

## Gay couples get victory in Vermont

### ■ State's Legislature first to approve 'civil unions.'

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — Lawmakers gave final approval Tuesday to legislation making Vermont the first state to grant gay couples nearly all of the rights and benefits of marriage.

The state House voted 79-68 for the "civil unions" bill, which was approved by the Senate last week.

Democratic Gov. Howard Dean said he will sign it, possibly as soon as Thursday.

"I think the powerful message is that in Vermont, we tend to value people for who they are, not what they are," Dean said.

Three gay couples and their lawyers, who sued in 1997 when they were denied marriage licenses, watched in the crowded House chamber as the final roll was called.

Stacy Jolles and Nina Beck stood cradling their 5-month-old son, Seth. Peter Harrigan stood embracing Stan Baker, who held a small necklace from which his parents' wedding rings dangled. And Holly Putterbaugh held hands with Lois Farnham, who wiped tears from her eyes.

"This isn't marriage, but it's a huge and powerful bundle of rights that we've finally gotten," Baker said.

The bill came about after the Vermont Supreme Court unanimously ruled in December that gay couples were being unconstitu-

tionally denied the rights and benefits of marriage.

The court gave the Legislature time to decide whether to let gays marry or to create some kind of domestic partnership. Lawmakers opted for a parallel system for gays, creating what they called civil unions.

After the bill takes effect July 1, couples will be able to go to their town clerks for licenses. Then they will have their unions certified by a justice of the peace, judge or member of the clergy.

Breakups will be in family court, just as divorces are, although they will be called dissolutions.

The more than 300 benefits that the state confers on married couples now will flow to same-sex couples, including the ability to make medical decisions on behalf of partners, inherit from each other without hefty taxes and protection from having to testify against one another.

But there are responsibilities, as well. For example, same-sex partners will have to assume each other's debt and pay child support.

Civil unions will not entitle couples to benefits bestowed by the federal government in areas such as Social Security and immigration. And most states probably will not recognize civil unions.

Still, no state has ever gone so far in recognizing gay relationships.

"I think this definitely places Vermont in the forefront in this country, places Vermont on par with Nordic and European countries and Canada," said Beth Robinson, a lawyer who argued the

*"I think the powerful message is that in Vermont, we tend to value people for who they are, not what they are."*

Howard Dean  
Vermont governor

gay couples' case before the Vermont Supreme Court.

Opponents in the Legislature said they were being asked to grant special rights to people whose lifestyles they could not support.

"If this bill passes, this day shall live in infamy throughout the country and throughout the world. This is against natural law," said Republican Rep. Henry Gray.

Supporters argued that traditional marriages between men and women would not be undermined if gays were granted the same rights.

"May we be the last generation of gay and lesbian Vermonters who have formed our committed relationships without the possibility of a law that grants us our rights, benefits and responsibilities," said Rep. William Lippert, the only openly gay member of the Legislature.

## Criticism of Reno continues

### ■ Meanwhile, Elian and his family move to a secluded place and plan to have schoolmates visit.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Elian Gonzalez and his Cuban family moved Tuesday to a secluded location on Maryland's Eastern Shore as the Clinton administration arranged to have four playmates visit him.

In a closed-door meeting, Attorney General Janet Reno failed to quiet Republican criticism of her decision to use force to reunite father and son.

Reno told 13 senators that the possibility of firearms in the house of Elian's Florida relatives was a key consideration for the military-style raid, participants said.

While several Democrats praised her performance, Republican senators emerged from the session with fresh criticism of Reno and the pre-dawn raid in Miami.

"Many of the questions were not adequately answered," said Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., who had arranged the meeting.

Lott announced hearings into the raid next week by the Senate Judiciary Committee — and suggested that Elian's father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, would be among those sought for testimony. He conceded, however, that Gonzalez probably couldn't be compelled to testify, given his status as a Cuban citizen.

Members of both parties said the exchanges with Reno had been cordial, but that criticism was freely expressed by many attendees.

Meanwhile, U.S. marshals moved Elian, his father, stepmother and half brother from the apartment at nearby Andrews Air Force Base, where they had stayed since Saturday night, to an estate at Aspen Institute's Wye River Conference Center to await court action over whether Elian should be allowed to return to Cuba.

State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said that, at the father's request, four playmates of Elian — each accompanied by an adult — will be allowed to come from Cuba to visit him for about two weeks. A teacher and cousin, previously granted visas, planned to fly to the United States today.

The Rev. Joan Brown Campbell of the National Council of Churches, a supporter of the father's effort to be reunited with his son, said the children were being brought here to create "a sense of normalcy for him about the life he has led and will lead."

