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GAY ADOPTION

Taking a stand

Florida Bar supports overturning state law that bans gays from adopting children

by **Billy Shields**
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The Florida Bar is coming out in a big way — for gay adoption. The Bar's board of governors voted unanimously to file an amicus brief before the 3rd District Court of Appeal supporting a Miami-Dade circuit judge's ruling that declared unconstitutional the state's ban on gay adoptions.

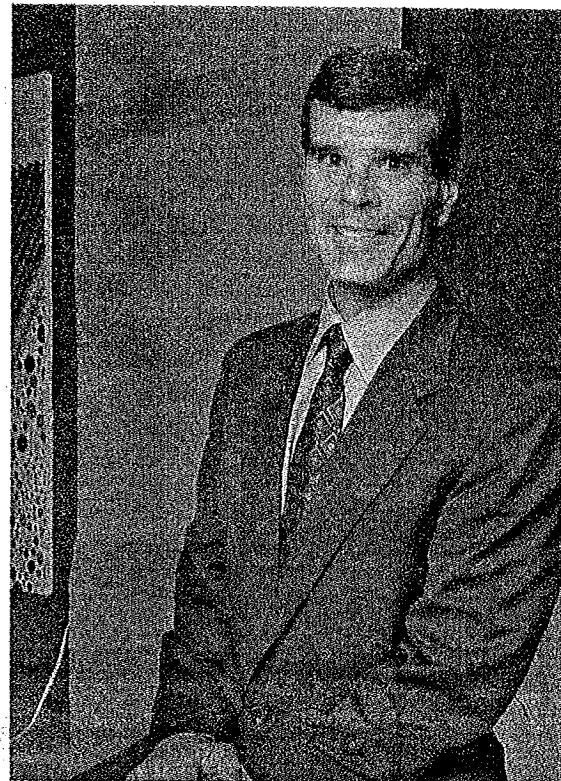
"We thought it was appropriate to defend the judge's decision," said Nancy Gregoire, a family section member and a partner with Kirschbaum Birnbaum Lippman & Gregoire in Fort Lauderdale. "In my mind, speaking only for myself, it was the right thing to do and well past its time."

Circuit Judge Cindy Lederman ruled in November that the state's ban on gay adoption was unconstitutional.

Forty-two of 52 board members participated in the Friday vote. Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp's chief of staff, Larry Ringers, filed the only recusal.

Bruce Rogow, a prominent Constitutional lawyer and professor at Nova Southeastern University's law school, said an amicus brief from the Bar could provide a persuasive argument in favor of gay adoption.

"It would be influential. It will say to the court



Bar governor Ervin Gonzalez argued for the Bar a friend of the court brief in support of gay adoptions

CONTRACTS

Astrologer loses court fight but isn't penalized

by **John Pacenti**
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Flamboyant astrologer Walter Mercado's stars were aligned when a federal jury found that he broke a contract with his former management companies but did not owe a penny of the millions of dollars sought for lost profits and damages.

Mercado's attorney, Carlos A. Velasquez, said he never had a jury find a client broke contractual obligations but owed nothing.

"This is very unique," he said. "The jury determined Walter didn't perform in 2006, but they really couldn't prove they [the plaintiffs] had sustained any damages."

Mercado, who lives in Puerto Rico, is a fixture on Univision's "Primer Impacto." He is known as much for his reading of the