

# L.A. Domestic Partner Law Ready For City Council Action

By Jeff Lawrence  
For Update

WEST HOLLYWOOD — Los Angeles City Councilmember Mike Woo last week called for Gays and Lesbians throughout the city to lobby the Los Angeles City Council in favor of recommendations of the City Task Force on Family Diversity.

Speaking at a meeting of the American Civil Liberties Union's Lesbian and Gay Rights Chapter here on July 26, Woo specifically asked members to lobby for a proposal to extend sick leave and bereavement leave to city employees with domestic partners. This will be the first of the task force's recommendations to be put forward to the council.

The proposal would allow city workers to take time off to care for domestic partners who are sick or in the case of a domestic partner's death, as with spouses and children. Tom Coleman, a Los Angeles attorney who served as principal consultant to the task force, said the City Administrative Officer and Personnel Department studied the proposal and its cost was estimated at \$2.3 million — in

time off for workers, not cash out of the city's coffers.

The council's Government Operations Committee, chaired by Woo, recently passed the proposal 2-1, and Woo can now set a date to put it before the full council for a vote. But he said he wants to be assured of overwhelming support in the council before asking for a

vote, probably sometime in the fall.

Gays and Lesbians from all areas of the city should contact their city councilmembers to demonstrate that support for the plan goes beyond Silver Lake and Hollywood, he said. Woo suggested citizens call his office for fact sheets and study the issue first, and then make appointments

to meet alone or in groups with their local council members.

Woo said the task force's report, released on May 21, after two and a half years of organization, research, and testimony, is aimed at persuading government to recognize changes in the traditional family and develop policies to reflect

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## PARTNERS

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those changes. Its 110 recommendations to national, state, county, and city government cover a broad range of concerns of single-parent families, multi-generational families, gay couples, and other so-called non-traditional families.

Much of the focus is on Gay and Lesbian concerns. Forty percent of the task force's members were Gay or Lesbian, and 38 of its recommendations address the community's issues.

These recommendations make up "a very comprehensive agenda for Gay and Lesbian rights," Coleman said. The agenda goes beyond individual rights to focus on relationships and economic concerns, which he sees as the Gay Rights issues of the next decade.

Among the task force's recommendations are proposals for government action against lifestyle discrimination in insurance, educational programs to combat homophobia, and investigation of hate crimes against minorities.

The report contains a variety of proposals concerning discrimination against unmarried couples — in housing, in discounts given by businesses, in government programs and benefits, in regulations concerning domestic violence, and in other areas.

Coleman said the task force built upon legal precedent which says that household families not related by blood or marriage are legally traditional families. They sought to fill a gap in current laws to extend protections to these families.

"We're not trying to legalize same-sex marriages," Coleman said, "just recognize them" as a type of family.

The group put forth a definition for domestic partnerships. To qualify as domestic partnerships under the task force's proposals, such as the sick leave plan, household members would have to declare that they share the necessities of life, among other things. But in most legal procedures, domestic partners would not have to give proof of their status, just as legally married couples are rarely called upon to prove they are married.

Woo and Coleman both expressed confidence that many of the proposals in the report, drafted by a diverse panel reflecting different groups, would win broad support and eventually be acted upon at different government levels.

Coleman said they pursued the sick leave proposal first because of its comparatively low cost and because it has a relatively good chance of being enacted.

Aug. 3, 1988

Update

# Reactions

• JULY 26, 1988

## RECOMMENDATIONS

City officials and community organizations are starting to implement recommendations proposed last month by the Los Angeles City Task Force on Family Diversity. The Final Report of the Task Force contains more than 35 proposals involving gay and lesbian family issues.

Los Angeles City Councilman Michael Woo, who convened the blue-ribbon panel two years ago, started the implementation process. A City Council committee chaired by Woo has recommended that the full Council grant sick leave and bereavement leave to city employees with domestic partners. The Council will vote on the measure this summer.

A copy of the Final Report can be obtained by sending a \$10 contribution to the Institute for the Study of Human Resources, Family Diversity Project, P.O. Box 65756, Los Angeles, CA 90065. Or call (213) 258-8955. Checks should be made payable to I.S.H.R.



July 20, 1988

## Family Proposals Put Into Action

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Thomas F. Coleman, author of the final report, and Christopher McCauley, co-chair of the panel, joined Woo at a Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles (MECLA) civic event to disclose implementation plans on other recommendations.

Woo told a gathering of gay and lesbian community leaders that he is asking City Attorney James Hahn to render two legal opinions. Is it illegal for businesses to give consumer discounts to married couples but deny them to unmarried couples? Can a landlord legally refuse to rent a one-bedroom apartment to an unmarried couple? Strategies to overcome these problems will depend on the response to these questions, Woo said.

McCauley, a member of the city's Human Relations Commission, told the MECLA gathering that Mayor Tom Bradley is asking the presidents of all city commissions and the managers of all city departments to give him feedback on the report and recommendations. Both the city and the county Human Relations Commissions are examining recommendations dealing with discrimination in housing, employment, and insurance, McCauley said.

Coleman, who teaches a class on domestic partners' rights at USC Law Center, urged activists to closely study those proposals dealing with non-discrimination by city contractors, flexibility in employee benefit programs, discrimination against tenants and consumers, political appointments to city boards and commissions, hate crimes, domestic violence, and school programs. A major section of the report deals with domestic partnership families, Coleman noted.

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