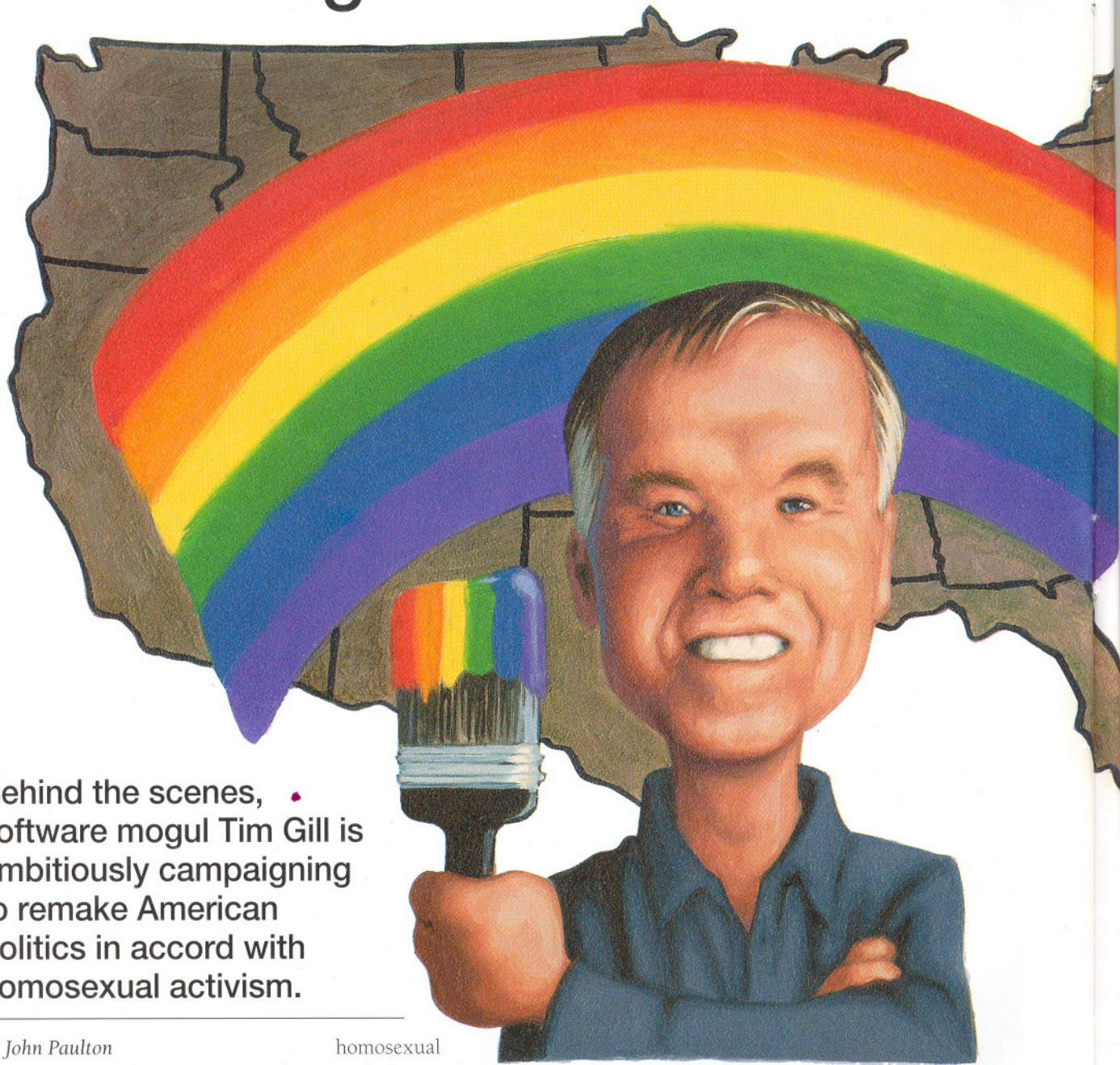


# In the image of Gill



Behind the scenes, software mogul Tim Gill is ambitiously campaigning to remake American politics in accord with homosexual activism.

by John Paulton

**Y**ou don't want to get on Tim Gill's bad side. Marilyn Musgrave could tell a few war stories.

Musgrave, a three-term congresswoman from Colorado, was a lead sponsor of the original Federal Marriage Amendment. Gill, a Denver-based software tycoon (founder of Quark), is perhaps the most powerful force for

homosexual activism in American politics.

