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Through Rainbow-Colored Glasses

By Christine Dinsmore

Another salvo has been fired in the same-sex marriage struggle. This time, gay activists are picking off other members of the queer community. It's the latest twist in an old debate—Outing closeted politicians who professionally work against their own personal interests.

The Federal Marriage Act, the bill to add discrimination to the Constitution, may be temporarily dead with its 48 to 50 procedural vote in the Senate, but it's still proving to be a hot button, divisive election year issue. In July, the House of Representatives passed the Protection of Marriage Act, stripping federal courts of their jurisdiction to hear challenges to the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. (Locally, only Maurice Hinchey voted against this vitriolic legislation.) It appears as if some high profile supporters of these discriminatory bills are kept politically afloat by the acumen of their gay staff members.

Their days of living safely within the closet may be numbered. Web sites are sprouting up, naming names: the gay staff member of Wayne Allard (Republican-CO), the senator who introduced the Federal Marriage Act; a fund-raiser for Ralph Reed, the Christian Coalition leader and top aide in the George W. Bush re-election campaign; and a former chief of staff of a Republican member of the House, now working on the Florida Senate campaign of Mel "Marriage is between a man and a woman" Martinez.

Gay staffers and politicians have been put on notice. "For years our silence has protected you. Today that protection ends," warn ads in several gay publications. The caveat is part of a campaign by *DearMary.com*, a site dedicated to Mary Cheney, the veep's lesbian daughter, and *DontAmend.com*, a Web resource to fight antigay legislation. These sites have rekindled the debate, begun during the Defense of Marriage Act's successful journey through both chambers of Congress.

Like the previous operation, this tactic has our community split. More radical members scream, "Out 'em." Others claim that it harks back to McCarthyism, when right-wingers destroyed people's lives by dragging them out of the closet.

To divulge or not to divulge? I can see both sides of the argument. Hey, what can I say? I'm a Libra.

Right now my inkling is to out the rascals, even though it goes against my principle of not harming someone because of a vendetta. It just seems like you can't have it both ways—party your ass off in gay after-hours clubs by night and don your suit and tie in the morning to advance the political career of someone working to make you a second-class citizen.

Human Rights Campaign, which bills itself as the largest bipartisan gay and lesbian organization, is opposed to outing. Its opposition pushes me further into the *DearMary.com/DontAmend.com* camp. My respect for the Human Rights Campaign tanked after it supported Al D'Amato, the anti-choice candidate, over Chuck Schumer in the 1998 New York Senate race. HRC claimed that reproductive choice is not a gay issue. Since then, my partner and I don't give them a dime. When a Human Rights Campaign appeal shows up in our mailbox, we send it back with a note: "Ask Al D'Amato."

My disdain for the Human Rights Campaign deepened when it uninvited Margaret Cho to Unity 2004, a LGBT party at the Democratic National Convention, citing she would cause "a potential media firestorm."

I wish the push for same-sex marriage didn't arrive until November 3. But it's here along with these side issues. Outing. Human Rights Campaign. Margaret Cho. Mary Cheney.

To out or not to out? Fortunately, it's not my decision. I'm sure of one thing, though. There's a more important outing question. How can we kick George Bush out of the White House?