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Gay rights group cheers Cellucci, snubs Clapprood

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The Republican candidate for lieutenant governor addressed a State House rally of activists for women's and homosexual rights yesterday, while the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor was snubbed.

Sen. Paul Cellucci (R-Hudson), running mate of Republican gubernatorial nominee William Weld, spoke in support of a "hate crimes" bill, now pending in the Legislature, designed to combat crimes of prejudice from vandalism to assault.

"The passage of this legislation will send an important message to people who advocate violence and hatred that it will not be tolerated in Massachusetts," Cellucci told a cheering crowd of about 75.

Marjorie Clapprood, the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, cosponsored the hate crimes bill and was a featured speaker at a similar rally last year, but she was not invited to speak yesterday because of her status as running mate with gubernatorial nominee John Silber.

"We're opposing that ticket,"

said David LaFontaine of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights. "If she speaks now she's speaking for John Silber."

LaFontaine ripped into Silber, telling the crowd that many of the candidate's campaign remarks "inflame the hatred and bigotry that we're trying to end."

A spokeswoman for Clapprood pointed out last night that Weld opposed the gay rights bill that finally became law after 17 years. She also said Clapprood has been a strong supporter, not just of the hate crimes bill, but of a gay couples' right to care for foster children.

The hate crimes bill, now languishing in the Senate, would create a uniform method of gathering statistics on crimes of prejudice based on race, religion, or sexual orientation and would provide for police officer sensitivity training to help identify hate crimes.

Yesterday the bill's proponents also announced an agreement with the local chapter of the Massachusetts Organization for Women to try to get the Legislature to add "gender" to the list of covered constituencies.