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Pro-Gay bills outnumbered State legislative survey finds 48 anti-Gay measures

by Christopher Jones
New Year's optimism has given way to February's cold reality as activists' predictions that pro-Gay bills would far outnumber anti-Gay bills in state legislatures in 1997 have, so far, failed to materialize.

A *Washington Blade* survey of the 50 state legislatures has found that 40 pro-Gay bills and 48 anti-Gay bills had been filed to date. None of the measures has yet become law; most are still awaiting committee votes and some have already died or been voted down.

Of the 48 anti-Gay bills introduced, 39 of them seek to prohibit legal recognition of same-sex marriages. (See accompanying story.) The other nine anti-Gay bills are spread over three categories: "no promo homo" bills which seek to ban discussion of Gay issues in public schools; bills which seek to ban Gay people from adopting children or providing foster care; and "parental rights" bills which aim to give parents the right to inspect any ed-



by Joe Tom Easley

"It's no surprise to me," said Log Cabin official Rich Tafel about the high number of GOP-sponsored anti-Gay bills.

ucational materials their children use in schools. Some of the "parental rights" bills also seek to require that children obtain a parent's signature before attending sex education and human sexuality classes or before visiting a school psychologist.

Of 40 pro-Gay bills introduced, 12 seek to provide increased penalties against the perpetrators of hate crimes based on the victim's sexual orientation. (Two such measures in Virginia died in committee this week.) Nine bills seek to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment; three seek to ban such discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Seven seek to establish some form of domestic partner benefits in the state, while five bills seek to legalize same-sex marriages. Two bills seek to allow Gay people to adopt children; and two bills seek to protect Gay students from harassment in public schools.

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