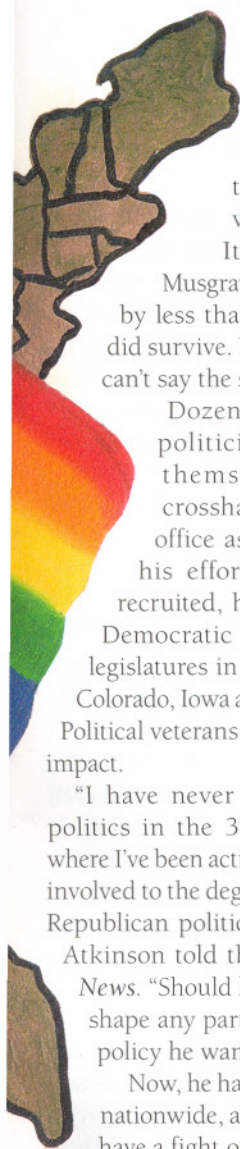
So Musgrave is most definitely on Gill's bad side — and even in the often vicious world of politics, his efforts to get her booted from office have been way over the top.

When Musgrave ran for re-election in 2004, Gill funded television attack ads showing a woman portraying Musgrave

— dressed in a pink suit — picking money from the pockets of soldiers on a battlefield. Another showed the same actress stealing a watch off of a corpse.

And in 2006, Gill and his allies spent nearly \$1.4 million setting up a bogus pro-life group, Coloradans





for Life, to attack Musgrave (who has a 100 percent pro-life voting record). The goal: Suppress the turnout of pro-life voters for Musgrave.

It nearly worked; Musgrave survived, winning by less than 3 points. But she did survive. Most of Gill's targets can't say the same.

Dozens of conservative politicians have found themselves in Gill's crosshairs — and out of office as a result. Between his efforts and those he's recruited, he's helped produce Democratic majorities in state legislatures in places like Oregon, Colorado, Iowa and New Hampshire. Political veterans are marveling at his impact.

"I have never seen in Colorado politics in the 30-some odd years where I've been active ... any individual involved to the degree that Tim Gill is," Republican political consultant Katy Atkinson told the *Rocky Mountain News*. "Should he choose to, he can shape any part of Colorado public policy he wants to."

Now, he has taken his strategies nationwide, and pro-family forces have a fight on their hands.

## Here comes the money

Gill doesn't fit the image of a political firebrand. A self-described introvert who rarely speaks publicly, he shuns the media spotlight. His grandparents on both sides were Colorado farmers — hardly a predictor that the young Gill would someday become what a leading gay publication, *Out Magazine*, would describe as the fourth most powerful homosexual in America.

Born in Indiana, the 54-year old Gill grew up in the Denver suburb of Lakewood. He ventured into homosexual activism at a young age: After enrolling at the University of

Colorado at Boulder in the early 1970s, he joined the speaker's bureau of the campus gay-advocacy group.

But he spent most of his energies on two other passions: computer technology and making money. An early job with a computer startup fueled a desire to run his own company, and after getting a \$2,000 loan from his parents, he launched the software company Quark.

Eleven years later, in 1992, Gill began to refocus on the gay activism of his college days. By that time, Quark had become a major national and international firm, having hit the jackpot with its publishing software, QuarkXPress. And Gill had become a very rich man.

Following that fall's passage of Amendment 2 — the Colorado measure that prohibited localities from passing special gay-rights ordinances — Gill got angry, feeling that (as he would later put it) "the forces of evil are out to destroy us." So he began to put his new wealth to work on behalf of a pro-homosexual agenda.

## Sponsorship and strings

In 1994, he formed the Gill Foundation, investing huge amounts of his fortune to seed gay-rights organizations in all 50 states. One, in particular, enjoyed spectacular growth. The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) swelled from a group run out of an apartment to the leading gay-activist group in America's schools. And they give the credit to their early chief funder.

"The gay community in its current form could not exist without Tim," GLSEN Executive Director Kevin Jennings told *The Denver Post*. "He created the infrastructure of national organizations like mine, and also in out-of-the-way-places where gay community centers never existed before."

By 2001, according to *USA Today*, Gill Foundation donations to homosexual-rights organizations around the country represented 20 percent of their annual budgets. As of this year, the foundation

has made grants of well over \$115 million, making Gill far and away the leading funder of the homosexual movement.

Beyond the vast sums of money, he quickly put his creative entrepreneurship to work.

For example, rather than simply funding hundreds of gay-rights groups, Gill launched training seminars around the country to help the organizations sharpen their message, hone their efficiency and raise money more effectively.

A leading gay-rights activist told the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* why Gill is unique as a donor. "If you look at other people, the 'superdonors' in our community, Tim stands out," said retired software executive David Ring, "because he is going beyond funding particular causes and organizations and helping to create some of the infrastructure to move the community forward."

But Gill also used other creative — some would say insidious — means to advance the homosexual cause.

