Observing Tucson And The Greater Arizona Community

OBSERVER

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Tucson Observer Archives

AVP Team Rallies To Protect LGBT Youth

tucsonobserverarchives.org

TUCSON (Observer Update) - Weekly demonstrations to call attention to bullying and school violence against LGBT youth have been launched by Wingspan's Anti-Violence Program (AVP). The purpose is to urge parents and school officials to promote safety and to be alert to any dangerous signals. The gatherings will be Thursdays from 6:30 to 8:30 a.m., and participants are urged to bring signs promoting diversity and peace.

Pictured above are Oscar Jimenez, Wingspan's Anti-Violence Program manager, left, and Wingspan volunteer Alex Lopez at a demonstration Nov. 18 at the corner of North Campbell Avenue and East Speedway.

For information on future locations, which will vary, contact Oscar Jimenez at ojimenez@wingspan.org.

Arizona Mormons Hold Vigil To Remember GLBT Suicide Victims

PHOENIX (Observer Update) - The Phoenix chapter of a Mormon gay rights group held a candlelight vigil on Friday to remember victims of suicide, The Arizona Republic reported.

On Top Magazine reported that about 40 members of the Phoenix Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender Coalition for Mormon Action gathered across from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' (the Mormons) Mesa Temple as the church celebrated its 31st annual Christmas Lights ceremony.

The event raised awareness for The Trevor Project, the California-based non-profit that runs the nation's only 24-hour, toll free confidential suicide hotline for gay and questioning youth, and Phoenix Affirmation, a local gay group that lobbies for greater acceptance from the Mormon Church.

The members snuffed out their candles to remember gay Mormons who had committed suicide. Bobby Parker, a Mormon who came out gay late in life, said he had considered several times taking his own life. "When I first came out I was sent out for reperative therapy to change me back to a heterosexual," he said.

Parker added that his group hopes "that there is just more tolerance among Mormons for gays." The Mormon Church recently softened its stand on being gay. An updated guidebook says gay men and lesbians are accepted in the church, so long as they remain celibate.

Pentagon: No Gays Or Lesbians Were Discharged Last Month

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PENTAGON (Observer Update) - o U.S. service members have been discharged for being openly gay in the month since the Defense Department adopted new rules surrounding the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, a Pentagon spokeswoman said.

Under new rules adopted Oct. 21, Defense Secretary Robert Gates put authority for signing off on dismissals in the hands of the three service secretaries. Before then, any commanding officer at a rank equivalent to a one-star general could discharge gay enlisted personnel under the 1993 law that prohibits gays from serving openly in uniform.

Pentagon spokeswoman Cynthia Smith told The Associated Press that no discharges have been approved since Oct. 21. Smith did not know if the absence of recent discharges was related to the new separation procedures. The Pentagon has not compiled monthly discharge figures for any other months this year, she said.

Based on historical trends, however, it appears the change, as well as moves by Gates and President Barack Obama to get Congress to repeal "don't ask, don't tell," has caused discharge rates to fall dramatically, said Aaron Belkin, executive director of the Palm Center, a pro-repeal think tank based at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

"Statistically, it would be extremely unlikely if we had a month in which there were no gay discharges," Belkin said, noting that 428 gay and lesbian service members were honorably discharged under the ban in 2009. "When you require a service secretary to sign off on a discharge, you are basically saying, 'We don't want any people in this category discharged unless there is an exceptional situation.'"

A month without "don't ask, don't tell" discharges was welcome news, said Aubrey Sarvis, executive director of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network. Still, the organization continues to hear daily from military personnel who are under

Continued on Page Two

Hate Crimes Down: Gays Still At Risk

WASHINGTON, DC (Observer Update) - U.S. hate crimes declined overall in 2009, according to a new FBI report, as did those motivated by bias against the victim's sexual orientation – but those attacks represented an increased percentage of total hate crimes, and long-term numbers indicate gays remain particularly vulnerable, reports advocate.com.

According to the FBI's Hate Crimes Statistics, 2009, participating law enforcement agencies around the nation reported 6,604 bias-related crimes involving 8,336 victims (some crimes involve multiple victims), down from 7,783 incidents and 9,691 victims in 2008. This drop came even though the number of agencies participating increased, from 13,690 to 14,222.

There were 1,436 crimes motivated by sexual orientation reported in 2009, down from 1,617 in 2008. These crimes did represent a larger percentage of hate crimes in 2009 than in the previous year – 18.5% versus 16.7%. The number of victims was 1,482 in 2009, 1,706 the previous year.

The FBI notes that as a result of last year's passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act, the bureau has begun gathering data on crimes motivated by actual or perceived gender and gender identity, and will incorporate that into future reports.

Gays remain more likely to be the target of hate crimes than other minorities, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, which fights hate groups and bias crimes. The winter issue of the center's Intelligence Report, released Monday to coincide with the FBI report, analyzed hate-crimes data from 1995 through 2008 and found that people who are gay or perceived to be are twice as likely to be the victim of a violent hate crime as African-Americans or Jews, more than four times as likely as Muslims, and 14 times as likely as Latinos.

Antigay activists are becoming more extreme in the face of advances by LGBT people, said Mark Potok, editor of Intelligence Report, which in the winter issue also profiles 18 virulently antigay organizations and debunks the myths they spread, such as that gays helped orchestrate the Holocaust.

