

Singer turns interviewer at gay-issues forum

Saturday August 11

Nation and world roundup

PERSON IN THE NEWS

LOS ANGELES — She's at home in the spotlight, but this week Melissa Etheridge's performance involved questioning, not singing.

Etheridge grilled Democratic presidential candidates taking part in a Thursday night forum broadcast on Logo, a gay-oriented cable TV channel. Under her questioning:

- Former N.C. Sen. John Edwards affirmed he is "comfortable" around gay people.
- Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., defended her husband Bill Clinton's record on gay rights and reiterated that she considers homosexuality "moral."
- New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson skirted an Etheridge query about whether homosexuality is a choice, saying, "I don't see this as an issue of science or definition. I see gays and lesbians as human beings."

A majority of Americans oppose nationwide recognition of same-sex marriage, and only two candidates supported it — long shots Mike Gravel of Alaska and Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio.

Interestingly, in advance of the forum, one gay spokesman said it's a Republican who perhaps has done most as a political champion of gay rights.

"Rudy Giuliani is near the top of the list," said Matt Foreman, who heads the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. He cited the former New York mayor for gay-friendly hiring practices, along with a successful push for domestic partnership and hate-crime laws in New York.