

Hearings to be held on medical marijuana

Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) will hold hearings next year on legalizing the use of marijuana for medical purposes. Frank made that announcement Sept. 3, at the 1994 national conference of the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws, in Washington, D.C.

Many people with HIV/AIDS have found marijuana effective in relieving the nausea sometimes associated with the disease or with treatments and medications used in therapy. The herb also has medical applications for glaucoma, multiple sclerosis, nausea associated with chemotherapy for cancer, and other afflictions.

Frank called the classification of illegal drugs "probably the most important undiscussed issue that we have."

He said, "For the government of the United States to deny a doctor's right to prescribe what he thinks is best for that patient in this situation is wholly at variance with most of the principles my colleagues profess." Frank said he hopes to "shame my colleagues into changing this policy."

NORML is organizing a nationwide civil disobedience action Nov. 15 to bring attention to the issue of medical marijuana.

Transitional turmoil at NGLTF

Peri Jude Radecic is stepping down as executive director to return to her old job of public policy director at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Radecic was elevated to her current position a year ago, when Torie Osborn unexpectedly resigned after six months on the job.

Radecic decided that what she enjoyed most and did best was the public policy work. She wanted to return to that rather than remain in her current post, with its heavy responsibilities in fund raising and administration.

Radecic will stay on as executive director until a successor is found. Board co-chair Deborah Johnson-Rolon heads up the search committee. She hopes to complete that process in November and have the person in place soon thereafter.

Meanwhile, three Washington, D.C., employees of NGLTF will leave the organization in September. This follows a budget cut at the start of the summer that eliminated four program positions. One of the slots had been left vacant for a time, following a resignation for reasons of health.

Among those departing is Deborah Cox, director of finance and administration, the first person hired by Osborn last summer.

Spokeswoman Robin Kane is leaving after four

years with the organization.

Ivy Young has logged five years with NGLTF. She is currently director of its well-known "Creating Change" conference. She leaves two months prior to that annual event.

NATIONAL NGLTF GAY & LESBIAN TASK FORCE

Two board members will come to Washington during this time of transitional turmoil. San Franciscan Chris Collins will "assist with fund raising and other organizational duties." Texan Gregory Fisher will become interim director of communications. An interim office manager will be hired.

Crime bill takes on gay-bashing and violence against women

Included in the federal crime bill passed recently in both the House and Senate are provisions that increase the penalties for hate crimes and crimes of violence against women. This marks the first time Congress has moved to punish crimes against lesbians and gay men.

Once signed by the president, this \$30.2 billion legislation will increase sentences by at least three offense levels for federal crimes motivated by actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexual orientation.

The Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act attached to the bill was sponsored in the Senate by Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.) and in the House by Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.). Twenty-six states and Washington, D.C., have laws that enhance penalties for hate crimes; 12 states and the District of Columbia include sexual orientation in those statutes.

A second measure included in the federal bill is the Violence Against Women Act, which doubles the federal penalty for repeat sex offenders. It also requires that federal laws treat as the same ac-

quaintance rape and rape by a stranger. The act mandates restitution for the victims of sex crimes and includes money for a variety of police training, counseling, data collection, and educational programs.

P-FLAG members shot at abortion clinic

The July 29 shooting outside an abortion clinic in Pensacola, Fla., took the lives of the clinic's doctor and an escort, and injured a second escort. James Barrett, 74, and his wife, June Barrett, 68, were volunteering as escorts at Dr. John Britton's clinic. The Barretts were also members of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

When the three arrived at the clinic that day, antiabortion activist Paul Hill shot at them, killing Dr. Britton and James Barrett. June Barrett received injuries to her arm and breast, but survived. Hill was arrested in connection with the shootings and charged with murder, according to *The Washington Blade*.

June Barrett's son had died of AIDS-related causes. She and James Barrett, married four years, had also volunteered for P-FLAG and Escambia AIDS Service and Education. James Barrett, a retired Air Force lieutenant, had learned to accept gay men and lesbians after meeting June.

"They were both loving and good people. It [the shooting] makes us sick," said Bonnie Bryant, Pensacola P-FLAG member.

All women welcome, except...

Six openly transsexual women were allowed to enter the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival this year, despite the festival's exclusionary policy of allowing only "womyn-born womyn." The event followed a week-long protest by 13 transsexual women and their friends and supporters.

The protesters camped across the road from the festival's main gate beneath a bright green banner which proclaimed, "Camp Trans: For Humyn-Born Humyns." The protest included a variety of workshops and activities aimed at informing festival participants about gender issues, and included a speech by Leslie Feinberg, author of *Stone Butch Blues*. Schedules of these activities were handed out to women waiting to enter the festival.

The six transsexual women were finally allowed to attend a meeting of the Lesbian Avengers inside the festival grounds, after their request for clarification of the exclusionary policy was passed on to festival owners Lisa Vogel and Barbara Price. The women were escorted to the meeting by a contingent of Lesbian Avengers.

The protesters believe the action was successful, but said they still feel the wording of the festival policy is unclear. The group plans to protest again next year.

Bias to be addressed in U.S. HIV/AIDS policy

Administration officials met last month with national gay and lesbian organizations and agreed to a new approach in HIV/AIDS policymaking. Clinton's chief domestic policy advisor and acting HIV/AIDS policy coordinator agreed to include the Department of Justice in a new governmentwide working group, in order to address the problem of homophobic discrimination as part of combating the epidemic.

Carol Rasko, chief domestic policy advisor, and Patsy Fleming, acting HIV/AIDS coordinator, attended the White House meeting. Also represented were the Human Rights Campaign Fund, the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum, the National Latino Lesbian and Gay Organization, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the American Association of Physicians for Human Rights.

Gay and lesbian leaders also emphasized at the meeting that the new HIV/AIDS policy coordinator needs to be able to influence policymaking in the White House and Congress, and should have offices in the White House itself.

Texas jury opts for death sentence in gay murder

Donald Aldrich, 29, has been sentenced to death by a Kerr County, Texas, jury for killing Nicholas West, 23, because West was gay. Abducted at gunpoint from a gay cruising spot, West was driven 10 miles to a remote spot where he was stripped, beaten and shot to death, reported to *The Washington Blade*. The trial was moved from Tyler, Texas, to Kerr County due to publicity.

Civil rights activists say this is the first hate-crime murder in Texas where the accused was convicted of capital murder instead of a lesser verdict.

"In Texas, there is a history of devaluing the rights of gay men and lesbians, which means people who murder them tend to receive lighter sentences because of who their victims are," said Dianne Hardy-Garcia, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Human Rights Lobby of Texas.

Aldrich admits he committed the crime because the victim was gay, according to the Associated Press.

Compiled by Jann Gilbert and Bob Roehr

cathartic comics I featuring The Brown Bomber and Diva Touché Flambé by Prof. I.B. Gittendowne

