



EDITORIAL CARTOON

# Letters to the editor

## Regarding Republican Propaganda

Two articles in your March 25th edition are worthy of comment.

On page 13, there is a full page of propaganda by the head of the Log Cabin republicans. He claims gays will grow more influential under Bush because he appointed a gay AIDS czar and gay ambassador to Romania.

How does he explain Bush's cuts in the AIDS budget? If Bush were sincere in making a gay friendly statement with an ambassador, he would appoint one to the reactionary pedophile-coddling Papal See.

On page 15 there is a quarter page article about domestic partners being left out of Federal 9/11 money. This is not surprising with Bush's

buddy Mullah Ashcroft as head of the Justice Department. If the Log Cabin republicans think Bush is so great, what do they have to say about this? What can they do to have Bush overrule Ashcroft? Not a damn thing with Bush's appointments of reactionary religious right hosanna hooters to key government posts and trying to pack the courts with the likes of Pickering.

The best course for gays is to work actively in the Democratic party and make real rather than symbolic differences in our lives.

Ed Saltaire  
Fort Lauderdale

## Compass Thanks The Express for Support

I would like to thank your overwhelming support and sponsorship of PrideFest 2002.

This year's event was truly successful thanks to organizations such as The Express Gay News.

I would like to extend a special thank you to *The Express* for the extensive coverage of our events.

We did have a few growing pains this year...

but we are making the necessary adjustments to have a bigger and better event next year.

I look forward to working with *The Express* in the future as Compass continues to offer new and exciting events to the residents of South Florida.

Scott W. Fox  
Compass Events Coordinator

## Late Breaking News

### Tampa Officer's Surviving Partner Appeals for Benefits

The surviving partner of a lesbian police officer that was brutally killed has appealed a decision to deny her benefit payments stemming from her partner's death.

The Tampa Fire and Police Pension Board refused to give Mickie Mashburn surviving partner benefits because her partner had never named her as a beneficiary for her pension.

Mashburn claimed she should receive benefits because she and her partner, slain officer Lois Marrero, "remained permanently committed to each other until Marrero's death" in a lawsuit filed on April 1 in Hillsborough County Circuit Court.

The lawsuit asks for a circuit court judge to rule out a March 1 order by the board denying Mashburn benefits and seeking to determine who Marrero's

beneficiary would have been.

Marrero was brutally shot down in the line of duty by a bank robber on July 6.

Ironically, Marrero was killed days before the pension plan changed its policy to let unmarried officers name beneficiaries.

Survivors of unmarried employees are now eligible to receive up to \$50,000 in death benefits from the plan for 10 years.

Mashburn said that she lived with Marrero for 11 years and the couple had a commitment ceremony in 1991.

Marrero's family objected to Mashburn getting pension money, describing the couple's relationship as growing increasingly rocky and saying Marrero was involved with another woman in Texas shortly before she died.

A court date for the lawsuit has not yet been set.



Officer Lois Marrero hugs Reggie McCarter, then 3, at a workshop in November 1993 aimed at improving police relations with youngsters

Photo Courtesy St. Petersburg Times

So all our battles are not won. We still have to fight the retards and rejects and voices of hate.

Legally, too, we have roads to negotiate, hills to climb. You see, gays can still not adopt. Gays are still not allowed to serve openly in the military. Gays may not marry. Gays that have been partners for 20 years may not claim the same tax exemptions that a straight couple married 20 minutes can. Gays are still second-class citizens in schools that permit a homophobic presence. As we win battles, the list gets shorter, but the list is still there.

To insure the sanctity of your relationship with your partner, do not rely on the laws. The laws will not be relying on you. Protect yourself legally by selecting an attorney to prepare documents that codify your relationship and secure your rights.

Where possible, register as domestic partners. Spell out carefully how you want your property protected and directed if something should happen to you. Find out what kind of partnership agreements you can draft and secure today to protect your future tomorrow. Yes, we have made progress, but not enough. Govern yourself accordingly, and act responsibly.



Mickie Mashburn

**This Above All...  
To Thine Own  
Self Be True.  
EXPRESS  
YOURSELF!**

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Wilton Manors, Florida 33305  
Or E-mail your letters to:  
Publisher@expressgaynews.com**

## EDITORIAL

### Protect Yourself Legally Today!

From our inaugural issue in January of 2000, right through the tragedies of 9-11, a recurring theme of gay life is the continuing lack of legal protection that gay couples have.

We saw it in March of 2000 when his domestic partner's family threw Frank Gagliano out of his home after he lost Rob Pierce, the NBC cameraman, in a helicopter crash.

We painfully wrote about it again in July of 2001 when our front page headline recorded the shooting death of a lesbian policewoman in Tampa, Lois Marrero. Her partner of ten years, Mickie Mashburn, was denied partnership benefits by the City Council. News reports in this issue document the beginnings of the arduous legal process of courtroom appeals.

We learned about it again with Diane Whipple, mauled to death by a dog in San Francisco. Her partner had to file a groundbreaking civil suit in order to collect benefits as a same-sex survivor. Only then did the laws change to meet the developing reality.

Sadly, other articles written in the past few months have recorded that the domestic partner survivors of 9-11 terrorism will not get federal benefits unless they meet state guidelines for legal heirs. And in most states gays do not so qualify.

Our freedoms are vast, our enterprises noble, and our community is growing locally and nationally, both in quantifiable numbers and political strengths. The most strident voices cannot deny that gays have become a vibrant and viable political and social force in American life.

Locally, gays serve in political office and on the circuit bench. We represent businesses and tourism and a wealth of developing industries. We have revitalized communities and lent aesthetics and architecture to our environment. There is so much we have already achieved and so much more we are going to do.

The homophobic ministers and tired, beaten talk show hosts who corrupt the local airwaves with venom about gays are becoming lost relics of a distant age. One of those beaten voices, Steve Kane, and his band of banal enthusiasts, like Ric Seiderman, Nat Trager, and Brian Craig, have fallen into the ashcan of public disdain and social disrepute. They join the foolish and feverish Fred Phelps, the reviled Kansas minister, as laughingstocks, an ugly scar on the body politic of our age.