"As Americans become more accepting of homosexuals, the most extreme elements of the antigay movement are digging in their heels and continuing to defame gays and lesbians with falsehoods that grow more incendiary by the day," Potok said. "The leaders of this movement may deny it, but it seems clear that their demonization of homosexuals plays a role in fomenting the violence, hatred, and bullying we're seeing."

A family member of the Tucson Gay Museum

UPDATE

McCain's DADT Blame Game

WASHINGTON, DC (Observer Update) - Arizona Sen. John McCain said the only reason the "don't ask, don't tell" repeal is a hot issue in Washington is due to a pandering presidential candidate looking for votes in 2008, reports advocate.com.

McCain said Sunday on CNN's Face the Nation, that the policy is not necessarily damaging to the military. Instead, he said, the issue was raised after an "inexperienced" then-Senator Barack Obama promised to repeal the law that bans gays and lesbians from serving openly in the military, according to the Washington Post.

McCain, who is leading the charge in the Senate to keep the 17-year-old law on the books, lost to now-President Barack Obama in the 2008 election.

Big Sale At Wingspan Dec. 3

TUCSON (Observer Update) - Check out Wingspan's Facebook page and Craig's List Friday, Dec. 3, for cool items you can buy, or just come on over from 1 to 4 p.m. that day for the big "garage sale" on our parking lot, 430 E. Seventh St.

The offices of Wingspan and the Eon Youth Lounge will be closed that day so we can clean out our storage unit over on the east side and truck the contents we can't use back for sale to you. Hey, our trash could just be your treasure.

We could use a couple of trucks and volunteers to help pack up and haul the stuff from the storage shed, as well as volunteers to help with the sale in the afternoon. If you would like to help out, e-mail wingspan@wingspan.org.

Out Artists At Club Congress

TUCSON (Observer Update) - Nationally touring LGBT artists Namoli Brennet and Eric Himan team up for a great night of music at Club Congress, 311 East Congress, Thursday, December 9 at 7 pm.

Local award-winning favorite Namoli Brennet just returned from an 8,000 mile tour

in support of her latest release, Black Crow.

Tulsa-based Eric Himan's soaring & soulful vocals have been compared to Tracy Chapman & John Mayer, and his latest release finds him branching out from his acoustic roots with a CD of solo piano/vocal tracks. Doors open at 7 pm, and admission is $5. 21 & over.

Boys R Us Presents A Lil' Queer Holiday

TUCSON (Observer Update) - It's time for Boys R Us to closeout 2010 with A Lil' Queer Holiday! Come watch the Boys in all their holiday cheer at Hotel Congress on Friday December 3rd.

The festivities begin with a matinee for all you early birds. Doors at 6 pm. Show at 7 pm.

And for all you night owl, doors at 9 pm & show at 10 pm. General Admission is $8.00. VIP seating is $12.00. Bring a can of food and receive $1.00 off your admisssion.

All donations will go to the community food bank. For more info go to tucsondragkings.com or call 304-2155.

World AIDS Day Marked In Tucson

TUCSON (Observer Update) - Campaigners from around the world joined up World AIDS Day, December 1, commemorating the theme of universal access and human rights.

This year the World AIDS Campaign worked to promote the Light for Rights campaign.

The Light For Rights campaign strives to underscore this year's focus on HIV and human rights by encouraging people in cities around the world to dim the lights on key landmarks to remember the devastating affect AIDS has had on us all, and to turn back on the lights to illuminate the fundamental rights we all share.

In Tucson, a celebration of the fight against HIV/AIDS featured free HIV testing, guest speakers and performances by Boys R Us, Jaime J., Switchblade Parade, On the Mark, the Pinche Blues Band at the Club Congress.

Pentagon: No Gays Or Lesbians Were Discharged Last Month

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

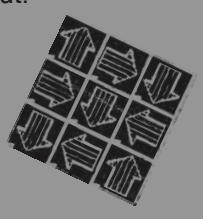
investigation for being gay and face the possibility of being fired.

"We have clients who are still under investigation, who are still having to respond, and in fact we have a client under investigation right now under suicide watch," Sarvis said. "So 'don't ask, don't tell' has not gone away."

Gates announced the change requiring the top civilian officials with the armed forces to personally approve "don't ask, don't tell" discharges after a federal judge in California ordered the military to immediately stop enforcing its ban on openly gay troops, declaring the 17-year-old policy unconstitutional.

An appeals court subsequently froze the judge's order until it could consider the broader constitutional issues in the case. Putting responsibility for firing gay personnel in the hands of the three service secretaries was not designed to slow the rate of discharges, Gates said at the time. Rather, concentrating that authority was meant to ensure uniformity and care in enforcement at a time of legal uncertainty, he said in a memo outlining the new rules.

Gates since has urged the Senate to repeal "don't ask, don't tell" before a new Congress takes office in January. He said this week he plans to release a months long study on how lifting the gay service ban would affect the armed forces and could be carried out.



the unlikely forum for Biggest Loser trainer Jillian Michaels to announce that she's bisexual.

OBSERVER

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Informing the Community
The Observer

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Study: AIDS Pill Helps Gay Men Avoid HIV Infection

Tucson Observer Archives

WASHINGTON, DC (Observer Update) - Scientists have an exciting breakthrough in the fight against AIDS. A pill already used to treat HIV infection turns out to be a powerful weapon in protecting healthy gay men from catching the virus, a global study found, reported the AP on 365Gay.com.

Daily doses of Truvada cut the risk of infection by 44 percent when given with condoms, counseling and other prevention services. Men who took their pills most faithfully had even more protection, up to 73 percent. Researchers had feared the pills might give a false sense of security and make men less likely to use condoms or to limit their partners, but the opposite happened – risky sex declined.

