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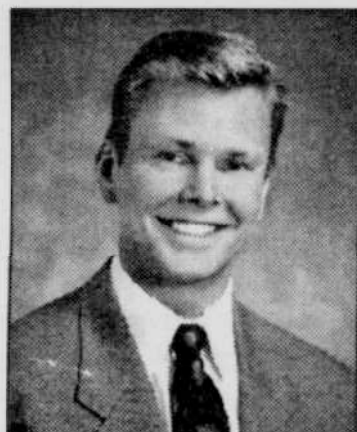
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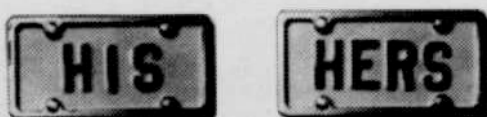
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NATIONAL news

ADOPTION BAN PASSED

House approves D.C. appropriations bill with an amendment
to prevent adoption by unmarried couples by Bob Roehr

During its last day of business before summer recess, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 227-192 to forbid unmarried couples from adopting children in the District of Columbia. Some viewed the vote, which occurred Aug. 7, as anti-gay.

"It might give some gay rights activist a warm feeling to see gay couples treated just as if they were married," said principal sponsor Rep. Steve Largent, a Republican from Oklahoma, "but these are kids... It is simply wrong to turn them into trophies from the culture war, to exploit them in order to make some political point."

Rep. Chet Edwards, a Texas Democrat, blasted the measure, saying it would "allow a philandering married husband who abuses his wife on a regular basis to be able to legally adopt a child," but would prevent "two nuns who felt God's calling from adopting a disabled, blind child from Romania."

The adoption proposal was an amendment to a D.C. appropriations bill.

New Mexico Republican Heather Wilson said, "This amendment...points out why we should not deal with these kinds of complex issues in an appropriations bill." She urged for local autonomy in making decisions "on a case-by-case basis in the best interest of each and every child."

Local opponents had worked closely with Appropriations Committee members to block such amendments earlier in the legislative process, and initially they succeeded.

On July 30, openly gay House member Jim Kolbe, a Republican from Arizona, spoke movingly about a same-sex couple who had adopted children from Russia. The same day, committee Chair Robert Livingston, a Louisiana Republican, denied a request for a roll-call vote on the amendment as Traditional Values Coalition lobbyist Andrea Sheldon glared from the sidelines.

Coalition officials subsequently issued a press release in which Sheldon dubbed Livingston "a fraud...more concerned with currying political favors with the left than he is about doing what is right."

Still, proponents of the adoption ban proposal managed to get the amendment to the House floor for a recorded vote of all members, and they managed to pull together a significant majority.

Despite the amendment's passage, the vote may be more symbolic than practical. The Senate Appropriations Committee previously passed the District's budget bill without the amendment.

Traditional Values Coalition leaders have not pressed for amendments on the floor of the Senate in the past, but they still have that option.

President Bill Clinton has indicated his displeasure with the amendment as an infringement on local home rule. He has not, however, publicly pledged to veto the adoption provision.

If the measure does eventually take effect, it applies only to unmarried couples. Individual lesbians and gay men in D.C. would be able to adopt children.

**"This amendment...
points out why we
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complex issues in an
appropriations bill."**

—Rep. Heather Wilson

RITONAVIR PROBLEMS CONTINUE

The veil of secrecy surrounding problems with the protease inhibitor ritonavir (trade name Norvir) continues to be upheld by the drug's manufacturer, Abbott Laboratories.

The company announced July 27 it had "encountered an undesired formation of Norvir crystalline structure that affects how the capsule form of Norvir dissolves."

Arthur Higgins, senior vice president for pharmaceutical operations, added that the capsules will not be produced until the problem is resolved. Abbott Laboratories expects supplies of capsules will have started running out at pharmacies by the middle of August.

Crystallization also occurs in the liquid form of the product, but keeping the liquid drug at room temperature and shaking the bottle redissolves the crystals.

Some AIDS advocates, however, fear switching to the liquid form of ritonavir will adversely impact compliance. The first reason is that a bottle of liquid is more difficult to carry than a pill, so dosing might not occur on the recommended schedule. Secondly, even the company admits the product's taste is less than pleasant. Indeed, one consumer described it as "tasting like carburetor fluid." (Another prefers the liquid over the capsule, however, because the latter "explodes in your stomach.")

Kiyoshi Kuromiya, a Philadelphia treatment advocate who has closely followed the

federal Food and Drug Administration's approval process of all four protease drugs, says Abbott Laboratories has always been extremely secretive about its product.

He charges: "[Abbott] got it through with full licensure with an absolute minimum of data on anything... Merck [maker of Crixivan] was much better on being open about it."

In other news, an unexpected number of premature births led the National Institutes of Health to suspend enrollment July 22 of pregnant women in protease inhibitor trials.

The initial data came from a Swiss birth registry and was presented at the recent international AIDS conference in Geneva. The data showed a third of the women who were on combination therapy—which in some cases included protease inhibitors—giving birth prematurely.

A survey of the Pediatric AIDS Clinical Trials Group showed three of five births to be premature. That trial used Norvir as the protease inhibitor.

Other trials, however, did not show the same pattern. In all cases, the numbers were small. The Swiss data was based on 30 pregnancies, while the United States safety trials each had 10 or fewer gravid patients.

■ Reported by BOB ROEHR