

# National News

## Colorado anti-'gay' rights amendment on ice

In a victory for the Hollywood crowd, a Denver, Colorado judge ruled on Jan. 15 that Colorado's Amendment Two, a voter-approved constitutional amendment that bans pro-"gay rights" legislation, cannot be implemented as scheduled until his court can decide whether it violates the constitutional rights of homosexuals. A full court hearing on Amendment Two is expected this summer. In his ruling, Judge Jeff Bayless cited a "reasonable probability" that Amendment Two will be found unconstitutional.

"If all our laws are treated this way, there will be chaos," said Will Perkins, chairman of Colorado for Family Values, the group which placed Amendment Two on the ballot. "The fair thing would be to let it become law." Perkins said supporters of the measure will go to the state Supreme Court to seek to have it upheld.

## Suit claims electric chair is torture

With Charles Stamper's execution scheduled for 11 p.m. Jan. 19, the Jan. 18 issue of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* described the federal class action challenging Virginia's electric chair as "a torture device," in violation of the Eighth Amendment. Stamper, who was confined to a wheelchair after being injured in a knife attack in prison, is a plaintiff in the federal suit, which is being brought by all Virginia death row inmates.

No court has looked at the evidence that the electric chair is torture since it was introduced as the "humane" alternative to hanging in 1890, lawyer Dorothy Young told the press.

The suit states that an electric shock can be administered to kill instantly; however, that requires a voltage so great that the body might literally explode. Therefore, the suit says, the state essentially guesses at the voltage that should be used to kill the victim without causing his body to explode, which

for obvious reasons, the state is careful to avoid. The death mask, the diaper which the condemned is made to wear, and other equipment, are designed to keep the witnesses from "seeing . . . suffering on [the victim's] part." Modern evidence shows that most of the electric current passes through the victim's skin, not the skull or the brain, and "the effect is to burn the condemned person's skin at extreme temperature while he is awake and conscious for an indeterminate period." This occurred during Virginia's execution of Derrick Peterson in 1991, when it took 13 minutes and two separate electrical jolts to kill Peterson, the suit says.

Virginia Attorney General Mary Sue Terry's office told the court: "We do not agree for one minute that prisoners electrocuted in Virginia's electric chair suffer."

## Environmental rules spur mayors' revolt

A group of 114 mayors held a press conference on Jan. 18 to blast "a seemingly endless stream of federal (and state) environmental requirements," during the U.S. Mayors Conference in Washington, D.C. The mayors of 114 towns and smaller cities denounced the mushrooming of federal laws requiring cities to spend increasing sums supposedly to protect the environment.

The mayors stressed that environmental issues are proposed with the attitude that "we just can't spend too much on the environment," regardless of the impact on local government costs, personal incomes, private property rights, and the economy. Environmental requirements are eating up the money needed for infrastructure, police protection, and helping the homeless. Moreover, while cities must pay more and more for environmental costs, Congress has reduced federal funding and jeopardized cities' ability to raise tax revenues by retarding local economic development with these very same environmental requirements.

The group is talking about requiring "agency impact statements" to control the depredations of the Environmental Protection Agency, and is reported to have drafted legislation forbidding Congress to order cities to spend money.

## Haiti blockade: a 'new Berlin Wall'

The decision to deploy the Coast Guard to blockade Haiti, ostensibly to protect Haitian boat refugees from drowning, was met with a hail of denunciations from everyone except the Bush White House and the Clinton camp. Harold Koh of Yale Law School called it "a floating Berlin Wall around Haiti." Jean-Claude Bajeaux, a human rights activist in Haiti, told the *Washington Times*: "The interception is a case of piracy on the high seas! U.N. protocols call for giving asylum seekers a fair hearing before sending them back." Rich Swartz, attorney for the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, said in Washington, "Whether it's called an encirclement or a white picket fence, a blockade is a blockade. Blockades are acts of war."

Rolande Dorancy, head of the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami, asked, if the operation were solely for humanitarian purposes, why not throw a cordon around Cuba to prevent Cubans from drowning? Daniella Henry, director of the Haitian-American Community Council in Del Ray, Florida, said: "They're putting a barricade around Haiti. For what? So that people can die there? This is just like they are under house arrest." And an unnamed Haitian military official said that the action was "excessive. I would never think that the U.S. would tremble or the President would be trembling because of some little Haitians."

## Kissinger censored POW/MIA report

Columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak reported on Jan. 13 that Henry Kissinger succeeded in "rewriting POW history" by having sections that asserted he knowingly abandoned American POWs and MIAs at the end of the Vietnam War expunged from the final report of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. The excision of this damning conclusion was carried out through Kissinger's attorney, Lloyd Cutler.