"I am encouraged by this announcement of groundbreaking research on HIV prevention," said a statement from President Barack Obama. "While more work is needed, these kinds of studies could mark the beginning of a new era in HIV prevention."

The results are "a major advance" that can help curb the epidemic in gay men, said Dr. Kevin Fenton, AIDS prevention chief at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But he warned they may not apply to people exposed to HIV through male-female sex, drug use or other ways. Studies in those groups are under way now.

The news came as UNAIDS announced that the global epidemic was slowing - new cases dropped nearly 20 percent over the last decade and about 33 million people are living with HIV now. Health officials credit part of the decline to wider condom use, and on Tuesday the Vatican said that using a condom is a lesser evil than infecting

expanding what some see as Pope Benedict XVI's softening stance on this issue.

"This is a great day in the fight against AIDS … a major milestone," said a statement from Mitchell Warren, head of the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition, a nonprofit group that works on HIV prevention.

Because Truvada is already on the market, the CDC is rushing to develop guidelines for doctors using it for HIV prevention, and urged people to wait until those are ready.

"It's not time for gay and bisexual men to throw out their condoms," Fenton said. The pill "should never be seen as a first line of defense against HIV."

As a practical matter, price could limit use. The pills cost from $5,000 to $14,000 a year in the United States, but only 39 cents a day in some poor countries where they are sold in generic form.

Whether insurers or government health programs should pay for them is one of the tough issues to be sorted out, and cost-effectiveness analyses should help, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

"This is an exciting finding," but it "is only one study in one specific study population," so its impact on others is unknown, Fauci said.

His institute sponsored the study with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Results were reported at a news conference Tuesday and published online by the New England Journal of Medicine.

It is the third AIDS prevention victory in about a year. In September 2009, scientists announced that a vaccine they are now trying to improve had protected one in 3 people from getting HIV in a study in Thailand. In July, research in South Africa showed that a vaginal gel spiked with an AIDS drug could cut nearly in half a woman's chances of getting HIV from an infected partner.

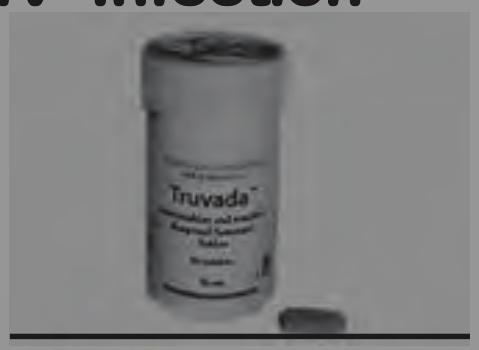
Gay and bisexual men account for nearly half of the more than 1 million Americans living with HIV. Worldwide, more than 7,000 new infections occur each day. Unlike in the U.S., only 5 to 10 percent of global cases involve sex between men.

"The condom is still the first line of defense," because it also prevents other sexually spread diseases and unwanted pregnancies, said the study leader, Dr. Robert M. Grant of the Gladstone Institutes, a private foundation affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco.

But many men don't or won't use condoms all the time, so researchers have been testing other prevention tools.

AIDS drugs already are used to prevent infection in health care workers accidentally exposed to HIV, and in babies whose pregnant mothers are on the medication. Taking these drugs before exposure to the virus may keep it from taking hold, just as taking malaria pills in advance can prevent that disease when someone is bitten by an infected mosquito.

The strategy showed great promise in monkey studies using tenofovir (brand name Viread) and



emtricitabine, or FTC (Emtriva), sold in combination as Truvada by California-based Gilead Sciences Inc.

The company donated Truvada for the study, which involved about 2,500 men at high risk of HIV infection in Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, South Africa, Thailand and the United States (San Francisco and Boston). The foreign sites were chosen because of high rates of HIV infection and diverse populations.

More than 40 percent of participants had taken money for sex at least once. At the start of the study, they had 18 partners on average; that dropped to around 6 by the end.

The men were given either Truvada or dummy pills. All had monthly visits to get HIV testing, more pills and counseling. Every six months, they were tested for other sexually spread diseases and treated as needed.

After a median followup of just over a year, there were 64 HIV infections among the 1,248 men on dummy pills, and only 36 among the 1,251 on Truvada.

Among men who took their pills at least half the time, determined through interviews and pill counts, the risk of infection fell by 50 percent. For those who took pills on 90 percent or

Continued on Page Four

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A NEW DON

By James Livezey Kulick

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Kimpton Tops With G/L Travelers

NEW YORK (Observer Update) - Advocate.com reported that Kimpton has pulled ahead of the W as the hotel group that does the best job of promoting itself to the gay and lesbian travel market, according to a new survey.

Of the more than 4,700 people surveyed by Community Marketing, 13% chose Kimpton. Starwood's W chain came in second with 11%, trailed by Hilton, Hyatt, and Marriott, according to USA Today.

Kimpton and Starwood tied in 2009. In 2008, Starwood took top honors.

Community Marketing has been tracking the gay and lesbian travel business since 1992. Senior projects director David Paisley says Kimpton has clearly taken the lead in the gay and lesbian market.

"Of all the hotel brands, [Kimpton is] the most active in LGBT community," Paisley told USA Today. "They have a website, they sponsor tons of events and they advertise in gay and lesbian media. W is very active and well respected, but they did fall behind."

