. That resulted in a commanding officer ordering an in-depth search of his e-mails to see whether he violated "don't ask."

Almy endured 16 "devastating" months as the military worked its way toward his ouster. In the end, he received half of what his severance pay would have been under normal circumstances. And, in what he described as a "final insult," he was escorted off his base by military police "as if I were a common criminal." He told senators: "My greatest desire now is to return to the Air Force as an officer and a leader protecting the freedoms of a nation that I love, freedoms that I myself was not allowed to enjoy while I was serving in the military. This is my calling in life. I hope that you will allow this to happen."

The duo's riveting testimony underscored the disgrace of this policy, which requires uniformed gays to stay closeted and celibate. Other recent pressure for change:

• Shackles: Two gay Iraq veterans – Lt. Dan Choi, an Arabic linguist being kicked out of the National Guard, and already discharged Army Capt. James Pietrangelo – chained themselves to the White House fence March 18 to protest DADT. Both later appeared in court in leg irons and handcuffs.

• Senate bill: Repeal legislation introduced March 3 by Sen. Joe Lieberman, the Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2010, has 25 co-sponsors.

• Vets survey: Vet Voice Foundation released a survey on March 15 of 510 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. By three to one, the vets are "comfortable" with gays and would find it "acceptable" to serve with open gays.

Former Navy officer Kopfstein told Congress that the "universal attitude" of her shipmates was that DADT was "dumb." It's getting easy to imagine a world without "don't ask."

(Deb Price of the Detroit News writes the first nationally syndicated column on gay issues and from which this is reprinted.)

Oklahoma Lawmakers Pass Wrong Hate Crimes Bill

OKLAHOMA CITY (Observer Update) - Lawmakers in Oklahoma thought they'd figured out a way to exempt the state from enforcing the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Act, which added protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity to the federal hate crimes act. But thanks to "a legislative error," the Oklahoma senate has instead passed a bill that sidesteps protections based on race and religion, reported advocate.com.

Senate Bill 1965, passed on March 10, states that local enforcement agencies should not enforce any sections of federal law listed under Title 18 U.S. Code Section 245 unless they are already covered by state law. But it's Section 249, not 245, where sexual orientation and gender identity protections are listed. Section 245 outlines protections based on race and religion.

Now that the mistake has been made public, the bill has little chance of getting through the House, according to Sarah Warbelow, the Human Rights Campaign's state legislative director. But that's little solace for Equality Oklahoma president Toby Jenkins.

"People are a little embarrassed that it got this far," he said.

