

Moral maturity

So Bob Bauman, the king of conservatism, the friend of the family, the troubador of traditional values, the master of morality, is gay.

What a pleasant surprise. The Republican congressman may not know it yet, but he has just performed his greatest service yet for his constituents on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

That isn't to say that Bauman, who had frequented Washington's gay bar circuit, was received well on the Shore. An Easton businessman spoke for others when he told *The Washington*



Rep. Robert E. Bauman

Post, "My wife saw it on TV last night. We just looked at each other in disbelief."

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Bauman has taught them that just because your congressman — or your dentist or your teacher — doesn't happen to share your sexual orientation doesn't mean he or she can't serve you with distinction. Bauman, chairman of the American Conservative Union, won hefty majorities in each of his three congressional races. One can question the wisdom of the Eastern Shore's views, but Bauman has unquestionably reflected them accurately.

Of course, the Shore will need a while to get used to the new Bauman — the real Bauman. And, not surprisingly, the congressman is finding the disclosure of his private life a painful lesson.

But it is a lesson. For it gives Bauman a chance to try on his neighbor's moccasin, to empathize with the homosexuals whom conservatives like Bob Bauman have attacked. He already knows how intolerance can help politicians. Now he will discover how it hurts its victims.

Actually, Bauman has already known the worst effects of intolerance. He has already known what it is like to live a secret life, to embrace a conscious schizophrenia, to maintain the facade of happy family life.

We extend Bauman our condolences, not only for the harassment he is undergoing but also for the secrecy he had to engage in trying to stave off his current embarrassment.

But for the Eastern Shore's sake, we hope Bauman recovers soon from the shock of coming out and heads back to the hustings with a new mission. Bauman has preached intolerance. Now let him preach tolerance.

If Bauman would follow Jerry Falwell and Anita Bryant and their gang around the country exploding their moral myths, he could achieve the national stature he was seeking before his current troubles. And by attacking their messages of hate with a message of compassion and understanding, he can achieve the moral maturity they will never know.