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Coming Out of the PC Closet

A call to action! The great state of Georgia wants to develop its high-tech industry. But it is also the home of an oppressive law that threatens the spirit of the PC community. What can we do about it?

Usually in this column I focus on issues largely relevant only to the personal computer community. Now, in a departure from my regular subject matter, I'd like to address an issue with much broader social significance. It's one, I believe, that's important enough to merit your attention and your involvement.

Recently, I received a letter from Governor Joe Frank Harris of Georgia inviting me to take part in a technology tour of the Atlanta area. He's looking for good press about that region's great technological opportunities. Of course, Georgia has some wonderful success stories. After all, it's the home of some major personal computer companies and industry leaders.

Unfortunately, Georgia, like a handful of other states, happens to be the home of an oppressive law whose spirit stifles the very progressiveness Governor Harris hopes to promote in his quest for high-tech immigrants to his state.

I'm referring to the Georgia state law, recently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, that outlaws sodomy (defined as oral and/or anal sex)—even when practiced by consenting adults in the privacy of their own homes.

This statute threatens the personal sexual freedom of everyone—heterosexuals and gays alike.

By threatening to imprison or punish offenders, this archaic law may violate constitutional rights, including the Eighth Amendment's ban against "cruel and unusual punishment" and the Fourth Amendment's guarantee of "the right of the people to be secure in their persons [and] houses."

You may well ask, what does a law against sodomy have to do with personal computers and high technology? The answer is that the law conflicts with the very vision that compelled the growth of personal computers.

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