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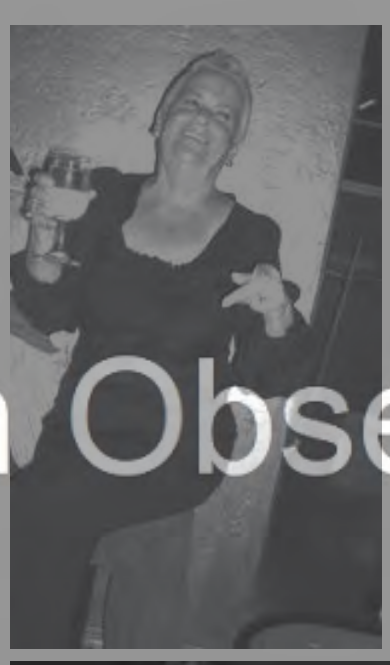
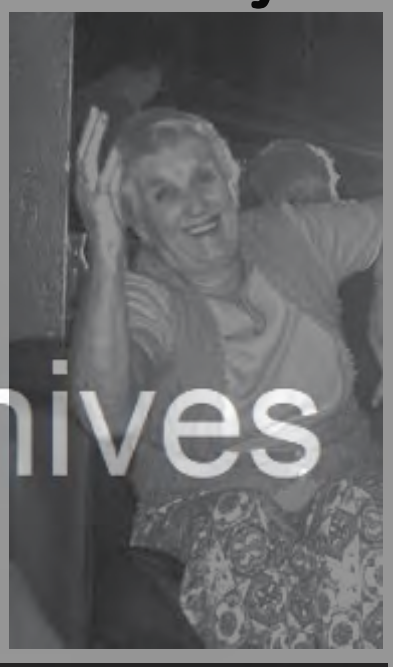
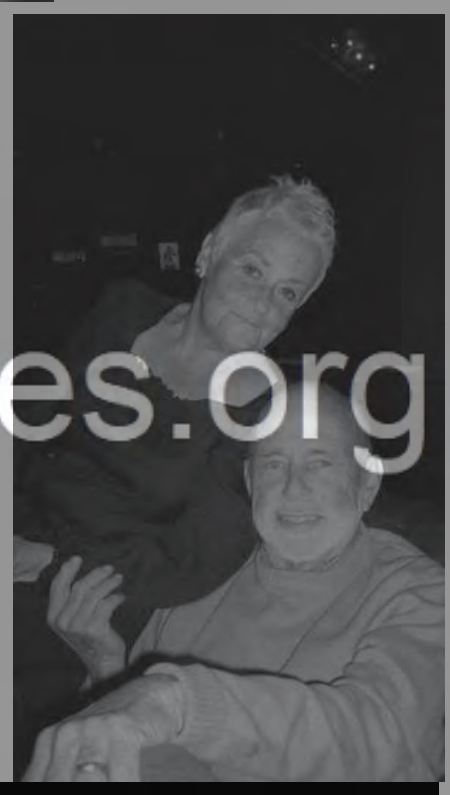
Mickie's Birthday Party At Woody's Last Friday







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Discharging Gays To Draw More Scrutiny In Military

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Observer Update) - Discharging a gay person for violating the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy will draw unprecedented scrutiny under new orders from Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who is already pushing to repeal the ban on gays serving openly in the U.S. military.

Guidelines call for testimony from third parties to be given under oath. The discharge of enlisted personnel must be approved by officers who hold a rank equivalent to a one-star general or above, according to military and defense officials familiar with the plan. They spoke on condition of anonymity ahead of the announcement. The goal is to ensure that the law is applied fairly and consistently across the military and that flimsy testimony from third parties is eliminated, the officials said. The plan is considered a stopgap measure until Congress decides whether to repeal the 1993 law.

President Barack Obama has said the ban unfairly punishes gays and has called on Congress to lift it. Gates agrees but says he wants to move slowly and has ordered an internal assessment, due Dec. 1, on how the Defense Department could lift the ban without damaging morale or hurting recruitment.

In the meantime, Gates has said he wants to find ways to implement the law more "humanely" and prevent cases in which gay service members are outed by someone carrying a grudge.

Gay rights groups say the plan to require high-level scrutiny for discharges under "don't ask, don't tell" is a step in the right direction but add that Congress must still act to lift the ban. "Service members would still be leaving the services under 'don't ask, don't tell' every day, so what we need is repeal," said Aubrey Sarvis, executive director, Servicemembers Legal Defense Fund.

Military officials, Republicans and even some conservative Democrats have been reluctant to embrace the change. They say they support Gates' review of the policy but that no changes should be made if they might hurt military effectiveness.

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and other Democrats say the time has come to repeal the ban and have called for an immediate moratorium on dismissals.

Nathaniel Frank, a senior research fellow with the Palm Center, which supports a repeal of the ban, said it is unclear how much of an impact the new guidelines would have because regulations already restrict third-party allegations.

"Anything that continues to allow the discharge of servicemembers for something that research shows has no bearing on military effectiveness will not go far enough," Frank said.

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LGBT Seniors More Likely To Be Poor, Isolated

Tucson Observer Archives

NEW YORK (Observer Update) - A new report from Movement Advancement Project sheds light on stereotypes of senior members of the LGBT community.