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Savage takes On-Air Swipe At CNN

KYRA PHILLIPS DAN SAVAGE

SINGLED OUT FOR HATE CRIMES

ATLANTA (Observer Update) - Dan Savage, columnist and founder of the It Gets Better project, appeared on CNN to discuss recent hate crime news, and he took the opportunity to challenge CNN and other networks for giving antigay voices a platform.

According to Media Matters, which provided the transcript below, Savage spoke with Kyra Phillips of CNN Newsroom about new reports including one that shows LGBT people are far more likely to be victimized by hate crimes. Savage called out the media for giving voice to antigay leaders like Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, which the Southern Poverty Law Center has labeled as a hate group.

PHILLIPS: You know, it's difficult to say what would be a solution [to anti-gay hate crimes]. But, could we start with more hate crimes legislation where bullies are prosecuted more severely?

SAVAGE: We can start with that, we can also start with... really, we need a cultural reckoning around gay and lesbian issues. There was once two sides to the race debate. There was once a side, you could go on television and argue for segregation, you could argue against interracial marriage, against the Civil Rights Act, against extending voting rights to African Americans and that used to be treated as one side, you know, one legitimate side of a pressing national debate and it isn't anymore. And we really need to reach that point with gay and lesbian issues. There are no 'two sides' to the issues about gay and lesbian rights.

And right now one side is really using dehumanizing rhetoric. The Southern Poverty Law Center labels these groups as hate groups and yet the leaders of these groups, people like Tony Perkins, are welcomed onto networks like CNN to espouse hate directed at gays and lesbians. And similarly hateful people who are targeting Jews or people of color or anyone else would not be welcome to spew their bile on networks like CNN and then that really – we really have to start there. We have to start with that type of cultural reckoning.

Study: AIDS Pill Helps Gay Men Avoid HIV Infection

CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE

more days, risk fell 73 percent. Tests of drug levels in the blood confirmed that more consistent pill-taking gave better protection.

The treatment was safe. Side effects were similar in both groups except for nausea, which was more common in the drug group for the first month but not after that. Unintended weight loss also was more common in the drug group, but it occurred in very few. Further study is needed on possible long-term risks.

What's next?

All participants will get a chance to take Truvada in an 18-month extension of the study. Researchers want to see whether men will take the pill more faithfully if they know it helps, and whether that provides better protection. About 20,000 people are enrolled in other studies testing Truvada or its component drugs around the world.

The government also will review all ongoing prevention studies, such as those of vaccines or anti-AIDS gels, and consider whether any people currently assigned to get dummy medicines should now get Truvada since it has proved effective in gay men.

Gilead also will discuss with public health and regulatory agencies the possibility and wisdom of seeking approval to market Truvada for prevention. The company has made no decision on that, said Dr. Howard Jaffe, president of Gilead Foundation, the company's philanthropic arm. Doctors can prescribe it for this purpose now if patients are willing to pay for it, and some already do.

Some people have speculated that could expose Gilead to new liability concerns, if someone took the pill and then sued if it did not protect against infection.

"The potential for having an intervention like this that has never been broadly available before raises new questions. It is something we would have to discuss internally and externally," Jaffe said.

Until the CDC's detailed advice is available, the agency said gay and bisexual men should:

Use condoms consistently and correctly.

Get tested to know their HIV status and that of their partners, and get tested and treated for syphilis, gonorrhea and other infections that raise the risk of HIV.

Get counseling to reduce drug use and risky sex.

Reduce their number of sexual partners.

Much Ado About Nothing

by Jack Melichar

Bound for Glory, Nine Hundred Miles, This Land Is Your Land. We all know them and we've all sung them - songs about the open road, fighting for one's rights, and the beauty of nature. Now meet the man that brought them all to life. As he looked for work and his next meal, Woody Gutherie sang the stories of a whole nation determined to survive the Great Depression. Join The Arizona Theatre Company in discovering and celebrating this great American who gave our country its voice.

Woody Gutherie's **AMERICAN SONG** is an exuberant musical celebration of America. It tells the life of the rambling folk singer through his words and music.

The New York Times said it "manages to find both the high beauty and the earthly humor of Guthrie's love affair with America." (12/9/98)

The play presented by the Arizona Theatre Company opens at the Temple of Music and Art on December 3. For ticket information, call (520) 884-8210.

BALBOA HEIGHTS

Last week I had the pleasure of attending the annual Thanksgiving party sponsored by TKO for the children living in Balboa Heights. Over 60 children were fed as well as some parents. Leftovers were used to feed several families in the area. Special thanks need to go to Deb Waltman who pulled the whole enterprise together, with the help of Wendy Strozeski, Hillary Madrid and Sammy (sorry Sammy. I couldn't find your last name). In addition, to all those who contributed food, a very special "thank you".

Unfortunately, the Marty Birdman Center in the park where the dinner was held may soon be closed because of "the budget crisis" (more on this shortly). This would mean that about 100 kids would have no place to go after school and lose the help they are getting. Another positive program to help children may be given the ax because of the stupidity of the city fathers.

I recognize the fact that there is a budget crisis, but I am also aware that much of the crisis is of the city's own making.

For example, who was the idiot who decided to put forward a proposal to raise the salaries of the mayor and city council members while at the same time they were squealing like stuck hogs that the sales tax had to be raised to cover city services - especially police and firemen? Where was the money to come from to pay them more for screwing up - perhaps yet another tax increase? It's too bad they had cried about this wolf in the past, and the wolf did not appear. It's equally unfortunate that this time it did.

