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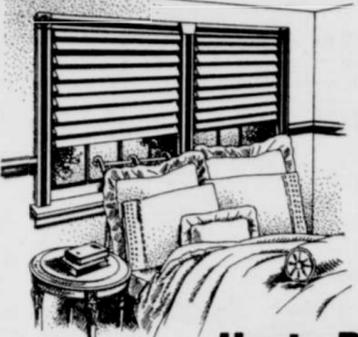
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NATIONAL news

ARIZONA

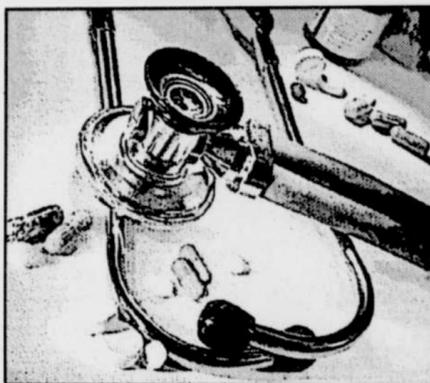
The voters of Tempe re-elected openly gay Mayor Neil Giuliano to a fourth term. Giuliano, a Republican, won an election race in March with an overwhelming 70 percent of the votes.

While Giuliano's sexual orientation has been an issue in previous elections, Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund officials say it did not figure in this year's race.

"We are very pleased that this year, the key question was who would make the best mayor for all the people of Tempe," says Victory Fund Executive Director Brian Bond. "And the voters resoundingly told us that the answer was Neil Giuliano."

Giuliano campaigned on his record in the areas of neighborhood revitalization, economic improvement and youth development.

CALIFORNIA



Public health officials in Los Angeles County are concerned about a recent outbreak of syphilis among gay men. At least 23 new cases were reported during six weeks in February and March, reports the March 23 *Los Angeles Times*.

The outbreak, which is affecting men between the ages of 25 and 50, appears to be centered in Hollywood, West Hollywood and Silver Lake. The situation is considered unusual because Los Angeles County typically experiences only about 100 cases per year, and most of those cases appear in heterosexual men and women.

The rash of syphilis diagnoses is of particular concern because the spread of a sexually transmitted disease suggests that people are not employing safer sex practices, particularly condom use. Public health officials are also concerned because the number of reported cases is growing daily. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that the outbreak is spreading to other areas of the state or to heterosexuals.

The genital sores caused by syphilis make the transmission of HIV easier. Higher prevalence

of the disease could prove to be a precursor to an increase in the transmission of HIV, because some of the men infected with syphilis also have HIV.

Dr. Jonathan Fielding, director of public health for Los Angeles County, emphasized that this upsurge is not an epidemic. The health department is urging health care providers to test appropriate patients and to find and treat the sexual partners of those diagnosed with the disease.

"I am sure we are going to see a significant increase in cases," says Fielding. "We are urging those at risk to be screened and urging physicians with high-risk patients to screen them."

He adds: "The good news is that it is very treatable. Penicillin, the old standby, is the primary treatment."

One of the reasons the outbreak is considered so surprising is that syphilis is generally thought to be on the decline across the nation.

Syphilis is spread through direct sexual contact with syphilis sores. It cannot be contracted by contact with toilet seats, doorknobs or eating utensils. Washing, urinating or douching after sex will not prevent transmission of the disease. Syphilis, if left untreated, can remain latent in the body for years. It can cause severe damage to the heart, brain and other organs.

LOUISIANA

On April 11, the state Supreme Court will hear a case concerning the constitutionality of Louisiana's 195-year-old sodomy law, which was struck down last year by an appellate court.

A March 15 story in the *Baton Rouge Advocate* reports that, under the "crime against nature" law, both oral and anal sex between consenting adults are designated as felonies. These crimes are punishable by up to five years in prison. The law applies to gay men, lesbians and heterosexuals. However, gay men and lesbians believe they are targeted by the law.



In February 1999, a three-judge panel of the 4th Circuit Court of Appeal overturned the law. The court ruled that noncommercial, consensual oral and anal sex is protected by the right to privacy in the Louisiana Constitution. The Orleans Parish district attorney appealed that ruling.

The case in question concerns the 1996 conviction and sentencing of Mitchell Smith for having oral sex with a woman.

The American Civil Liberties Union joined the case on Smith's behalf. The ACLU argued

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