The report finds "LGBT elders are more likely to live in poverty, face social and community isolation, and lack appropriate health care and long-term care" according to a news release on the group's Web site.

The report, called the first major collaboration between LGBT groups and advocates of the elderly, provides a road map for advocates to help seniors age. The report includes input from Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Elders, American Society on Aging, National Senior Citizens Law Center, Center for American Progress and AARP.

"Most Americans already face challenges as they age, but LGBT older adults have the added burden of a lifetime of stigma; familial relationships that generally lack legal recognition under the law; and unequal treatment under laws, programs and services designed to support and protect older Americans," the release said.

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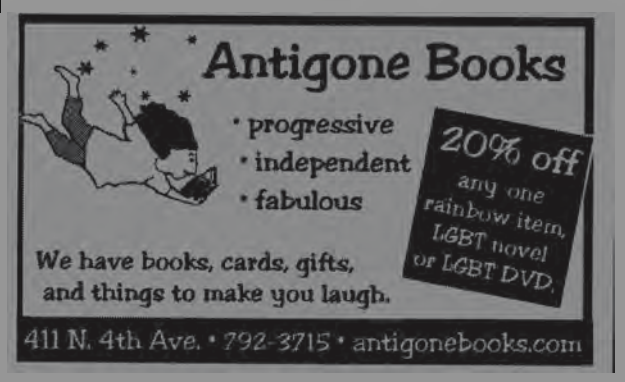

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At The Tea Dance At The Moon

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Would Partners Of Gay Troops Get Benefits Too?

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Observer Update) - If gay service members are allowed to serve openly, the military will face another tough question: Should gay partners be entitled to military benefits?

Momentum appears to be building for ending the ban on gays in the military. New rules ordered by Defense Secretary Robert Gates make it harder to discharge men and women under the policy known as "don't ask, don't tell." His decision is intended as a stopgap measure as Congress weighs whether to go along with President Barack Obama's request to repeal the law.

Since the draft ended in 1973, spousal benefits have increasingly been used as an incentive to recruit and retain an effective force. Today, more than half of all troops sport a wedding ring.

Benefits for married service members include college tuition for a spouse and the right of a spouse to be at a wounded service member's bedside. Spouses also have access to military health care and commissaries worldwide, and married service members receive better housing and even extra pay when they go to war.

The ticket to qualifying for those benefits is a marriage certificate. Heterosexual couples have a choice whether to marry, but same-sex marriages are legal in only five states and Washington, D.C. Whether same-sex partnerships would be recognized by the military and what benefits might be afforded gay couples would become issues if the ban were lifted. Already, Gates has included the issue of benefits in a review of how to lift the repeal, which is due Dec. 1.

Repealing the ban without offering same-sex partner benefits would be like telling gay service members they are equal but not giving them all the advantages of service, said Tiffany Belle, 33, of Long Beach, Calif., a lesbian and former sailor. "You're basically letting us be free being ourselves in the military, but then you're not letting us reap the benefits."

The 1996 Defense of Marriage Act prohibits the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriages. Nathaniel Frank, a senior research fellow at the Palm Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara, said it's unrealistic to think the military would be out front of the rest of the government in offering benefits to unmarried partners.

"They don't do it for straight people, and they're very unlikely to do it for gay people," Frank said.

But, in addition to repealing "don't ask, don't tell," Obama has called for getting rid of the Defense of Marriage Act and has moved to extend some federal benefits to same-sex partners.

Obama has approved small changes in benefits available to same-sex couples who work for the federal government, such as visitation and dependent-care rights. The State Department extended benefits to gay diplomats, such as the right for their domestic partners to hold diplomatic passports and for paid travel to and from foreign posts.

Larry Korb, a senior fellow at the Democratic-led Center for American Progress, who served as an assistant secretary of defense in the early 1980s, said what the military would have to work through is similar to what the State Department and some federal agencies have done.

