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MEDIA RELEASE

**SUPREME COURT OF CANADA RULES ALBERTA'S HUMAN RIGHTS LAWS
DISCRIMINATE AGAINST LESBIANS AND GAYS**

(Ottawa - April 2, 1998) The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in a unanimous decision that Alberta's failure to include "sexual orientation" as a prohibited ground of discrimination directly contravenes the *Charter's* equality guarantees.

Delwin Vriend's constitutional challenge to Alberta's *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multi-culturalism Act*, in the case of *Vriend v. Alberta*, focused on whether the exclusion of "sexual orientation" as a prohibited ground of discrimination violated section 15 of the *Charter*.

LEAF counsel, Gwen Brodsky says, "This decision is extremely important to gays and lesbians everywhere. It clearly confirms that courts must not abdicate their responsibilities when governments violate basic human rights." LEAF counsel Claire Klassen states, "As LEAF argued before the Court, this case has nothing to do with 'neutral silence'. The deliberate exclusion of gays and lesbians from human rights protection in Alberta sends a message of intolerance and hate. This message has not been condoned by the Supreme Court of Canada and cannot be condoned by the people of Canada."

Gwen Brodsky further states, "It is profoundly disrespectful and undemocratic for the Alberta government to even consider using the notwithstanding clause in order to avoid its constitutional obligations. The government of Alberta must respect the constitution."

LEAF is pleased that Canada's highest Court recognizes the significance of this case and the resounding implications for equality for all people in Canada.

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