Gay NY politicians participate in forum

By ALEXA WILLIAMSON
Contributing Writer
Two homosexual public officeholders were among the four participants in a forum titled “Queers in Politics,” held last night in Ferris Booth Hall.

The four-member panel of speakers was comprised of homosexual politicians Laura Morrison, former president of Gay and Lesbian Independent Democrats, Deborah Glick, a member of the New York State Assembly, City Councilmember Tom Duane, and Dick Davy, executive director of Empire State Pride Agenda, a gay lobbying group.

One of the major challenges facing New York homosexuals, the panel agreed, is convincing the New York state legislature to pass an anti-discrimination bill that would make discrimination based on sexual orientation illegal. According to Glick, the bill was proposed 22 years ago but not heard until a lesbian legislator brought it to the floor.

“Bills do not move unless gays are in office,” she said.

All four also expressed shock at polltakers’ estimates that as much as 30 percent of New York City’s homosexual population voted for Republican Mayor Rudolph Giuliani last November, despite the fact that the first time he ran for the
office, in 1989, he did not support gay rights.

Duane speculated that gays may have voted for Giuliani instead of former mayor David Dinkins because Dinkins did not fulfill campaign promises he made to the gay community.

Glick said she was surprised that many homosexual voters aligned themselves with the Republican party, which she defined as a “party of exclusion” which is “basically for straight, white older men.”

Despite the slow pace at which legislators address gay issues, such as AIDS, health care, and same sex domestic partnerships, Duane and Davy emphasized the importance of gay political action groups joining with other minority groups to gain political clout.

Throughout the discussion, all four also stressed the need for gays and lesbians to be public about their sexuality.

Duane called for gay students to “keep the franchise going,” adding that homosexual students should enthusiastically support gay organizations on campus.

The forum, which was attended by about 25 students, was co-sponsored by the Lesbian Bisexual Gay Coalition (LGBC) and the College Democrats.