"My own personal view is that if they want to make it happen, they can," Korb said.

U.S. military officials are concerned that recruitment might suffer if they open the door to gay service members and their families. They worry that the Southern, Christian base from which the military relies heavily to fill its ranks will resist the change.

But if they don't adequately address the benefits issue, it could lead to gay service members leaving the military because there's no provision for caring for their families, said Ryan Gallucci, a spokesman for the veterans group AMVETS.

"They won't be on equal footing as their heterosexual counterparts," Gallucci said.

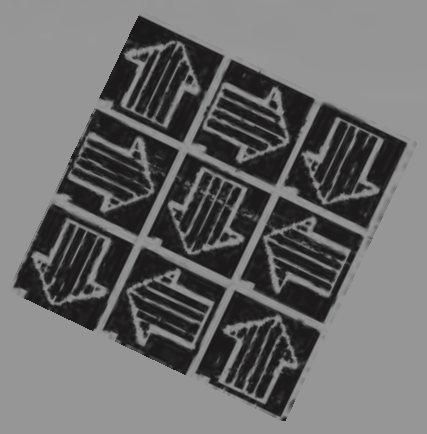
Some repeal proponents say that lifting the ban should be the focus, not the what ifs related to benefits. They say discussions about whether the Pentagon would recognize gay troops' partners aren't relevant now.

"Let's get rid of the ban first and then look at those issues," said Kevin Nix, a spokesman for the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, which seeks to repeal the law.

Frank, who has written a book about the policy, said opponents of repeal use a "thorny questions" strategy to make the process of lifting the ban seem far more complicated than it is by bringing up issues like benefits.

One former service member who is watching the debate is Melanie Costa, 34, of Franklin, Mass. The Iraq veteran said she left the military after four years in the Marines and six in the Army Reserves so she could marry a woman in Massachusetts, where gay marriage is legal. She said if the repeal is dropped she'll re-enlist – if her wife gets benefits.

"If I got deployed, and she wasn't able to get all the benefits as another married couple, there's not really a point," Costa said.



Minister Faces Sanction For Legal Marriages

Rev. Jane Spahr

SAN FRANCISCO (Observer Update) - For the second time in four years, the Reverend Jane Spahr, a retired Presbyterian minister, faces charges that she broke church law by marrying same-sex couples, reported advocate.com.

The difference this time, however, is that the 67-year-old Spahr, who lives in San Francisco, could be disciplined for performing legal marriages, as the 16 couples were wed during the five months in 2008 when same-sex marriages were legal in California.

"Trying to sanction a minister for performing marriages…is unprecedented," Spahr's attorney, Scott Clark, tells the Santa Rosa, Calif., Press Democrat. But JoAn Blackstone, the prosecutor in the case, which gets under way in August or September, said California law is immaterial. Legal or not, same-sex marriages are "expressly prohibited," by the church.

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Mugabe: Gay Rights Would Be 'Insanity'

HARARE - Zimbabwe's president says gay rights will not be protected in a constitution being drawn up under a power-sharing deal.

State radio quoted President Robert Mugabe saying that Western rights groups have called for constitutional reforms to include gay rights. He calls that "Insanity".

Same-sex acts are illegal in Zimbabwe, and condemnation of gays is common in Africa. Ugandan lawmakers have proposed imposing the death penalty on some gays,

A gay couple is on trial in Malawi, charged with unnatural acts and gross indecency. (Associated Press)

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Bar Calendar Specials

SATURDAY, APRIL 3

COYOTE MOON - Miss Rosie Cheeks and Friends: Bunny, Giovanna, Jasmine, Mercedes and Mama. The fun starts at 9:00 p.m.

