

## Liberals Itching to Take Abstinence-Only Courses to Court

**T**he battle over abstinence-only sex education is about to be ratcheted up as those favoring a more liberal approach to sex education are being encouraged to take their fight to the courts. That's the tactic being recommended by a Cornell University law professor and a Washington attorney in a legal journal article titled "Keeping the Sex in Sex Education: The First Amendment's Religion Clauses and the Sex Education Debate."

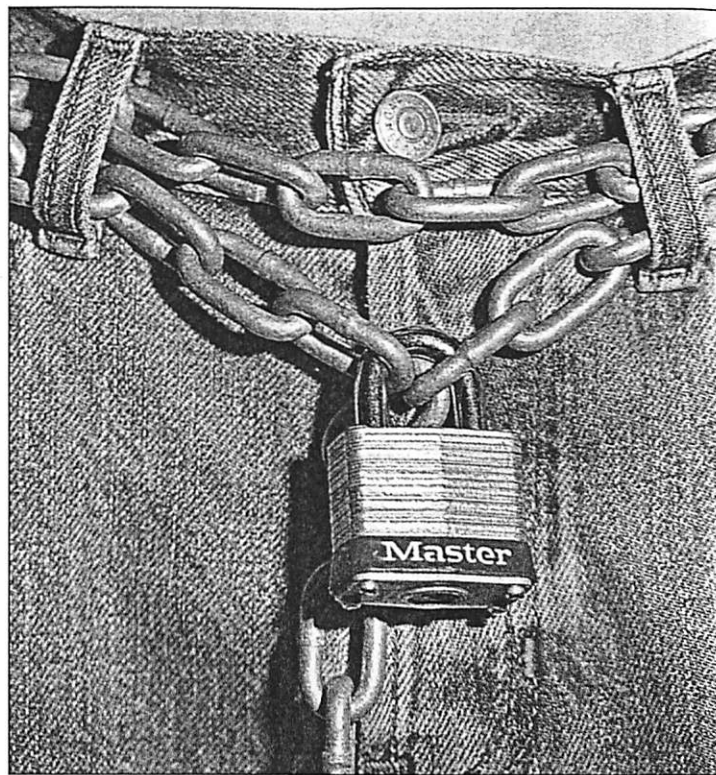
Gary Simson, a professor and expert on constitutional law, and Erika Sussman, a litigation associate with Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman LLP in Washington, say abstinence-only programs endorse the views on sex urged by, and identified most prominently with, the Christian Coalition and its allies on the "religious right."

The authors say abstinence-only programs can be defeated in the courts because they violate the First Amendment's prohibition on laws "respecting an establishment of religion." The article appears in the latest issue of the *Southern California Review of Law and Women's Studies*, published by the University of Southern California Law School.

Critics of abstinence-only education programs say teen-agers need "comprehensive sexuality education," including the "Just Say No" approach. But, since some young people won't just say no, they say the courses should include detailed information on birth control and disease prevention.

Statistics seen as supporting the need for more-detailed programs include those attributed to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention claiming that two-thirds of American high-school seniors have engaged in sexual intercourse. Using that figure to support its call for more liberalized sex education, the AIDS Research Institute says: "Moreover, the exhortations to avoid sex until marriage have little, if any, meaning for gay teens." The institute maintains that abstinence-only programs further "a religious and political, not a public-health, agenda" and therefore "cheat many young people."

A similar point of view is espoused by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, one of the more influential activist groups pushing for sex-education programs



focusing on topics including condoms, sexual orientation, abortion and AIDS. The group publishes a booklet, "Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Kindergarten-12th Grade," giving a clue as to when it believes sex education should commence.

Among pro-abstinence groups, the Eagle Forum reports that there has been a significant increase in the number of teachers and nurses who favor the teaching of abstinence as the "only appropriate option" for adolescents. The newsletter cites a study by Project Reality, a leading abstinence-education provider, showing that an increasing number of teachers and nurses view educating youngsters about abstinence as more important than educating them about contraception.

## More Marines Coming Home

**T**he remains of 19 U.S. Marines killed in action on Japanese-occupied Butaritari Island early in World War II have been discovered and sent home for burial. The Marines, members of the 2nd Raider Battalion, had been listed as missing since 1942. Their remains were discovered in a mass burial site on the island. Identification and notification of next of kin has taken about a year. The U.S. Army's Central Identification Lab in Hawaii located the grave site with the help of local inhabitants and conducted identifica-

tion using both historical records and modern DNA technology.

The 2nd Raiders hit Butaritari, also known as Makin Atoll, on Aug. 17, 1942, and were ferried in by submarine to a point where they launched rubber boats for the actual landing. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's son, Capt. James Roosevelt, was second in command of the operation. More than 88,000 service members from World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War remain listed as missing in action.