Is there really no choice but to, once again, make the children pay for adult stupidity?

I believe that there are other options. Why, for example is it necessary to send a fire truck along when an ambulance is requested? Perhaps they feel the patient may need hosing down.

Why are two or three police cars required when an old lady is pulled over? I know that many of "Tucson's Finest" are severely overweight - well, O.K. fat - but are they that inept?

It seems like a typical knee jerk response from Arizona's politicians. Take away programs that will help children. Hell, they can't vote anyway so what's to loose. Never mind that the state will soon be number 1 in something. We'll teach Mississippi how to really stick it to the kids.

Finally Leslie Nielsen, star of Airplane and Naked Gun died of complications of pneumonia on Sunday. Before he turned to comedy, he had a longtime career as a dramatic actor. Nielsen was 84. Thanks for the laughs, Leslie.

Marines Resistant To DADT Repeal

PENTAGON (Observer Update) - The Pentagon's much-anticipated DADT repeal survey won't be released until Tuesday, but The Washington Post reports Marines have the strongest resistance to overturning the ban on openly gay soldiers serving in the military.

Advocate.com reports early reports suggest the majority of the 400,000 active duty troops and reservists surveyed have no strong objections to repealing the "don't ask, don't tell" law. But reservations are strongest among Marines, an attitude shared by their top leader, Commandant Gen. James Amos.

Amos has said he doesn't think the government should lift the ban during times of war.

From the Associated Press article: "The Corps is the youngest, smallest and arguably the most tight-knit of the enlisted forces, with many of its roughly 200,000 members hailing from small towns and rural areas in the South. Marines are unabashed about distinguishing themselves from the rest of the military, with a warrior ethos and a religious zeal for their branch of service that they liken to a brotherhood."

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DOJ Appeals Lesbian's Reinstatement To Air Force

Former Major Margaret Witt

SEATTLE (Observer Update) - A lesbian flight nurse discharged under "don't ask, don't tell" can rejoin the Air Force Reserve, even as the government appeals a judge's ruling that returned her to the job, her lawyers said, reported the AP on 365Gay.com.

U.S. District Judge Ronald Leighton ruled in September that former Maj. Margaret Witt must be reinstated because her dismissal advanced no legitimate military goals and thus violated her constitutional rights. The Justice Department appealed that ruling to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

But government lawyers did not ask the appeals judges to freeze the lower court's ruling while the appeal proceeds - and Witt's lawyers said that means she can be reinstated.

"I am thrilled to be able to serve in the Air Force again," Witt said in a written statement released by the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington state. "The men and women in the unit are like family members to me, and I've been waiting a long time to rejoin them."

Witt was suspended in 2004 and subsequently discharged after the Air Force learned she had been in a long-term relationship with a civilian woman. She sued to get her job back.

Leighton initially upheld her firing, but in 2008 a three-judge 9th Circuit panel said military members could not be discharged under "don't ask" unless their dismissal furthered military goals such as troop morale or unit cohesion. It sent the case back to Leighton, who ruled that Witt's firing actually hurt morale in her unit.

If Witt is reinstated, she would be serving openly at a time when the military's policy on gays is in disarray. President Obama and Defense Secretary Robert Gates want to end the ban, but say it should be done through Congress, not the courts. A federal judge in California has declared the 1993 "don't ask, don't tell" law unconstitutional - a ruling the DOJ is also appealing - and in the meantime, the Pentagon has issued new guidelines that have drastically cut the numbers of gays being dismissed under the policy.

The Pentagon plans to release a study on how lifting the gay service ban would affect the armed forces. The Justice Department did not immediately say why it did not seek a stay of Leighton's ruling. The Air Force Reserve at Joint Base Lewis-McChord south of Seattle, where Witt was based, did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

"It's indicative of the effort the White House is making to thread the needle on 'don't ask, don't tell,'" said Chris Neff, deputy executive director of the Palm Center, a pro-repeal think tank based at the University of California, Santa Barbara. "They're holding the line that they need to continue to appeal these, but they are taking an extra measure to address this policy and try to make it moot. This is the first White House that has really made an effort to keep gays in the military."

Despite being excited to rejoin the Air Force, Witt said she was disappointed the government was appealing at all.

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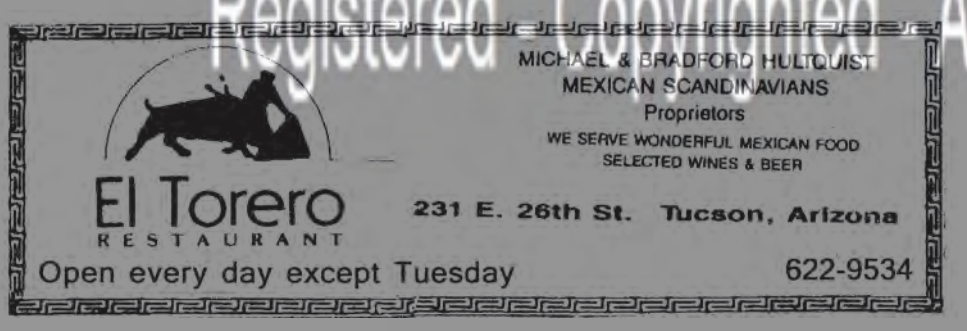

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COMMENTARY. . .

by Rebecca Juro

On The Day Of Remembrance

A few years ago, I wrote a Transgender Day of Remembrance post for Bilerico Project which connected the issues of employment rights and hate crimes. With today's economy and political situation being what they are, I think it's time to make that point again, but there's more to it than simply access to gainful employment and therefore economic sustainability. There's also the matter of what we're teaching those who come after us.

