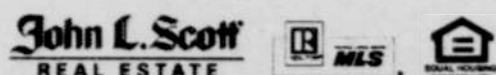


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— The Oregonian, August 10, 1996

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NATIONAL news



Even though the Boy Scouts already have equal access to schools, Van Hilleary (center) figures it can’t hurt to be prepared

NATIONAL
The Human Rights Campaign derided House passage May 23 of an anti-gay amendment sponsored by Rep. Van Hilleary, R-Tenn., prohibiting federal funding to public schools that deny access of facilities to the Boy Scouts of America, despite the fact that the law already guarantees the organization equal access. A companion measure in the Senate was introduced by Jesse Helms, R-N.C.

“This was an empty, mean-spirited gesture,” said Winnie Stachelberg, HRC political director. “These bankrupt measures will accomplish nothing concrete or substantial in the policy arena and are vivid examples of political grandstanding by anti-gay politicians.... This is really nothing more than a punishment in search of a problem.”

To gain support for his amendment, Hilleary issued a letter to his colleagues on Capitol Hill that mistakenly said schools routinely deny access to the Scouts. Reps. Bill Delahunt, D-Mass., and Connie Morella, R-Md., wrote to lawmakers to address the error.

Hilleary’s letter “might lead you to believe that such exclusion is lawful and commonplace, and it is not,” they said. “A selective denial of equal access is unlawful. And no school district has ever successfully barred the Boy Scouts from using school facilities that are open to all.”

Helms said on the Senate floor last month that “radical militants” were trying to ban the Boy Scouts from campuses. He also said gay activists “demand that everybody else’s principles must be cast aside in order to protect the right of homosexual conduct.”

Health Secretary Tommy G. Thompson announced May 15 the release of *A Guide to the Clinical Care of Women with HIV*, thought to be the first medical manual specifically written for this population. The publication provides practical, experience-based advice and authoritative treatment guidelines for clinicians treating women with HIV.

“This new manual could not be more timely,” Thompson said. “HIV infection among women has become the fifth-leading cause of death among women between the ages of 25 and 44. Information in this guide will help clinicians improve treatment and save the lives of HIV-positive women and their babies.”

Recent statistics confirm HIV’s increasing threat to women. Of the 43,517 new cases in the United States reported from July 1999 through June 2000, 24 percent were among women.

Even more ominously, in the 32 states with confidential HIV reporting, women between 13 and 24 years old comprise more than half of the

new cases of HIV infection. In 1985, by contrast, women represented just 6 percent of the reported 10,000 U.S. AIDS cases.

The virus can be especially tragic for pregnant women. Many women learn they are HIV-positive only after giving birth to an infant with HIV, yet diagnosis and treatment before birth almost always can prevent transmission of the virus to the newborn.

KANSAS
The Kansas Court of Appeals has ruled that judges must consider a wide range of factors and not focus solely on sex at birth when determining the legal gender of a person who has had a sex-change operation. The decision came May 11 as the court considered the validity of the marriage of J’Noel Gardiner, a trans woman, to her husband, Marshall.

The marriage essentially was voided after his death, when his estranged son successfully challenged the union in a dispute over the estate. The trial court ruled that Gardiner’s prior sex change would not be recognized and that her marriage was invalid because she was born a male and unions between people of the same sex are not legal in Kansas.

The appeals court reversed that decision, giving a detailed review of scientific literature and rejecting what it called “a rigid and simplistic approach” to defining trans people. Recognizing the “diverse composition of today’s families,” it noted that biology is “no longer the sole organizing principle” of family life in the United States.

“This decision recognizes what transgender people have known for a long time: that some people’s sex is not determined by their anatomy at birth,” said Jennifer Middleton of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. “It is very encouraging to see this court focus on medical knowledge and the reality of people’s lives rather than old-fashioned, narrow notions of what it is to be a man or a woman.”

MINNESOTA
A state court struck down Minnesota’s law prohibiting oral and anal sex May 18. The American Civil Liberties Union hailed the ruling and vowed to defend its statewide impact if Gov. Jesse Ventura’s administration steps in and tries to limit it to the individual plaintiffs in the case.

“This is a tremendous victory—because of