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The committee staff's draft implied that the Americans left behind in Indochina were "shunted aside" by President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger. At least two committee members—Republicans Robert Smith (N.H.) and Charles Grassley (Iowa)—shared this conclusion. As originally drafted, the report said: "American officials did not have certain knowledge that any POWs had been left behind. But there remains the troubling question of whether the Americans who were expected to return but did not were, as a group, shunted aside and discounted by government and population alike. The answer to that question is essentially yes and it is in this sense that a form of abandonment did take place."

Amazingly, on Dec. 28 committee chairman John Kerry (D-Mass.) gave Cutler and Kissinger's assistant L. Paul Bremer the opportunity to review the draft in a secure Senate committee room. Cutler, acting on Kissinger's behalf, enlisted Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Sen. Hank Brown (R-Colo.), and others to have the history of POW abandonment rewritten.

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## Largest ever rally demands Pike must fall

Over 250 people rallied in Washington, D.C. to demand the removal of a statue honoring Confederate general and Ku Klux Klan founder Albert Pike on Martin Luther King's birthday, Jan. 15. Participants included a busload from New York-New Jersey, and carloads of smaller delegations from North Dakota, Pittsburgh, southern Virginia, Philadelphia, and Ohio. The campaign to bring down the statue, which is on federal property in D.C., has been spearheaded by Lyndon LaRouche's vice presidential running mate, Rev. Jim Bevel, an associate of the late Dr. King.

Bevel set the tone for the rally in his remarks by developing the principle of constitutional law, which has its basis in love. He emphasized the non-violent principle for obtaining peace and justice based on righteousness, the principle for which the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King gave his life. He

pointed to LaRouche as the inheritor of the King movement. He declared that the LaRouche-Bevel campaign would rally every Friday to bring down the statue until April 4, the anniversary of both Dr. King's assassination and the date that the Pike statue was erected in 1901. Starting on April 5, there will be a presence at the Pike statue "continuously."

Hadaasha Maryum, an international human rights activist from Iowa, quoted Dr. King saying that peace is not the absence of tension, but the presence of justice. She was followed by Imam Akeo Abdul-Samad, president of the Organization of Islamic Ummah in Des Moines, Iowa, who emphasized love as a way to overcome slavery.

Greetings and prayers were delivered to the rally by religious leaders from Washington, Newark, and New York City. Earl Simpson, shop steward from American Federation of Government Employees local 12, which represents the Labor Department workers who maintain the statue, led the crowd in chants and songs. Tom Fenske and Dan Defender from Standing Rock Indian Reservation, both Native Americans, came 1,800 miles from North Dakota to the rally.

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## Exorbitant fine vs. Virginia miners upheld

The Virginia Supreme Court declined to rehear an appeal by the United Mine Workers (UMW) this month, contesting the \$52 million in fines which the Virginia Supreme Court imposed, when the bitter 1989 miners' strike was settled. The court had earlier overturned a decision by the state Court of Appeals that had wiped out all the fines.

The United Mine Workers must now decide whether to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court or try to make a settlement. The Virginia Supreme Court ruled that the UMW owed the state \$24 million, and two counties \$17 and \$11 million. A receiver was appointed by the court who has stated that he is ready to start levying UMW bank accounts and property. Attorney General Mary Sue Terry has offered to help collect the fines once a final judgment is made.

## Briefly

● **SEN. JOHN MCCAIN** told a Washington radio station that he thought the latest U.S. military attack on Iraq would teach a lesson to Iraq's President Saddam Hussein, "that in our democracy there is no difference between administrations." McCain (R-Ariz.) was a POW in Vietnam during the two Kissinger administrations of Nixon and Ford.

● **THE WHITE HOUSE** released excerpts of a long-secret diary which George Bush kept on the Iran arms for hostages deal, including one entry reading, "I'm one of the few people that know fully the details." The entry appeared on Nov. 5, 1986, months before Bush told a newspaper interviewer that he had been "out of the loop" on the covert dealings with Iran.

● **THE HOUSTON** Anti-Defamation League announced in early January that, thanks to a grant from the Enron Corp., the ADL's "World of Difference" brainwashing program, which had been shut down, will reopen with a full-time staff member. The "Arab Hour" radio show announced the Enron grant and called upon listeners to protest the presence of the ADL in the schools to the Houston school board.

● **A GROUP OF FARMERS** announced on Jan. 13 that their "Milk Lift" to children in Iraq will continue, and pledged their solidarity with the Jan. 17 international day of action to lift the embargo against Iraq. "We American farmers do not want our food products to be used as a weapon of war against innocent children," declared Milk Lift organizer Ron Wiczorek, who is a farmer from South Dakota.

● **ROSS PEROT** claims that his Dallas-based "United We Stand, America" organization has received over 250,000 phone calls since its formation was announced this month. Perot told reporters that the lobbying organization would flex its muscle in the special election scheduled to fill the Senate seat left vacant by Lloyd Bentsen.