LGBT kids who grew up during the visibly and at times aggressively homophobic Bush administration are now reaching adulthood to face the reality that they're not going to be welcome or considered an equal in many places or by many people simply because of who they love or how they present themselves to the world. Unsurprisingly, many don't much like what they see ahead for themselves. Horrifically, too many are choosing not to face that future at all.

When we think of hate crimes, we appropriately think of crimes involving physical violence. Yet, what is the effect on a newly-out young person to know that his or her own government doesn't consider them worthy of picking up a gun and dying for their country, to be considered for a job on the basis of their qualifications, or even marry the person they love - basic civil rights all of their straight peers take for granted? And all for something about themselves which they can't change, even if they might decide they want to.

Is it any wonder we're seeing so many LGBT young people dying, not only from actual violent crimes committed against them, but also by their own hand when confronted with a culture and and a government which perceives them and their dreams for the future as second-class or even as an actual threat to America?

The message we as a nation are sending the next generation of LGBT Americans is that they, their lives, and their dreams are not valued as highly in this country as everyone else's are. Since the election of Barack Obama and strong Democratic majorities in Congress in 2008, that message has been cast in even sharper relief as leaders who are seen as basically progressive politically such as President Obama and the Democratic Party leadership, the people we're supposed to be able to depend on to stand up for us in government, can't even get it together enough come out and say that two loving people who want to share their lives together and have their government recognize that relationship should be able to do so and that LGBT Americans should have the same opportunities for success in our country as all other citizens - no matter what anyone else thinks.

So President Obama finally picked up the phone this week to advocate for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell". That's great. Thing is, it's less than a drop in the bucket when compared with not only the agenda he promised to take on going in, but with the ongoing damage which must be undone that is destroying the hopes and dreams of our youth.

It's one thing to make supportive videos promising that things will get better, but it's quite another to put principle ahead of political convenience when it really counts and do what must be done to protect the futures of ourselves and our children, remembering that we are all Americans first and foremost.

I've said it in anger, now I'll say it in earnest: It's time for President Obama and Congress to put up or shut up on LGBT rights. This is no longer about politics or even religious values. Their cowardice and bigotry is costing lives - lives we cannot afford to lose. While there may be no crime in the legal sense being committed here, the negative social and cultural message being sent our youth through our laws and government is unquestionably powered by anti-LGBT hate and undeniably enhanced by the failure of those who claim to be our advocates in government to stand up to it.

When the loss of lives is factored in, those who might perhaps still be alive if their assailants or they themselves hadn't internalized the anti-LGBT hate and bigotry that's still far too much a part of our national culture, with still far too few in positions of power and influence willing to speak out against it much less actually take real and meaningful steps to combat it, it's nothing short of a political hate crime being committed against the American LGBT community as a whole, and against our youth in particular.

It's time for politicians and activists alike to start acting like serious adults when it comes to LGBT rights and to the greater issue of creating an America where every American truly is equal, in life, in law, and in their freedom to reach for their dreams.

This is a lesson adults need to learn from our kids. We're hurting their futures, and by extension, our national future as well. We're telling these kids with one side of our mouths that it gets better, but with the other we're demonstrating clearly that most of us have no interest in doing the hard work necessary to actually make it better - to make sure those encouraging words have the bite of truth, the credibility that comes with words and ideas which mesh with what one sees and hears every day.

We can no longer say we care about all of our kids if we're going continue to allow our legal system to pick and choose which kid's American Dream will be protected and which will be vilified on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. We must confront the reality that while we ourselves grew up and came out into a cultural environment that didn't really allow us to expect much than what little we already had, LGBT youth now connect outside of their own communities and social circles in ways that weren't yet even dreamed of when we were their age. They have access to the resources of the Internet to learn more and understand themselves and those around them in ways that just weren't possible for us twenty or thirty years ago.

Today's American youth are better informed, better educated, better protected, and diversity is more accepted in general - and with that comes the consciousness of that much more to lose. Our youth are the harbingers of the change we seek, the change that must happen in this country if we are to offer these kids a future worthy of looking forward to, of a country which truly does value the content of one's character over the color of their skin, their sexuality, their gender identity, or any other equally irrelevant consideration. In the end, it's our youth who will truly usher that American Dream into reality. In the meantime, however, it's up to us as adults, regardless of our own personal social, cultural, and political niches, to start setting a much better example.

If we, as a nation, really want to be able to say we're doing everything possible to protect our youth, we simply have to get this done.

(Rebecca Juro is a writer and columnist for the Bilerico Project, from which this is reprinted)

