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NATIONAL news

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The National Minority AIDS Council applauded the Bush administration's decision Jan. 7 to maintain the White House Office of National AIDS Policy.

Executive director Paul A. Kawata stressed the importance of this announcement in light of recent statistics showing the alarming increase and continued disproportionate impact the AIDS epidemic is having on communities of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos. "America needs heightened leadership in the fight for AIDS now more than ever directly from the White House, particularly in the area of coordinating the federal response and allocation of federal resources to address the AIDS epidemic."

Kawata also applauded the decision to maintain the office on the President's Initiative for One America. "We are encouraged that the administration understands the importance of attending to issues of diversity within society in general and within the fight against HIV/AIDS."

The Bush administration announcement was a reversal of comments made by chief of staff Andy Card, who told *USA Today* the offices would be closed. According to Reuters, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer could not explain why he had made the mistake.

Regardless, AIDS Action executive director Claudia French said, the statements were noticeably void of a genuine commitment to HIV/AIDS as a priority for the administration. "While we were encouraged by earlier reports that President Bush decided to keep the office, we are now baffled by double-speak from the White House."

Sir Elton John baffled his fans Feb. 10 by announcing he will do a duet with Eminem during the Grammy Awards ceremony airing Feb. 21 on CBS. Sources say the openly gay singer will perform "Stan," a hit by the homophobic rapper, who is expected to win several statues for *The Marshall Mathers LP*.

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, which is planning a protest outside the Staples Center in Los Angeles, expressed disappointment in John. Executive director Joan M. Garry said his decision violates the spirit of an award he received last year for combating homophobia.

"John has played an enormous role in educating the world about AIDS and gay issues through his music and charitable work," she said. "GLAAD is appalled that John would share a stage with Eminem, whose words and actions promote hate and violence against gays and lesbians."

Robin Tyler, who helped mobilize the Stop-DrLaura.com cybercampaign, wrote an open letter to John in disgust. She said it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences put the two artists together.

"They chose a prominent gay man as window dressing to cover themselves from the charge that they're promoting anti-gay hate," she wrote. "This is a familiar game in American politics: Choose a representative of an oppressed group to deflect criticism from hateful policies or rhetoric, as when President



Andrew Card

Bush (the first) nominated Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court."

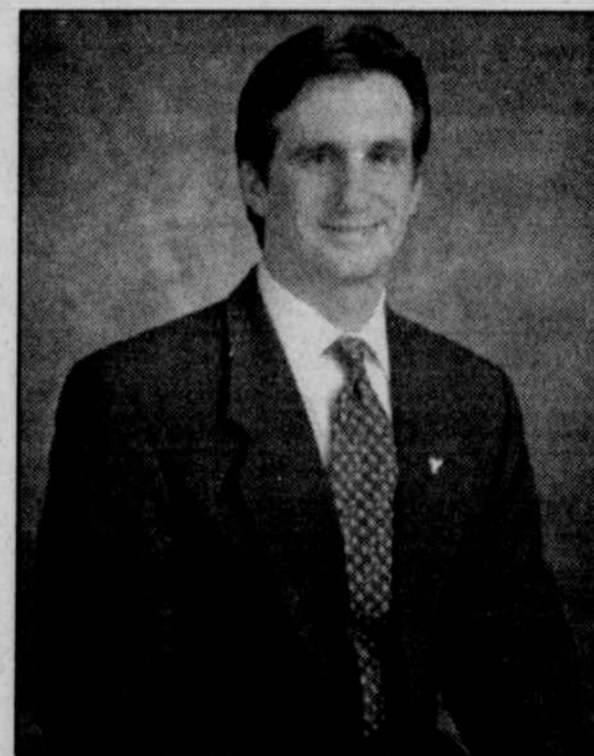
ARIZONA

A petition to recall openly gay Tempe Mayor Neil Giuliano was submitted Jan. 30. If at least 3,982 of the 4,606 signatures are validated by the end of March, he will face a special election Sept. 11.

The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund thinks Giuliano is being unfairly targeted by a campaign mired in anti-gay sentiment. The organization, which works to increase the number of openly gay public officials, is confident voters will re-elect him.

"At its core, this drive to recall a great mayor is about prejudice, not principle," executive director Brian K. Bond said. "It is a thinly veiled attempt to remove an outstanding public servant from office because he is openly gay."

The recall drive sprang up immediately following Tempe's recent attempt to modify its United Way campaign so city



Neil Giuliano

workers could use the government-coordinated giving program only as a vehicle for donations to organizations that do not discriminate. City workers still would have been able to support other organizations, but not through the city-sponsored program.

Public outcry over the proposal prevented the change, and Giuliano's office was flooded with anti-gay messages—including death threats. One e-mail was signed "gay-beater," and one voice mail said he should be "taken out."

The recall's leader, A.J. LaFaro, claims he isn't targeting the mayor's orientation. "It's not about [Giuliano's] sexual preference, it's about when he tries to push his agenda down our throats," he told the *East Valley Tribune*.

PENNSYLVANIA

The NBA fined Philadelphia 76ers guard Allen Iverson \$5,000 on Feb. 2 for shouting a derogatory remark about gays toward fans, *The Associated Press* reports. He claimed he only was responding to a barrage of insults and racial slurs hurled at him during a game