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NATIONAL news

Continued from Page 27

HIV or AIDS. He will send dozens of letters encouraging dental schools and training programs across the country to devote resources to education regarding HIV and to help eliminate discrimination against people with HIV and AIDS. In these letters, Dornfeld points out that "by redoubling our education efforts, our community can help to fulfill the promise that all persons, including those with HIV and AIDS, are provided full access to quality dental care."

In the lawsuit, Richard Doust, a 46-year-old Monmouth County resident, said he was referred to Dornfeld for emergency dental treatment. The lawsuit said that once Dornfeld learned Doust was HIV-positive, he took the man into his office and explained that his staff did not feel comfortable assisting Doust. Doust further claimed Dornfeld tried to refer him elsewhere for treatment.

Dornfeld denied the allegations, claiming he did not refuse treatment. Dornfeld further stated he is committed to doing what he can to ensure that all individuals with HIV and AIDS, and not just his own patients, receive full and equal dental treatment.

Scientific studies have consistently concluded that there is no significant risk of transmission of HIV from patient to dentist during dental treatment when universal precautions are routinely followed, and courts consistently have held that discrimination against people with HIV is unlawful under the Americans with Disabilities Act and state laws. But Lambda Legal regularly receives calls from people with HIV or AIDS who were denied dental or medical services or turned away from hotels and other public accommodations.

"These are everyday situations where most people encounter no problems, but people with HIV or AIDS are turned away at the door," attorney Jonathan Givner said. "They can usually find another hotel or another doctor, but in the process they've gone through the humiliation of being treated like second-class citizens—which is exactly what federal and state laws are designed to prevent."

Denial of dental services is particularly common, Givner said, and this settlement will help protect other people with HIV and AIDS from discrimination. "By educating dentists from within the profession, this settlement will significantly improve access to dental care for people with HIV and AIDS. For our client and for many other people with HIV and AIDS, we're extremely pleased with this settlement. It will make a substantial difference in people's lives."

African American teen-ager Sakia Gunn was stabbed to death May 11 after telling a man she was a lesbian.



Sakia Gunn

Newark police have a suspect in custody in the case and are holding him on murder, weapons and bias intimidation charges. New Jersey is one of 28 states, along with the District of Columbia, that includes sexual orientation in its hate crimes statute.

CONNECTICUT

Jessica (Horatio) Mercado, a Latina trans woman, was found stabbed to death last month in her New Haven apartment. No arrest has been made in the case.

According to police reports, Mercado was stabbed twice in the neck in her apartment, which was then set on fire in a possible attempt to cover up the crime. Some queer activist groups believe the crime might have been motivated by discrimination or alleged "gay panic."

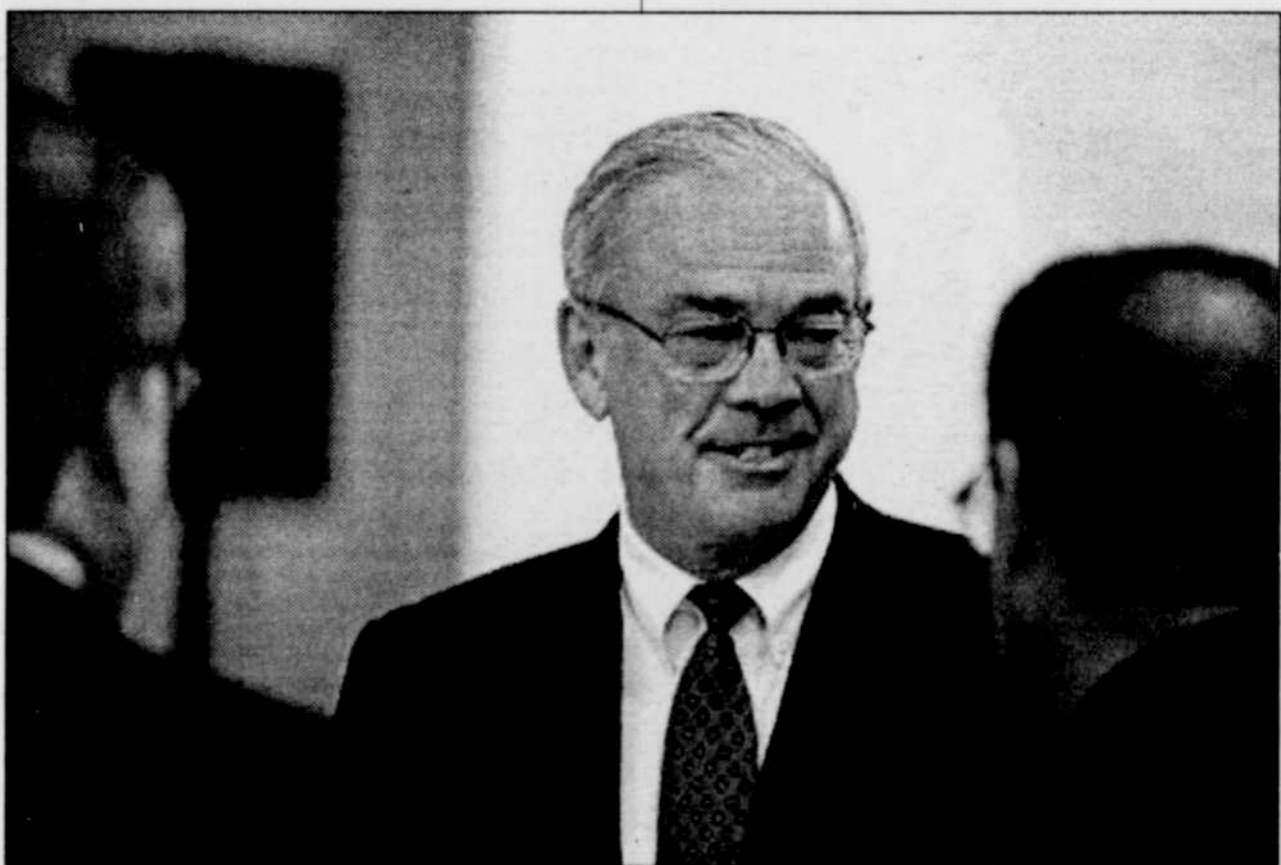
Connecticut includes sexual orientation in its hate crimes law but makes no clear reference to gender identity or expression. Only seven states and the District of Columbia have statutes that specifically include gender identity.

KENTUCKY

Democratic Gov. Paul Patton signed an executive order May 30 prohibiting discrimination against state employees based on sexual orientation or gender identity, among other factors. Kentucky is now the 10th state to use an executive order to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation against its public workforce and the only state to do so covering gender identity.

"In a country where it is perfectly legal in most jurisdictions to be fired based on sexual orientation or gender identity, any characterization of this order as a 'special right' shows a remarkable misunderstanding of civil rights," said Seth Kilbourn, Human Rights Campaign national field director. "We hope that Patton's successor will show an equally strong commitment to civil rights and retain these important protections for state workers."

Several counties and local governments statewide have passed ordinances in the past several years that include sexual orientation



Democratic Gov. Paul Patton has made Kentucky the first state to protect trans state employees from discrimination