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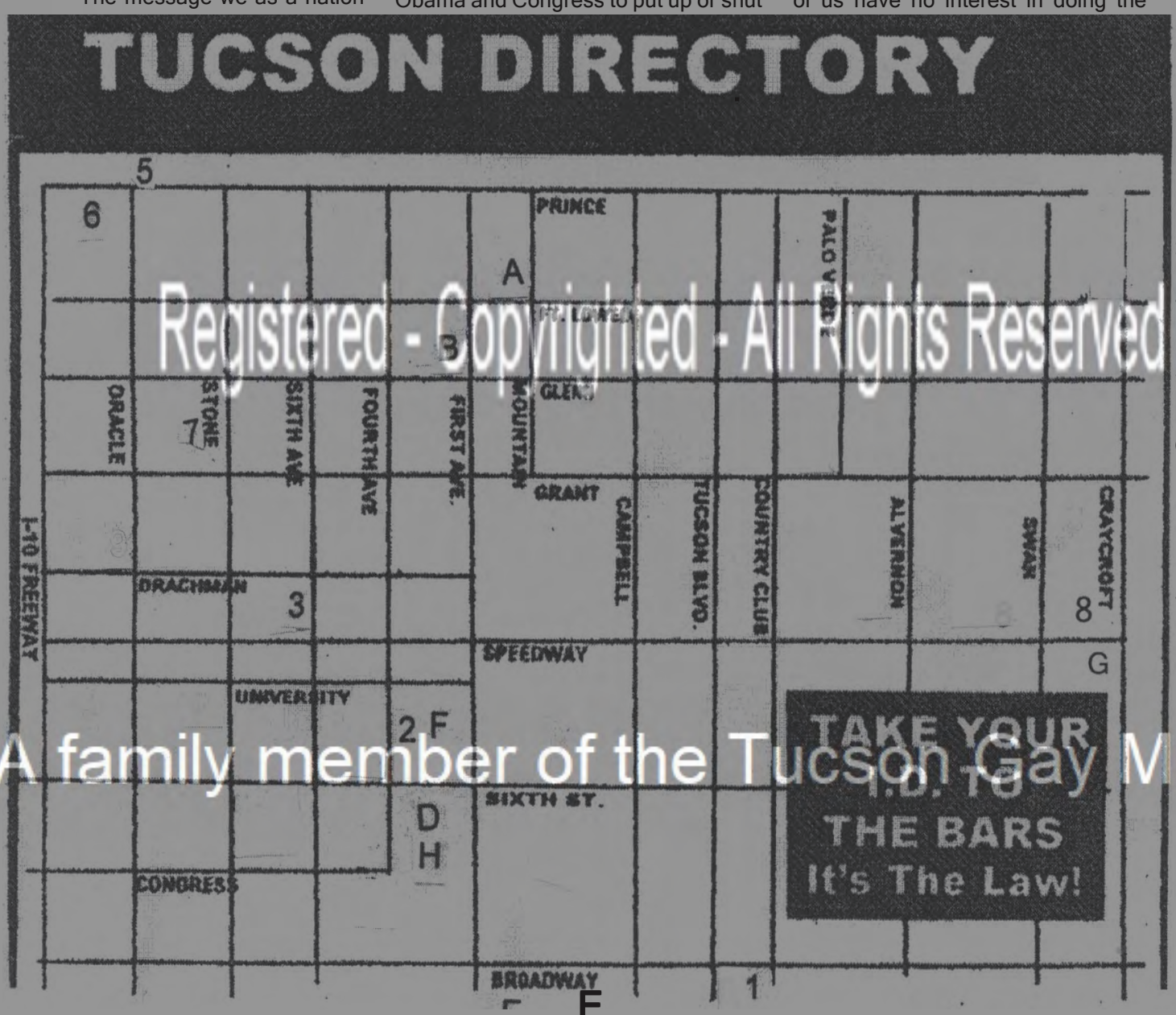

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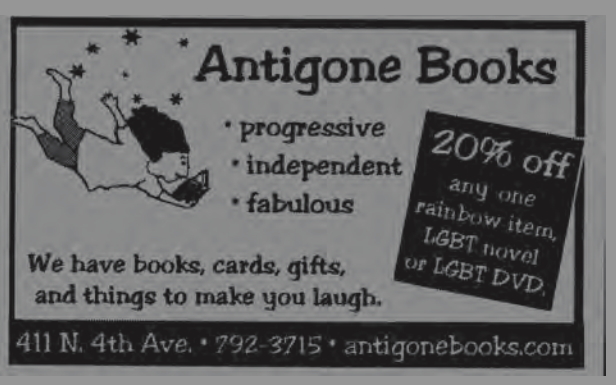

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Another Party Night At Brodie's

PHOTOS BY JORG

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Poet's Corner

PRIVATE MURPHY
by Ron Rose - Tucson

Shoot straight, Private Murphy
I don't care if you are Gay.
My life is in the balance
Could this be judgement Day?
I am bleeding and I'm hazy,
In shock, I'm fading fast.
So, save me Private Murphy
This day may be my last.
Again please, Private Murphy
Shoot straight, if you can
Straight or Gay, I really need you
I'm just a mortal man.

Tucson Observer Archives

The Way I Saw It. . .by Gary Clark

NOTE: Before his untimely death, Gary Clark had worked on this newspaper for nearly 40 years as graphic artist and Entertainment Editor. Part of his heritage was producing a weekly humorous drawing of life 'as he saw it'. It is amazing that most of these drawings are as funny and entertaining today as they were in past years. We have decided to open the 'vaults' on these faultless viewpoints. Enjoy!

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AROUND THE GAY GLOBE. . .

U.N.: AIDS Epidemic Slowing Globally

UNITED NATIONS (Observer Update) HIV Plus Magazine reports that safe-sex education and condom use have contributed to bringing the rate of new HIV infections down by 19%, the UNAIDS reported.

The United Nations' agency on studying and fighting the epidemic said the figure is in contrast to 1999, when the HIV rate was highest. Additionally, nearly 20% fewer people are dying of AIDS complications than in 2004 due to new treatment, according to NPR.

