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PORTLANDERS VISIT D.C. TO SAVE AIDS PROGRAM

Dozens of people with HIV and their advocates came to the nation's capital Feb. 24 seeking funding from Congress to maintain access to life-saving HIV/AIDS medications.

They were in Washington, D.C., to deliver a letter—signed by more than 400 community-based groups, health care facilities, national health care provider organizations as well as local and state governments—asking politicians to save the AIDS Drug Assistance Program by providing \$180 million in an emergency supplemental appropriation for fiscal year 2004. The amount would serve as a down payment on the \$319 million the program will need through fiscal year 2005 to serve nearly 100,000 clients.

ADAPs across the country are in fiscal crisis. According to a January report by the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, 791 eligible clients are already on waiting lists. Moreover, 15 states have taken steps to limit access to lifesaving HIV/AIDS drugs, while at least nine others plan to do so in the near future.

Since 2002, ADAPs have not received adequate federal funding. The fiscal year 2002 budget fell short by \$62 million, and the gap was \$79 million in 2003. Advocates predict this year could see the largest budget shortfall of about \$180 million unless Congress acts.

Unlike previous years, state and local governments won't have the funds to make up the difference, leaving thousands of HIV/AIDS patients without needed medicines. Even a short gap in treatment can undo years of progress in fighting the infection.



Rachel Pobi traveled to Washington, D.C., last month in hopes of saving the national AIDS Drug Assistance Program

About 100 people from 32 states met with their congressional representatives. Portland-area participants included Rachel Pobi, a heterosexual woman who has been HIV-positive for 24 years, and Fred Schaich, International Foundation for Alternative Research in AIDS founder.

"In 1990, before combination medicine was available, I was in a support group of 12 people; all but two of us died within two years," Pobi

told Just Out. "If these meds were available for them at an earlier time, they might still be here. I have these memories ingrained in my head. I don't want them happening to anyone else unnecessarily."

For more information visit www.atac-usa.org/adap.

ANTI-GAY JUDGE WILL DECIDE ON FLORIDA ADOPTION BAN

President Bush tapped an anti-gay judge Feb. 20 to serve on the court determining the fate of Florida's gay adoption ban—a law that directly affects a family that has since moved to Portland. The Human Rights Campaign strongly condemned the recess appointment.

"We have no reason to believe that William Pryor—who has shown time and again that he's unable to separate his anti-gay beliefs from his professional duties—will be able to serve as a federal judge without bias," president Cheryl Jacques said. "Mr. Pryor changed his vacation plans to avoid being at Disney World during Gay Days. If he's too prejudiced to share a 36,000-acre theme park with openly gay couples and their families, he should not be serving on a federal bench. It's especially troubling that he's been appointed to the same court that's been asked to rule on whether gays who serve as foster parents should be able to legally adopt children they've raised their entire lives."

Pryor will serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit, which has been asked to review the decision in Lofton vs. Kearney upholding Florida's ban on adoption by gay

and lesbian parents even though they're allowed to serve as foster parents. Portlanders Steve Lofton and Roger Croteau, who are raising three foster children from Florida, are among the plaintiffs in the case.

Jacques added, "Putting an individual with a track record of animus against GLBT Americans on any federal court, particularly the 11th Circuit, could have a devastating effect on so many GLBT Americans and their children."

In his role as Alabama's attorney general, Pryor abused his position by utilizing state resources to directly and indirectly attack queers in his state and across the country. He linked the state attorney general's Web site to vehemently anti-gay groups, including the Family Research Council and the American Center for Law and Justice, which regularly litigates cases against queer rights.

Pryor also filed a friend-of-the-court brief in Lawrence vs. Texas, the U.S. Supreme Court case challenging sodomy statutes, in which he likened homosexuality to incest, necrophilia, pedophilia, prostitution and adultery. He also argued in the brief that sodomy is a chosen behavior unworthy of constitutional protection.

Pryor is one of only six judges that HRC has opposed out of approximately 200 nominated by Bush. More than 175 national groups joined in this opposition, including the Log Cabin Republicans, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, People for the American Way, the Sierra Club and World Association of Persons with Disabilities. □

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