

# STATEWIDE DOMESTIC PARTNERS ORDER EXPECTED; DALTON INITIATIVE A SUCCESS

## PRIMARY ENDORSEMENTS

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error is creating liberal family leave benefits for both traditional and non-traditional relationships. State employees will be entitled to as much as 8 weeks of family leave, and the use of up to 10 of their accumulated sick days to care for a partner. Four bereavement days are available on the death of a partner. A separate domestic partnership order designates lesbian and gay partners as "primary" visitors with access rights to state institutions, such as hospitals and prisons, analogous to those afforded to heterosexual spouses.

The orders will extend of their own legal force to managerial employees only. The Weld Administration has indicated a willingness to put the domestic partnership package on the bargaining table in talks with state employee unions, the legal prerequisite for coverage of unionized state employees. As Dalton noted, "it is our hope that the Governor will propose to the collective bargaining process of the state workers' unions that these benefits be extended to gay and lesbian state workers who are not in managerial positions."

One key component of the full array of domestic partnership benefits sought by the lesbian/gay movement is missing from the Weld orders, for legal reasons. The Weld Administration concluded that the statute which identifies who is deemed a "dependent" of a state employee for health insurance purposes limits executive discretion to define dependents otherwise (i.e. to include domestic partners). Legislation is likely to be filed for consideration next year, to add health benefits to the domestic partnership package for state employees.

The Weld orders are the first success in a three-part Alliance push for domestic partnership at the state and local level. The longest-running effort is the push for the Family Protection Act in the Boston City Council, which traces back to the 1989 municipal elections. The bill is still pending after its loss 7-6 in a vote in June, 1991. Backers, including Alliance Domestic Partnership Chair Mike Miller, are optimistic, with the replacement of City Councillor Chris Ianella (a "no" vote) by former Councillor Bruce Bolling (a "yes" vote) a likelihood. Another vote is expected late in the year. Meanwhile, the Mayoral Domestic Partnership Task Force is considering a number of options, including an Executive Order for the City of Boston analogous to the Weld initiatives.

*Dalton asked that the following individuals be recognized for lobbying the proposal into law: David LaFontaine of the Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Civil Rights; Don Gorton and Holly Gunner of the Alliance; Rich Tafel and Mark Goshko of the Log Cabin Club; and attorney Vincent McCarthy, Alliance member.*



**"Rosemary Dunn Dalton, Former Alliance Chair and Member of the Governor's Women's Commission."**

DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE ORDER SIGNING WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1992, 7:30 P.M./BACK BAY HILTON The three-years running fight for domestic partnership recognition in Massachusetts is about to score its first major policy success. Governor William Weld is poised to issue two executive orders, with the net effect of extending several incidents of recognition to the relationships of gay and lesbian state employees and their domestic partners. The orders are set to be signed at a ceremony on September 23, 1992. Conceived and put forward by former Alliance Chair Rosemary Dunn Dalton, the executive orders were advocated by the Governor's Advisory Commission on Women's Issues, on which Dalton is the openly lesbian member. Dalton stressed the historic significance of the move: "This action on the part of our community and the Governor sends an important message to the whole country: gay and lesbian people have relationships and families." She sees this as "a forerunner to key legislation that will pursue medical and other (i.e. tax) benefits to gays and lesbians who form non-traditional families. In addition, it paves the way for gay/lesbian marriage."

The domestic partnership model the Governor's orders utilize looks to a number of factors for identifying covered relationships, including exclusivity, co-habitation, and sharing of the necessities of life. Domestic partnerships would be registered through the personnel offices of state agencies. Gay and lesbian state employees would receive the same family leave, sick leave, and bereavement leave options married state employees enjoy for their spouses. The extension of domestic partnership recognition comes at the same time the Gov-

Williams and Ted Lewis.

"Dianne Wilkerson captured support from across the diverse membership of the Alliance," noted Alliance Chair Don Gorton. "She's dynamic, articulate and interested in being a leader on issues of gay and lesbian rights. We're particularly hopeful that she can help bridge the communities that comprise the Second Suffolk district: the African American, Hispanic and lesbian/gay."

Former State Senator Sal Albano won support in his bid to reclaim the seat he lost to Republican Charles Shannon in 1990. He faces former Representative Joe Mackey, also a friend of the community, in the Somerville-Medford race. Albano's steely independence, and his down-the-line opposition to attempts to weaken the lesbian/gay rights law, won him the group's backing.

Sheriff Robert Rufo of Suffolk County got the endorsement in his bid for re-election. Rufo forged a lasting alliance with gays and lesbians in 1986, when he defeated City Councillor Dapper O'Neil for the Sheriff's post.

Also endorsed were incumbents Robert Havern; Sen. Lois Pines; Rep. Susan Schur; Rep. Pat Jehlen; Rep. Byron Rushing; and Rep. John McDonough; and newcomers Karen Uminski, Kathy Gardner-Gill, Joseph Mecrones, and Peter Georgiou.

No action was taken for the Suffolk-Middlesex Senate race. The seat is being vacated by Senator Michael LoPresti. Marc Pascucci, a moderate Republican, made a strong appeal for endorsement. His support of domestic partnership initiatives has given him an edge over Robert Travaglini, an incumbent Boston City Councillor who voted against domestic partnership legislation despite promises to give support. However, an extensive debate failed to allay concerns over his commitment to human services programs and AIDS-related funding. The Alliance plans to revisit the endorsement after further discussions with both campaigns.

The endorsements evening came one week after candidates night where over 29 contenders for state officer pitched their records and positions to members of the Alliance, the Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus and the Bay State Democratic Club, an organization of gay Democrats.

"There were a lot of new challengers coming to candidates night and that shows how gay and lesbian rights is becoming a defining issues in many state and local races," said Alliance PAC Chair Rich Johnson. "Along with HIV and recognition of families, gay and lesbian civil rights is one of the cutting edge issues of the 1990's."