For example, he began giving large grants to mainstream community institutions such as symphonies, libraries and colleges. He even gave a \$1 million gift to Ocean Journey, a major Denver aquarium. But there were strings. To receive the money, each of the organizations had to have a nondiscrimination policy toward anyone who identifies as homosexual. Further, they had to advertise that their funding came from the Gay & Lesbian Fund of Colorado, through plaques, event programs, annual reports and other means — all to help portray homosexuality as mainstream.

## Strategic politics

By 2000, Gill — though still largely below the radar of society — was clearly a hero to homosexual activists throughout the nation. Yet it was then he began telling others that the gay-rights movement needed to start to go on the offensive. "We have got to stop playing the victim role," he declared in early 2000.



## Where's the money going?

**W**ant to know which candidate Tim Gill — or anyone, for that matter — is giving to now? There are a number of Web sites that can help you quickly find out.

For federal races — U.S. House, U.S. Senate and president — the most helpful sites are:

[www.fec.gov/disclosure.shtml](http://www.fec.gov/disclosure.shtml)

This is the site of the Federal Election Commission, an agency of the federal government. Here you can search by donor or recipient for House, Senate and presidential candidates.

[www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)

This site, run by the Center for Responsive Politics, has a wealth of information and even allows you to enter a ZIP code to find out

who in your area is donating to national or statewide candidates and organizations.

[www.tray.com](http://www.tray.com)

This powerful site, operated by Congressional Quarterly, requires payment but offers unique features, including the ability to type in a company name and find out what candidates or organizations received donations from their employees.

For state races — legislature, governor, etc. — the following Web site offers links to official state election-related sites in all 50 states. It also identifies which states have campaign-finance databases online. The information that is available online varies widely from state to state.

[www.campaignfinance.org/linksstate.html](http://www.campaignfinance.org/linksstate.html) ●

Gradually, what Gill's people describe as "strategic philanthropy" began to be accompanied by "strategic politics." In the political cycle of 2000, Gill gave \$300,000 to political campaigns, followed by \$800,000 in 2002.

That giving, however, merely set the table for 2004, when Gill dumped an astonishing \$5 million into races, mostly in Colorado. As former Colorado Senate President John Andrews said, Gill "overwhelmed us with a tsunami of money."

Yet even that enormous figure fails to fully demonstrate his financial impact. That's because Gill isn't content to fund campaigns alone. An evangelist for his causes in pro-gay circles, he recruited three multi-millionaires to come alongside him: Jared Polis, a homosexual dot-com entrepreneur; Rutt Bridges, who made his millions in oil exploration; and Pat Stryker, a billionaire heiress and sister to Jon Stryker, a homosexual billionaire from Michigan.

But, as with his philanthropic giving, what distinguished Gill from other political donors was his strategy. Instead of simply pouring money into high-profile campaigns for Senate or Congress — what Gill calls "glamour giving" — he put much of his money into local races in an effort to shift control of the Colorado Legislature to gay-friendly Democrats. Thus, the four "Gillionaires" — as one wag dubbed them — targeted five legislative races, winning four.

One of the targeted state House candidates was Ray Martinez, a longtime police officer and Republican mayor of Fort Collins, Colo. Because of his prominence in the city and the fact that the district had a third more Republicans than Democrats, everyone assumed Martinez would win. But then an onslaught of attack ads began running, funded by Gill and his allies. In unprecedented fashion for a state legislative race, many of them even aired on expensive

Denver television stations.

Did the ads attack Martinez for his opposition to homosexual rights? Not a chance. The savvy Gill instead focused the ads on any issue where the candidate might be vulnerable. The result? A 10-point lead in the polls dissolved into a lopsided loss.

"You know how you hear about elections that are bought?" Martinez said to *National Review*. "That's what happened to me — my opponent's election was bought. My campaign cost about \$350,000, and the other side spent as much as \$1.7 million against me."

Welcome to Tim Gill's wild world of politics.

## On the road

Gill's \$5 million excursion into Colorado politics was smashingly successful. Democrats took control of both the state House and Senate for the first time in three decades, even as President Bush carried Colorado by a solid margin. Spurred on by his success, Gill decided to radically up the ante and widen the scope. So in 2005, he formed a new political entity, the Gill Action Fund, and set his sights nationwide.

In 2006, Gill and his cadre of allies carefully targeted a total of 70 state and local races in a dozen states. Gill's targets were chosen either because of their outspoken leadership on traditional marriage or because knocking them out could help switch a legislative chamber to Democrat — and thus gay-friendly — control. To fund it all, Gill pumped in an astounding \$15 million of his own money — on top of millions from his friends. This time, Gill won 50 of his targeted races and, in the process, gave Democrats control of several state legislative chambers.

