

NATIONAL news

is critically needed, as 14 states and jurisdictions, including Oregon, have implemented waiting lists or other restrictions on necessary medications.

At a markup July 16, the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee approved an additional \$161 million in Ryan White funding and provided modest but insufficient increases for HIV/AIDS activities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, according to HRC.

"The AIDS epidemic continues to grow at an alarming rate," Stachelberg said. "Treating those who are already living with HIV/AIDS is just the tip of the iceberg. Preventing new infections is the only way we know of right now to stop the disease in its tracks. We need to arm the CDC with the necessary funds to make prevention work possible today, so that there are fewer new infections tomorrow."

In separate action, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations approved increases in funding to help fight HIV/AIDS abroad. It provided \$550 million for programs at the U.S. Agency for International Development to combat HIV/AIDS, which is \$110 million above the Bush administration's request. It also included \$200 million for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.



A women's rights treaty has languished in the U.S. Senate for the past 22 years because of opposition from right-wingers like Jesse Helms

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force urged the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 24 to approve a women's rights treaty signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1980 and stalled in Congress for the past 22 years and to allow the full Senate to vote on whether to ratify it.

Nearly 170 U.N. member states, including Saudi Arabia, have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The United States is among a handful of countries—including alleged sponsors of terrorism Iran, Syria, Somalia and Sudan—that have refused to ratify it.

"Basic equality for women should be a no-brainer," said Lorri L. Jean, NGLTF executive director. "Yet the anti-gay right wing in America has blocked this treaty for nearly a quarter-century. If President and Laura Bush are serious about supporting the rights of women in Afghanistan and other countries, they should urge their Republican colleagues in the Senate to ratify CEDAW once and for all."

The treaty has languished in the U.S. Senate because of the opposition of right-wing groups and politicians, led by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C. Although the document merely mandates basic equality such as the right to own property, get an education and enter into marriage on an equal basis, U.S.-based conservative groups have resisted its ratification.

The Family Research Council alleges that the treaty "takes aim at family structure and morality." Meanwhile, Concerned Women for America calls it "the Equal Rights Amendment on steroids" and warns that it promotes "lesbianism" and "homosexual rights."

"The reality is that the right wing fears that these treaties will undermine their own rigid concepts of the family and religion," Jean said. "The right wing has used this same anti-woman, anti-gay rhetoric to oppose reproductive freedom and equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people both here in the U.S. and abroad."

The Mautner Project will present the National Lesbian Health Conference: Healing Works from Sept. 26 to 28 in Washington, D.C.

"The National Lesbian Health Conference is crucial to the advancement of lesbian health on all levels," executive director Kathleen DeBold said. "Unlike the typical health care gatherings where doctors meet with doctors, researchers meet with researchers and patients meet with patients, Healing Works brings together the diverse constituencies who share a common vision of increasing health-related education, services, research and organizations for lesbians."

The conference is planned and sponsored by a broad coalition of more than 60 groups and agencies. The program offers a wide array of plenary sessions, workshops and panels by more than 70 presenters, all showcasing the "healing work" being accomplished across the country.

Topics include "Lesbians with Serious Mental Illnesses: Needs and Resources," "BASTA! Latina Lesbians Community Response to Domestic Violence," "Children of Lesbian Mothers: A Research Update," "Cancer Risks in FTM and MTF Transsexual & Transgendered People" and "Sexual Minority Status Among Women Drug Users." Other workshops will focus on older women, disabled people, tobacco use, ovarian cancer and body image.

The conference costs \$300, which includes all materials, three breakfasts, two lunches and a welcome reception. Scholarships and sliding-scale fees are available to lesbians from underserved populations who otherwise would be unable to attend.

For more information or to register for Healing Works, call 202-332-5536, e-mail mautner@mautnerproject.org or visit the Internet site www.mautnerproject.org.

Metropolitan Community Churches, the predominantly gay Christian church with 300 congregations in 22 countries, has received recognition from the federal government to provide chaplains to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

"This marks a historic step for MCC churches," said the Rev. Troy Perry, longtime human rights activist, moderator of the 52,000-member church organization and himself an Army veteran. "U.S. programs have long been hostile to GLBT military servicemembers and veterans, so this marks yet another positive step toward full equality for America's gay and lesbian citizens."

While independent from the military services, the VA provides support and outreach programs to both active-duty servicemembers and veterans. MCC has a second application pending with the federal government to provide chaplains to military branches. **JM**

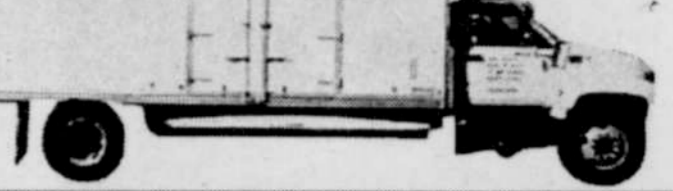
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