UNAIDS executive director Michel Sibidé told NPR that 56 countries have stabilized or even slowed the rate of infection, and that the organization has extended its goal of ensuring that all infected people have access to lifesaving drugs from 2010 to 2015. In five years the number of people in treatment has gone from 500,000 to 5 million.

But even with all of these advances, 10 million people around the world are waiting for treatment, and funding for UNAIDS, which provides medications to many, is facing fiscal setbacks.

"We have 5 million people on treatment – if we stop, these people will start dying six months from now," Sibidé told NPR. "Most of them don't know what will happen to them. And most of them are from the poorest segments of society."

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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. Hair of dog special $1.50 well bloody mary, screwdriver,,Cape Cod, salty dog or margarita.

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. Girlz Nite .75 for your favorite well drink or domestic drafts 6-8pm. Ladies only Texas Hold 'Em Poker 6 p.m. Y-Not Karaoke with Anna at 8pm. - Drink specials during karaoke $1 Michelob Ultra or Bud Light.

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.

COLORS - Open 4-10pm. Happy Hour 4-7pm, $3.75 Skyy cocktails, $3.00 Domestics and Well. ½ price appetizers 4-6. Full menu served until 10pm. Nightly dinner specials.

COYOTE MOON PUB –Open 3pm. Happy Hour All Day $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Pitchers. Boyz Night - .75 for your favorite well drink or domestic draft beer for men 6-8pm. Karaoke with Anna at 8pm drink specials during karaoke $1 Michelob Ultra or Bud Light..

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. Latin Thursday: Latin music 8pm to close. $2,50 well margaritas. $3 Mexican beers, $3.50 Jose Cuervo.

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 Cosmos.

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. Shots shot specials 8-close.. Dance lessons with Lawrence 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 vocals and piano stylings of Susan Artemis 6-9pm.

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 cheeseburger & 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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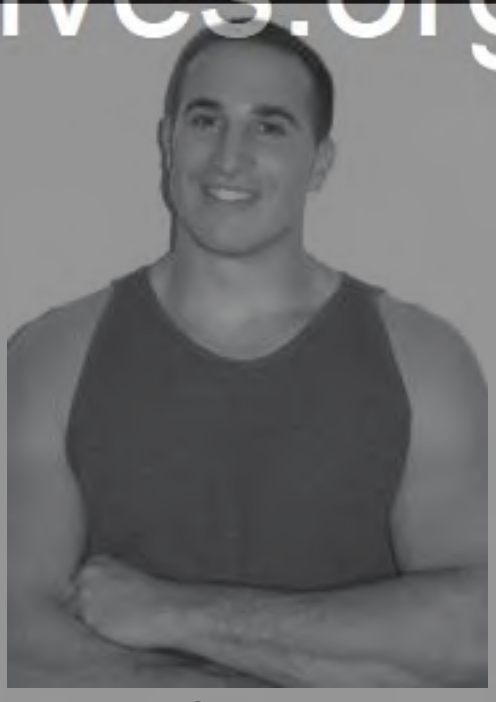

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Fox News Won't Air DADT Ad

NEW YORK (Observer Update) - Fox News, the Robert Murdoch-owned television network, has rejected an ad that features Canadian and Australian military leaders talking about the lifting of their gay bans as nonevents.

In the ad, Major General Walter Semianiw, chief of military personnel in the Canadian Forces, says: "There is no negative impact of having men and women of any sexual orientation fighting together, be it in Afghanistan, be it in Iraq."

"The lifting of the homosexual ban is a bit like Y2K. It was a nonevent, and it continues to be a nonevent," Major General Simon Willis (retired), the former head of defense personnel in the Australian Defense Force, says. (A photo from the video is shown above this article.)

Both men made their comments during a May 19 panel in Washington D.C.

The ad, titled Business as Usual, is produced by the Palm Center, a think tank at the University of California at Santa Barbara that studies "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the Pentagon policy that bans gay and bisexual troops from serving openly. The group's director, Aaron Belkin, said he hoped the network would reconsider.

"I am surprised that Fox News would reject an ad featuring allied generals, given that both host Bill O'Reilly and guest contributor Liz Cheney have expressed support for open gay service," Belkin said.

According to watchdog group Media Matters for America, Fox News objected to the ad's opening line: "As the military prepares to end 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' our NATO allies have told us what to expect … Business as usual."

"'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' is still on hold, so claiming the military is planning repeal is incorrect," an email from Fox News' ad department reads.

Kamala Harris Victory Over Anti-Gay Marriage Steve Cooley Cheered

KAMALA HARRIS STEVE COOLEY

SACRAMENTO (Observer Update) - LGBT groups are cheering Kamala Harris' victory over anti-gay marriage Steve Cooley.

Harris, the current district attorney of San Francisco, beat Los Angeles District Attorney Cooley to become California's next attorney general. Cooley, a Republican who said as attorney general he would defend California's gay marriage ban, Proposition 8, conceded the race to Harris.

"Today's decision in the attorney general race means that equality triumphed in every California statewide race," the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER), the group formed to challenge the constitutionality of Proposition 8, said in a statement.

Harris, who enjoyed the endorsement of Equality California, the state's largest gay advocate, promised to "never defend the anti-LGBT Proposition 8 in federal court."

"We're thrilled that our state has elected a governor and an attorney general who will refuse to defend Proposition 8 in court," Geoff Kors, executive director of Equality California, said.

An appeals court will hear oral arguments on a lower court's ruling that found the law unconstitutional on December 6. Governor-elect Jerry Brown, as attorney general, refused to defend the law in court.

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