But in many ways, Gill was also stealthier than ever in 2006, apparently aware that a single out-of-state megadonor could arouse suspicions and backlash in far-away states. So he again recruited donors, finding pro-homosexual contributors who would



write small- to medium-sized checks to favored legislative candidates.

So well did this scheme work that one of Gill's targets — Danny Carroll, the Republican speaker pro-tem in the Iowa House of Representatives — didn't even realize he'd been a target of a national homosexual campaign until a reporter from *The Atlantic* magazine called him after the election and walked him through campaign-finance reports.

And what did Gill get for all of it? Plenty.

New Democrat majorities in New Hampshire promptly passed a civil-unions law. In Iowa, where Carroll lost his seat and the Republicans lost the House, the Democrat Legislature enacted a homosexual nondiscrimination law. And Oregon's new Democrat lawmakers pushed through variations of both of the aforementioned laws. Democrat gains in Iowa and Indiana also stopped state marriage amendments in their tracks — all the more important in the wake of this summer's homosexual marriage in Iowa.

Meanwhile, back in Colorado, where Gill spent another \$5 million to elect a pro-homosexual governor and several more state legislators, the payoff was rich. Republican Sen. Josh Penry summarized the 2007 state legislative session this way: "Windmills, mill levies and a million paybacks to Tim Gill."

Among those paybacks:

- A law allowing homosexual couples to adopt children.
- A statute that completely redefines the family in Colorado. No longer will the usual definition of "blood, marriage or adoption" apply. Instead, any two or more people living together as a single household can be legally considered a family in the Rocky Mountain State.
- Colorado joined Iowa and Oregon in passing a homosexual nondiscrimination law. Although a late amendment exempted religious organizations, the law could force

Christian businesses — including for-profit Christian radio stations — to hire homosexuals, bisexuals and transgenders.

For Gill, not a bad investment at all.

### 'He's not invincible'

Still, as good as the last two elections have been for Gill, not everything he's touched has turned to gold. In fact, the campaign on which he spent the most money in 2006 resulted in a bitter defeat. That was the ballot measure to pass domestic partnerships in Colorado.

In early 2006, it became evident to national observers that Colorado was becoming a major battleground between Gill and pro-family advocates, including Dr. James C. Dobson. A *Washington Times* headline in February read: "Marriage activists headed for Colorado showdown; Gay millionaire, Focus on Family founder face off."

Knowing that Focus on the Family Action was gathering signatures to put a marriage amendment on the Colorado ballot, Gill and his legislative allies cleverly placed a domestic partnerships measure on the same fall ballot. Officially, Gill spent \$2.5 million in support of the measure, but he spent far more than that when unofficial "educational" efforts are included, such as a million-dollar campaign in Focus on the Family's hometown of Colorado Springs.

Polling throughout the fall indicated the domestic partnership measure was headed for victory. But a strong effort through churches — part of a \$1 million media and grassroots campaign by Focus on the Family Action and its associated state organization, Colorado Family Action — turned the tide and resulted in a stinging, 6-point defeat for Gill.

"Gill and his friends are a financial force to be reckoned with," said Colorado Family Action's Jim Pfaff, "but he's not invincible. What that defeat showed is that when pro-family citizens and

pastors band together and take action, even an extreme effort by Tim Gill can be defeated."

Gill also has struck out in most of his attempts to defeat state marriage amendments. A study of donations related to last year's state marriage amendments found that Gill and his allies gave 38 percent of the funds used by opponents of the amendments. Gill himself gave \$3.8 million, and his friends gave another \$1.5 million. Other than in Arizona, those anti-marriage efforts were unsuccessful.

### Wake-up call

All indications are that Gill is going to escalate his political involvement and funding in 2008. As usual, he's not saying what his plans are. But this year, he told *The Atlantic* that his state-level successes in 2006 have prompted plans for a "larger target list in 2008."

Perhaps more indicative of his plans for expansion is the conference he held in Miami in March 2006. It was Gill the evangelist in prototypical fashion, telling a group of 200 gay-rights donors how they can follow the Gill model of pouring massive funding into local races.

As Gill would prefer, there was very little media coverage of this event, but the *Rocky Mountain News* in Denver quoted a prominent gay activist, Marty Rouse of the Human Rights Campaign, who attended and said it was a "wake-up call" to many donors.

"He (Gill) saw how he was able to make a difference in his home state and he said, 'If I can make a difference in Colorado, you can make a difference in your home state. So let's work together to take it to your states.'"

Perhaps, as America heads into another critical election season, Gill's all-out commitment to the cause of homosexuality — and his zeal for spreading gay-rights victories to more states — also will serve as a wake-up call to pro-family citizens.

The clock is ticking. ●

*Paid for by Focus on the Family Action*