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### Introduction

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#### Citation Information

Paul F. Campos, *Introduction*, 68 U. COLO. L. REV. 285 (1997), available at <https://scholar.law.colorado.edu/faculty-articles/651>.

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Citation: 68 U. Colo. L. Rev. 285 1997

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UNIVERSITY OF  
**COLORADO LAW REVIEW**

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Volume 68, Number 2

1997

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**INTRODUCTION**

PAUL F. CAMPOS\*

In the year just past, the United States Supreme Court decided, as usual, several cases that drew wide attention. But perhaps no decision rendered by that tribunal was fraught with more national interest, political controversy, and the potential for fruitful academic discussions than Colorado's own *Evans v. Romer*.

The issue of gay rights has become an issue of national contention, with noteworthy battles being fought over military policy, school curriculum content, and matters of family law. No feature of the controversy has been more bitterly contested than the question of whether antidiscrimination laws should protect persons on the basis of sexual orientation, or whether indeed larger political units can or should bar smaller ones from implementing such laws. Colorado's Amendment 2, which in 1992 attempted to overturn antidiscrimination statutes in four Colorado cities, became the focus of an effort to reverse through judicial review the democratic determination of such questions.

Through the generosity of the late Ira C. Rothgerber, Jr., the University of Colorado School of Law was able to bring together a group of distinguished legal scholars and practicing attorneys for a day-long conference, "Gay Rights and the Courts: The Amendment 2 Controversy." This, the Fifth Annual Ira C. Rothgerber, Jr. Conference on American Constitutional Law, featured outstanding presentations from nationally renowned scholars, including Larry Alexander, Lynn Baker, Ann Estin, Lino Graglia, Thomas Grey, and Janet Halley. In addition, the incisive commentaries of the lead counsel in *Evans v. Romer*,

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Jean Dubofsky and Timothy Tymkovich, lent the special perspective of these talented lawyers to the proceedings, giving the conference a glimpse into the preparation and argument of what perhaps one day will be considered a landmark decision in the field of constitutional jurisprudence.

As their papers demonstrate, the invited speakers represent a wide variety of views on the issues discussed, and the audience was treated to both a spirited and scholarly debate regarding the set of controversial topics addressed by the papers.

We at the University of Colorado are indeed fortunate to be able to take advantage of such opportunities. The Byron R. White Center for American Constitutional Study and the University of Colorado School of Law present such events not only for the benefit of the academic and legal communities, but for the people of Colorado. We do so in the hope that Mr. Rothgerber's vision of making the sometimes arcane topic of constitutional law accessible to those who are most directly affected by it may be in some measure realized. It is very much through gifts such as Mr. Rothgerber's that the first three words of the United States Constitution, "We the People," are given the opportunity to have resonance for our own time.