

# letters

## Home test warning

To the Editor:

In reading the Aug. 16, 1996, issue of *Just Out*, I was stunned to see a 1/4 page ad for the Life Care Products home HIV test. This product, in the quest for a quick buck, short circuits all creditable HIV information, counseling and testing programs that exist in our community.

The guidelines used by the Oregon AIDS Hotline in recommending a test site to a caller include all the following:

- Pre-test counseling to ensure that the person has allowed enough time between the possible exposure to virus and the test to allow antibodies to develop. Indeed, if a person tests too soon the test result will be negative, but they will still be able to transmit the virus to other people. In contrast, when you call to order the Life Care test a third-party phone service takes your credit card number and types a mailing label for the test to be shipped. If you ask questions about the test, they confess to not knowing "that stuff" and suggest you place a toll call to the manufacturer (area code 604).

- A positive test result must be based on both a positive "Elisa" test and a confirming "Western Blot." Doing only the "Elisa" test can result in a 25 percent to 30 percent false positive rate in the general population. All the test sites we refer to do both before declaring a person HIV positive. Other home test kits approved by FDA do the same. Unfortunately, the Life Care test is "Elisa" only, meaning a very high rate of false positives...and this without any information or counseling person present. With this kit the presence of antibodies from a flu shot, hepatitis or one of several other common conditions will tell this person they have HIV disease.

- Anonymity. However, when you order the Life Care test your charge card company has a record that you just charged a mail order diagnostic kit from a company that specializes in mail-order HIV tests!

- Post-test counseling in person at the time of test results: to evaluate the emotional state of the person receiving results and ensure their well being, as well as to introduce the person to the availability of services and treatment. The Life Care kit comes with a piece of paper listing several "AIDS information hot lines."

The advertising of this product represents a serious potential danger to the emotional and/or physical well being of consumers and the people close to them.

Tom Richardson, Coordinator  
Oregon AIDS Hotline

## So-called friends

To the Editor:

Inga Sorensen needs to be congratulated for her coverage of our supposed friends and their support of the Defense of Marriage Act ["No 'I do' for you," *Just Out*, July 19, 1996]. As always, her coverage was hard hitting and right on. Personally, I am appalled by the lack of political courage in this country and it starts at the top.

President Clinton has taken probably more anti-gay positions than any other president in history. He also has been the most supportive. However, along with Earl Blumenauer and Elizabeth Furse, Clinton has mistakenly translated the phrase "courage of one's convictions" to mean courage to do what is politically necessary to get re-elected. But these individuals are continually supported by many in our community and our political organizations.

I say it is time to say no to our "friends" who say no to us. It would be easier to understand if any of them had the decency to apologize and even to try to explain their actions. I've never heard Clinton talk about why he thought it important to be supportive of lesbian and gay couples and families, but I did notice that he quickly agreed to sign a bigoted bill to deprive us of

socially sanctioned support. Maybe we should vote for Ralph Nader.

Closer to home, two of Oregon's more liberal congressional representatives, Earl Blumenauer and Elizabeth Furse, stabbed us in the back. Furse, who narrowly won by 300 votes in 1994, possibly will lose more than 300 lesbian and gay votes this year, and she should. For Furse the issue could have been a simple vote of "present." She could have explained it away fairly easily. I remember being at the wedding of two gay men three years ago, with Rep. Furse in attendance. What goes on in her head? I think she owes them an apology.

Portland's newest congressman, Earl Blumenauer, is a long one to talk up the lesbian and gay community when he wants money or support. Throughout his career he has been short on follow-through for support of lesbians and gays. In one of the most liberal districts on the West Coast, Earl Blumenauer said no to the thousands of lesbians and gays who supported him. At the Keeton Lowery Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club four months ago, Blumenauer got up and said that he would, if elected, support the rights of lesbians and gays to wed. Pure and simple, that is what Earl Blumenauer is all about. I think we need to find someone else to represent us.

We are fortunate to have two courageous representatives in Washington, D.C.: Rep. Peter DeFazio voted against the Defense of Marriage Act, and Sen. Ron Wyden announced several months ago, on his own, that lesbian and gay couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples including the right to marry.

Again we learn the lesson that you support your friends and you vote against those who attack you.

John Balkar  
Portland

Editor's note:

Wyden proved his support recently by voting against the Defense of Marriage Act.

## For us 95 percent

To the Editor:

We are writing to express our thanks to the citizens of the First Congressional District of Oregon for sending Rep. Elizabeth Furse to Washington, D.C., and to ask the gay and lesbian community to do everything possible to keep her here.

Elizabeth Furse has been an outspoken and effective advocate for the concerns and aspirations of the gay and lesbian community. She has stood with us again and again, co-sponsoring the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and opposing a stream of anti-gay amendments dealing with education, adoption and domestic partnership. She has spoken out fearlessly against the military ban and has been tireless in her support for AIDS research, prevention and care.

Despite this extraordinary record, we understand that some have lately questioned her commitment to our community in light of the recent vote on the so-called Defense of Marriage Act. This falls into the very trap the authors of this legislation have set for us: They want nothing better than to divide our community from those of our allies for whom a vote against the bill could have proven very costly at the polls.

The right wing hopes we will ignore the difference between those who actively oppose our fight for fairness and those who actively support us 95 percent of the time. Whether this strategy succeeds is up to us: Same-sex marriage will be a wedge issue this November only if we allow it to become one.

As the first two openly gay members of Congress, we hope you will not take the bait.

Gerry Studds, Member of Congress  
Barney Frank, Member of Congress



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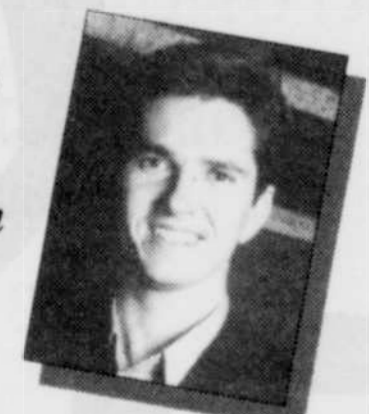


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