President Clinton, meanwhile, said Elian's reunion with his father, nearly five months after the boy's rescue in the Atlantic, "was long overdue." He urged that the family be given "the space it needs to heal its wounds and strengthen its bonds."

Speaking at an unrelated White House ceremony, Clinton also praised the federal agents who swooped in and removed the 6-year-old boy from the Miami house on Saturday morning for a "very, very difficult job to do with no easy choices."

## Seven hurt in zoo shooting

### Teen-ager arrested; officials call for gun control

WASHINGTON (AP) — Police arrested a 16-year-old boy Tuesday in a shooting at the National Zoo that wounded seven youths and stunned visitors to one of the capital's most popular tourist attractions.

The teen-ager was taken into custody 24 hours after the shooting at the home of a relative in Northeast Washington, Assistant Police Chief Terrance Gainer said.

The suspect was taken into custody without incident, and a shotgun was recovered at the scene, Gainer said. He was charged with assault with intent to kill.

Police Cmdr. Peter Newsham said at a news conference that authorities would attempt to charge the youth as an adult.

Officials had said the weapon used in the shootings was most likely a 9 mm handgun, but none was found. But Gainer said he believed ammunition used in a 9 mm handgun was recovered.

The investigation into the shootings continued, but "we're still operating under the presumption there

was one gunman, one gun," Gainer added.

The shootings prompted calls Tuesday from local and federal officials for stricter gun controls, but they insisted the National Zoo and the capital's other tourist attractions are safe.

Mayor Anthony Williams said more must be done to reduce teen-agers' access to guns and discourage them from resorting to deadly force to resolve conflicts.

"Instead of reaching for a bottle or a rock," as children used to do, "you're now reaching for guns," Williams said.

President Clinton echoed that theme during a White House event on hate crimes.

"It should be obvious that we can do more, and we must do more," Clinton said, calling the shootings "a senseless act."

Seven children between the ages of 11 and 16 were shot Monday following a fight at the zoo, which was crowded with thousands of people at an annual black family celebration.

## World and Nation Datelines

### ■ Netherlands

#### Prosecutors request further delay in bombing trial

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Scottish prosecutors Tuesday requested a further delay in the trial of two Libyans accused in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, after the defense submitted new evidence and a list of more than a hundred witnesses less than two weeks before proceedings were to start.

If granted by the special Scottish court at Camp Zeist, a former U.S. air base 45 miles east of The Hague, the trial could be bumped back several weeks — its third postponement since the original starting date of June 7, 1999.

Proceedings were scheduled to begin May 3 following two defense-requested delays since Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi surrendered Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi and Lamien Khalifa Fhimah last year to stand trial for the murder of 270 people, including 189 Americans, killed in the Dec. 21, 1988, bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Prosecutors said the delay was needed to help them prepare to deal with 119 new witnesses and further evidence submitted by the defense on April 20.

### ■ Iran

#### University students skip class to show support for president

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Hundreds of university students cut classes Tuesday to rally behind Iran's president, whose reforms movement suffered a blow this week when hard-line opponents closed down 13 pro-democracy newspapers and magazines.

The press crackdown, which included the arrests of two leading journalists, was an indication of the power that hard-liners in the ruling clergy wield and are willing to use despite the unquestioned popularity of President Mohammad Khatami and his allies.

### ■ Washington, D.C.

#### Report shows minority youth more likely to be imprisoned

WASHINGTON (AP) — A black youth is six times more likely to be locked up than a white peer, even when charged with a similar crime and when neither has a prior record, says a new civil rights report contending racial bias exists at every step of the juvenile justice process.

Many policies and practices have led to a "cumulative disadvantage" for black and Latino youth, civil rights leaders and youth advocates said Tuesday as they released the report by the Youth Law Center. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency, a criminal justice think tank, did the research.

### ■ Washington, D.C.

#### Clinton vetoes legislation to transport nuclear waste

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton vetoed legislation as expected Tuesday that would have cleared the way for thousands of tons of highly radioactive nuclear waste to be shipped to Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

Nevada lawmakers and national environmental groups hailed the action for blocking transportation of 40,000 tons of the lethal material that piled up at commercial reactors in 31 states.

But Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, who heads the Energy and Resources Committee, blasted the president for leaving unresolved where the country will permanently store the waste that remains lethal for 10,000 years.

## Daily Nebraskan

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 20, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year, weekly during the summer sessions. The public has access to the Publications Board.

Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.

Subscriptions are \$60 for one year.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 20, 1400 R St., Lincoln NE 68588-0448. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.

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## WEATHER

### TODAY

Partly cloudy  
high 72, low 52

### TOMORROW

Partly cloudy  
high 76, low 50