SUNDAY, APRIL 4 - EASTER

WOODY'S - Easter Brunch and Bloody Mary Bar 11 a.m. till 2 p.m. Beer Bust and Jeff's gourmet burgers 2 p.m. till 7 p.m. Karaoke at 9 p.m. Plus Woody's own Easter Egg hunt all day (as long as the eggs last). Easter Bonnet Contest at 4 p.m. (after church) and Best "Basket" Contest 9 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7

WOODY'S - America's Amateur Strip Contest starts at 11 p.m. To be held alternating Wednesdays. Final Grand Finale in May!

SATURDAY, APRIL 10

WOODY'S - "Meow Mix" with "Dia V" - "Boys-R-Us" and the return of "Aunt JoAnna" direct from Puerto Vallarta at 9:00 p.m. in the cabaret doing her incredible live vocal impersonations of Cher, Cyndi Lauper, Celine Dion and dozens of your favorite stars.

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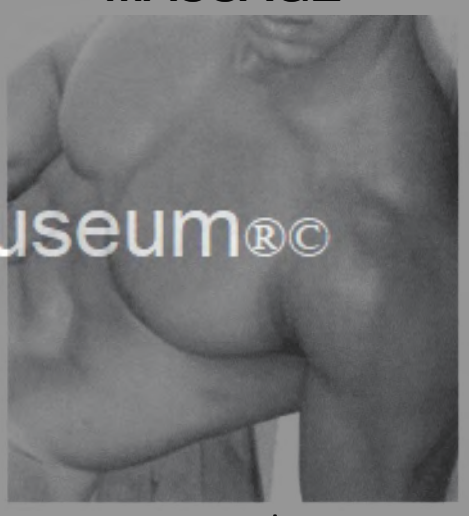

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DAILY BAR CALENDAR

SUNDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm - 2am It's Latin Sunday like the good ol' days. Catch DJ Dmenace spinning the best Cumbias. Get your Bucket of Beer ... 5 Bud Bottles for $5!

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 11am. Beer Bust Sunday - $1 draft beers (12 oz), domestic only; $2.25 domestic long necks.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm $2 Well or Domestic Beer. Karaoke on the Patio 4-8:30pm. Burger BBQ 5-8pm + $1 pint draft. 9pm-close Karaoke inside with Troy & $1.50 Well or Domestic Beer, $2.50 Call or Premium Beer. DJ Hurricane on the Patio.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am. Peter's Build Your Own Bloody Mary Bar 11am-2pm. Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excluding special events). Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-8pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar 2pm-2am. Beer Bust 2pm-7pm. Karaoke with Michael D 9pm-Close. Drag Bingo every other Sunday 8-9pm. Check our Ad for Special Events or Parties

MONDAY

THE BIZ - Closed for employee training.

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3 - 8 p.m. $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Bucket o" Beer - $10 Domestic, $12 Imports and microbrews (4 beers to a bucket, for 2 or more people, Some brands excluded).

IBT's -Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm $2 Well or Domestic Beer. 8pm-close $5 Scratch Long Island Varieties. 9pm-close DJ Hurricane with "All Request Music".

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am. Happy Hour 11am--8pm (excl spec events) Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-10pm Back Pocket Patio Bar 8pm-close. Karaoke with Michael D. 9pm-close.

TUESDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8 and Game Night all night long. Play Wii, beer pong and pool with the staff.

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3-8. $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. Pitcher Special $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.00 lg. Pitcher (excluding Blue Moon & Dos XX Amber).Girlz Nite Out. Girlz pay only .75 for well liquors or domestic drafts 8-10pm. Ladies only Texas Hold 'Em Poker 6 p.m. Y-Not Karaoke with Anna at 8pm

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestic Beer. 8pm-close "2'sDay" - $2 Well or Domestic Beer. DJ Q 9pm-close.

WOODY'S - Open 11am- 2am. Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excl spec events). Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-10pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar open 8pm-close, Caribbean Party Night with Woody's own Specialty Mojitos, Caprioskas and Martinis with Tucson's Hottest Bartenders.

WEDNESDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8pm. Wild Wednesday 18+ Party with DJ White Shadow spinning the hottest Hip Hop, R&B and top 40 remix dance of today. 21+ NO COVER. 18+ $8 Cover.

COYOTE MOON PUB -Open 3pm. Happy Hour All Day $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Pitchers. Karaoke with Ynot Entertainment at 9pm.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. "Diva-Licious" show w/Bunny FuFu. 11pm - -close "Reverse Happy Hour". DJ Q Inside & DJ Mike Lopez playing 80s music on the Patio.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am;. Happy Hour 11am-8pm excl. special events). Ful Kitchen open 11am-10pm. Back Pocket Bar open 8pm-close. Service Industry Employee Special All Day Long - $1 off all drinks except schnapps and draft. Different Themed Underwear Party 9pm-close with $1.00 off for those who participate (excl. Schnapps and Draft). Retro 80s & 90s Dance with DJ Clint 9 til close..

THURSDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8pm. Y-NOT Karaoke 9pm-2am with Meco pouring the best drinks in town. Come out and play.

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3 - 8 pm, $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg.. Pitcher. Boyz Nite Out - boys pay only .75 for well liquors or domestic drafts 8-10pm. Bicardi Thursdays - $3.00 Bicardi Rum - all flavors.

IBT's -Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. 10pm-close "Boyz Nite Out" w/Bartenders in their underwear. DJ Hurricane spinning Top 40 & DJ Mike Lopez on the patio. $1.75 Long Island, $1.50 Tequila Shots, $3 Skyy Cape Cods and $4 Skyy Cosos.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am; Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excl Spec Events); Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-10pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar open 8pm-close. Cheap Party Day **FREE POOL**, $1.00 PBR Longnecks, $2.00 Tecate Longnecks. Techno and Top 40 Dance with DJ Jeff 9pm - close..

FRIDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8 pm. GoGo Fridays with 2-4-1 drinks for the ladies til midnight. Catch Shorty spinning the hottest Hip Hop, R&B and Top 40 remix dance of today.

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3 - 8 pm, $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. $3.50 Sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Pitcher. $2.75 All Mexican Beers and Dos XX Amber. Dance lessons at 7pm $5 per person, Country Dancing 8:30 p.m. to close with DJ Pat.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. 9pm -close DJ Hurricane inside. 10pm-close DJ Mike Lopez with "I'm a Sexy Bitch Night" on the patio.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am; Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excl spec events). Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-11pm Back Pocket Patio Bar open 5pm-close. Enjoy the Live piano & vocal sounds of Susan Artemis 6-9 p.m.;

SATURDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm - 2am. Latin night with Latin Drag Show the 1st, 3rd and 4th Saturdays of the month. DJ Dmenace spinnin' the best Cumbias, Salsa & Merengue. $3 pitchers and $2 Tequila shotz all night long!

COYOTE MOON PUB - Open at 2pm. Happy Hour 2-8pm, $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Plus check out the bartenders choice of shot specials. $5.00 cheese-burger & fries. $3.00 Cuervo and $4.75 Jager Bombs. Check our calendar for the Saturday Night Special Entertainment.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. 5-8pm Karaoke on the patio $1Draft Pints. 9pm "Saturday Starrlett's" w/Bunny FuFu & Janee Starr. After the show, DJ Q spinning inside & 10pm-close, DJ Mike Lopez with the "Party on the Patio".

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am; Happy Hour 10am-8pm (excl spec events); Full Menu Kitchen open11am-11pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar open 5pm-close. Techno and Top 40 Dance with DJ Jeff 9pm til close. Check our ad for Twice-A-Month Special Events or Themed Parties.

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Firefighter Bias Suit Appealed

LOS ANGELES (Observer Update) - A California appeals court overturned a lower court's decision to award a black lesbian firefighter $6.2 million after she was allegedly forced out of her job with the Los Angeles Fire Department, advocate.com reported.

