

The five formed the Amendment Coalition to gather the 130,000 signatures on petitions required to put the anti-gay amendment on the November 1994 ballot. The amendment would have canceled out local ordinances in Columbia, Kansas City and St. Louis that ban discrimination against gays and lesbians.

But by the July 7 deadline, three of the five leaders had dropped out of the crusade and the Amendment Coalition was in disarray. Its president, Paul Summers, decided not to turn in any petitions because the effort had not collected the needed signatures.

Instead, the Amendment Coalition sparked the formation of a statewide opposition group called Show Me Equality and boosted efforts to organize gay-rights groups across the state.

"I fall short of saying I want to call Paul Summers and thank him for the last 10 months of organizing," said David Weeda, a leader of Show Me Equality and executive director of the Human Rights Project in Kansas City. Weeda said membership in the Human Rights Project increased by about 20 percent during the campaign against the amendment, while the gay rights movement gained greater visibility and built ties with abortion rights groups, labor unions and churches.

Similar statewide initiatives also failed to muster enough signatures in seven other states: Arizona, Florida, Maine, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio and Washington. Oregon and Idaho, however, did obtain enough signatures to place their proposed statutes on the November ballot, and while Florida will not have a statewide vote, the county of Alachua will vote on an anti-gay rights proposal.

The Michigan Campaign, a group formed in early 1993 specifically to defeat an anti-gay rights initiative, was able to disband in July when the Michigan Family Values Committee, a Christian-right group, failed to collect enough signatures.

"I like to think that [their initiative failed] because we scared them off when we organized so quickly and were able to get endorsements from several statewide organizations. They only like easy wins, and they thought they could win in Michigan," said Linda Shapanka of the Michigan Campaign.

However, Shapanka sees signs that the Christian right wasn't weakened by the defeat. "They're moving in a different direction. They're working very hard on the local level with spotlight campaigns to get their own politicians in office. They worked city by city in Oregon, which brought them up to this year, where they've won many local elections."

—Benjamin Israel

BOMBS (HIDDEN) AWAY!

The federal research facility that helped initiate the Star Wars fiasco is now pushing another project of questionable scientific merit. The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, located near San Francisco, is asking Congress and the Clinton administration to give the green light on a \$1 billion laser project called the National Ignition Facility (NIF). Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary is expected to release an assessment of the project—now in the design stage—by September 1.

Lab officials have told Congress that the NIF laser would be used to conduct research into fusion—an atomic reaction that, if harnessed, would provide safe nuclear energy. Secondarily, lab officials said, the NIF would help

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Touchy fans

The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* is still losing readers who are canceling their subscriptions over the paper's decision last fall not to use American Indian team nicknames in its sports coverage. What's still puzzling the editors is that when the policy began—weeks before the formal announcement struck media sparks—no one complained or, apparently, noticed.

Not just for kids

Never have promoters more aggressively used films and TV shows as promotional vehicles for products—and with good reason: profits. The sales of toys and other goods branded with *The Lion King* symbols have broken all records, looking to rack up \$1 billion in sales this year, according to *Advertising Age*. *The Lion King* is being labelled an "instant classic" by an industry that knows the real measure of success: sales synergy.

Next year, look for toys, books and a TV series featuring "Kung Fu Kangaroos" (ecologically correct martial arts marsupials) and for Teddy Sidekick, simultaneously a soccer-playing stuffed animal and an animated cartoon. And in case you thought this was just kids' stuff, note that sales of adult products licensed to *The Lion King* are booming.

Even public TV is finally getting a piece of the action. This year's public TV contract with *Barney* cuts PBS in on the huge sales of related toys,

and the upcoming Ken Burns documentary *Baseball* on PBS has its own baseball card set.

Free for all

New media technologies are testing the meaning of democratic freedom of expression in a commercial environment. The NBC-owned, all-talk cable channel America's Talking is probing the outer limits of talk programming. Along with talk shows about health (*Wellness*), psychology (*Am I Nuts?*) and government waste (*Pork*), there's *Bugged!*, an all-purpose, open-to-all rant show described as "primal scream therapy brought to you courtesy of the information superhighway."

Tobacco poster boy

The feds may have declined to attack Joe Camel (see "Etc., August 8), but things are different in California. The state Supreme Court has cleared the way for a lawsuit against the maker of the cartoon pitchman, who helps hook kids on cigarettes. The lawsuit, filed by an outraged lawyer, charges both the tobacco company RJR Nabisco and its advertising firms with unfair advertising.

And by the way...

The latest issue of *ad/vice*, the newsletter of the Center for the Study of Commercialism (1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, #300, Washington, DC 20009), points out that the signs behind players at sporting events can now be digitally altered for the home audience. Coke in the first inning, Pepsi the next...

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scientists maintain the safety of the nation's existing nuclear stockpile.

What lab officials didn't tell lawmakers, critics charge, is that the NIF will also be used in the design of entirely new nuclear weapons systems. Marylia Kelley, the founder of Tri-Valley Citizens Against a Radioactive Environment, says, "As [Livermore's] own documents indicate, the project is for future nuclear weapons design."

Those documents include a Livermore-published periodical, *Energy and Technology Review*. In the August 1991 issue of that publication, Livermore officials claimed that the NIF has "defense applications ... in simulations of the effects of nuclear weapons on hardware that must function in a nuclear environment, and in investigations of the basic principles of advanced weapons concepts."

Another document, the "Lawrence Livermore Institutional Plan 1994 to 1999," claims that the NIF is necessary in order to make "new scientific headway on the important problems facing the weapons design and weapons effects programs." The NIF would be used to "provide options" for improving the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile through the development of new weapons, the lab's plan says.

Despite these assertions, Breck Henderson, a spokesman for Livermore, says: "Many of our critics have said that the science in this project is a smoke-screen for the defense issues. It is not."

In recent weeks, two key members of the California congressional delegation, Democratic Reps. Pete Stark and Ron Dellums, have withdrawn support for the NIF project, even though advocates claim it would create thousands of new jobs in the state. Dellums suggested that the laser project might prove to be a violation of a nuclear non-proliferation test ban treaty, which the Clinton administration is negotiating in Geneva.

The government has already spent \$12 million on the NIF, with another \$60 million slated for this year.

—Gene Koprowski

ROUGH CUTS By JA Reid

