

## Rally and Lobby Day for H. 5427 Set for This Monday

by Susan Lumenello

The first big grassroots push for the gay civil rights bill begins this fall with an October 3 rally at the State House steps at 5:30 p.m. sponsored by the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights — and is co-sponsored by almost every other gay political/activist group in the Commonwealth. The timing of the rally is crucial, since the bill was fortuitously released out of the Committee on Bills in Third Reading yesterday, September 27.

Groups like the Boston National Organization for Women (NOW), the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Boston Intercollegiate Lesbian and Gay Alliance, and New England Gay and Lesbian Veterans, among many others, have offered their support for what is expected to be one of the biggest calls for passage of the 17-year-old bill. Activist groups from Springfield, New Bedford/Fall River, Worcester, and Cape Cod have also lent much support for the rally.

Scheduled speakers at the rally include state Rep. Mark Roosevelt (D-Boston), state Sens. Michael Barrett (D-Cambridge) and Bill Golden (D-Weymouth), Boston City Councilor David Scondras (Fenway, Back Bay), Ellen Convisser, president of Boston NOW, Jean McCray of the Mass. Lesbian and Gay Bar Association, and folksinger Pat Humphries.

The rally will be preceded by a lobby day in which constituents will meet with legislators to urge a 'yes' vote on the bill. The Coalition has undertaken a number of lobby days this year in which many legislators met with constituents.

Those interested in participating in the lobby day should meet at Nurses Hall inside the State House at 1 p.m. Meetings with legislators will last until 5 p.m.

"If we could get a huge turnout, especially for the lobby day, it would show the legislature how many people care about this bill," said organizer David LaFontaine. The Coalition is looking for-

ward to about 1,000 people attending the two events.

Hopefully, LaFontaine added, a well-attended rally will detract from the negative publicity surrounding the Barney Frank controversy.

"[Gay people] get the front-page headline when something negative is happening. [The media does not] want to show positive images of gay people," LaFontaine said.

The Coalition is particularly concerned about maintaining a majority of support for the bill in the House of Representatives. Because each representative works for a relatively small geographic area, LaFontaine reasons, "it only takes 10 or 15 [visiting constituents] to get them nervous."

"Given the choice," LaFontaine noted, "[legislators] wouldn't vote on an issue with a potential for controversy; issues like gay rights, abortion, and the death penalty." □



# Lobby Day

A day of lobbying for the Massachusetts Gay Rights Bills, 1-5 pm, Oct. 3, will be followed by a **Rally on the State House steps, at 5:30 pm.** Rep. Mark Roosevelt, David LaFontaine, and Sen. Mike Barrett (L-R, in photo by R. A. Chamberlin) will speak, along with Sens. Lois Pines and Bill Golden, Ellen Convisser and Steve Tierney. Folksinger Pat Humphries will entertain. All are welcome. 828-3039, 354-6280.