The second district court of appeal sided with Los Angeles city attorneys who argued that Brenda Lee did not exhaust all administrative remedies to keep her job, according to the Los Angeles Times. Her case has been remanded to the Los Angeles superior court for reconsideration. According to the Associated Press, Lee claimed her superiors made derogatory comments to her and required her to do grueling drills without proper safety precautions. She also said that someone urinated in her mouthwash.

Even though she reported the harassment, authorities reportedly refused to transfer her. She was eventually terminated in 2005, the AP reports. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission concluded in 2007 that there was sufficient evidence to support her claims. Lee's $6.2 million settlement was the biggest in a group of similar cases against the Los Angeles Fire Department alleging racial, gender, and sexual orientation discrimination. In total, the city has doled out more than $15 million.

Gay Couple Wins Birth Certificate Ruling

NEW ORLEANS (Observer Update) - A federal appeals court ruled Thursday that Louisiana must issue a gay couple in San Diego a birth certificate for their adopted son that includes both fathers' names.

According to The San Diego Union-Tribune, the fifth U.S. circuit court of appeals in New Orleans ordered the state registrar to issue a new birth certificate to Oren Adar and Mickey Ray Smith. The registrar had refused to do so. Their child was born in Louisiana in 2005, and Adar and Smith, who lived in Connecticut at the time, adopted the boy in New York in 2006. They sued in 2007 after the registrar declined to issue the birth certificate with both their names on it.

"Yesterday's unanimous ruling by a three-judge panel upheld a lower-court ruling," reports the Union-Tribune. "The judges said state law requires the registrar to list both adoptive parents' names and said the official was violating the Full Faith and Credit Clause of the U.S. Constitution by refusing to honor an out-of-state adoption, even if the adoption wouldn't have been granted to the same-sex couple under Louisiana law."

Taking A Stand On Lesbian Appointee

WASHINGTON, DC (Observer Update) - President Obama took advantage of the congressional recess and installed 15 nominees whose appointments had been stalled by the Senate, The New York Times reports.

Among the 15 is Georgetown law professor Chai Feldblum, a lesbian, who will serve on the five-member Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The nominees, who are expected to begin work next week, will be able to serve without Senate confirmation until the end of 2011.

"The United States Senate has the responsibility to approve or disapprove my nominees," Obama said in a statement. "But if, in the interest of scoring political points, Republicans in the Senate refuse to exercise that responsibility, I must act in the interest of the American people and exercise my authority to fill these positions on an interim basis."

In addition to being a Georgetown professor, Feldblum is also a director of the Georgetown Law Center's Federal Legislation and Administrative Clinic and once served as a clerk for Supreme Court justice Harry A. Blackmun.

Half Of Americans Would Support Gay President

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Observer Update) - More Americans said they would support an openly gay quarterback in the Super Bowl than an openly gay commander in chief, according to new poll released.

Fifty percent of respondents said they would support an openly gay president, while 44% said they would oppose, according to the 60 Minutes/Vanity Fair poll.

Fifty-five percent said they were comfortable with an openly gay U.S. Supreme Court justice, and 56% said they would support a gay Secretary of State.

With sports figures, 62% said they would root for a gay Super Bowl quarterback, and 61% would support a gay baseball commissioner.

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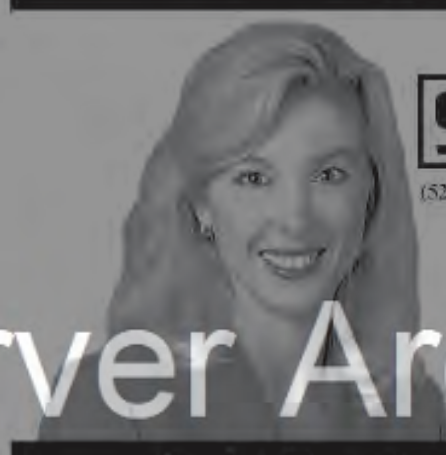
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