

**NATIONAL news**

**RELIGIOUS INVESTORS EXPAND FIGHT TO GET AIDS DRUGS TO POOR**

In light of World AIDS Day on Dec. 1, faith-based institutional investors are expanding their campaign for access to essential medicines. After a string of solid votes at drug companies last year, shareholder HIV/AIDS activists connected to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility have grown in number and ambition as they approach the 2005 shareholder season.



TVC director Andrea Lafferty

Sister Vicki Bergkamp, chairwoman of the center's HIV/AIDS Caucus, said: "ICCR members see the ravages of HIV and AIDS in their daily work in Africa, India and China. Our experience on the ground in these regions has convinced us that leading pharmaceutical companies can—and must—do more to make their lifesaving products accessible to the people who desperately need them."

James Gunning, the primary filer of an HIV resolution at Merck, said: "Too often, it is women and children who bear the burden of HIV and AIDS. Half of all children born with HIV die before they are 2 years old. One big reason is the high cost of pediatric AIDS medicines, which top \$1,300 per child per year. Compare that to generic adult first-line treatment, which is about \$200 per patient per year. How can we treat parents and not their children?"

More than 2.5 million children worldwide are living with HIV. In addition to the high cost of medicines, pediatric AIDS also suffers from a lack of research, inadequate diagnostics and other barriers to treatment, according to information released at a pediatric AIDS summit held by UNICEF and UNAIDS earlier this month in Geneva.

**KENTUCKIANS CHALLENGE GAY MARRIAGE BAN**

Three Kentuckians filed an election challenge Nov. 16 to the constitutional amendment approved Nov. 2. Citing the requirement that a constitutional amendment proposal must both be clear and deal with only one subject, the petition asks the Franklin Circuit

Court to rule the election results void.

The Kentucky Fairness Alliance, in supporting this legal challenge to the amendment, objects to the language used by the Legislature in presenting this proposal to the voters. "The Legislature did sloppy work," said John Davis, interim executive director. "The first part of the amendment talks about marriage. However, the second part of the amendment confused people on what exactly was being proposed."

Davis also noted: "It appears to ban domestic partnerships, prenuptial agreements and many other contractual arrangements among both gay and straight adults. Many Kentuckians support allowing adults to enter into contractual arrangements as to their property, whether they are gay or straight. This amendment did not allow voters to vote on the two proposals separately. That violates the constitutional provisions about how amendments are to be put on the ballot. That's why this lawsuit is important."

Charlotte Wood of Lexington, one of the plaintiffs and a board member of the Kentucky Fairness Alliance, met many people during the campaign who had mixed feelings about the amendment. "In going door to door, it was clear that a sizable number of Kentuckians would have voted for the first part of the amendment but not the other, if given a chance," she said. "People should have had the right to vote on the two proposals separately."

**ATTORNEYS WIN TAX DEDUCTION FOR SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY**

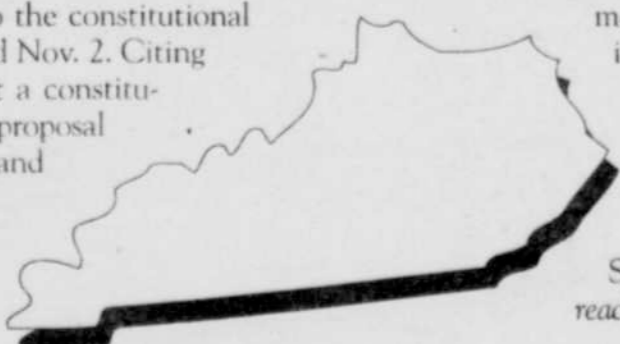
The Internal Revenue Service has concluded that a transsexual woman represented by Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders may deduct expenses for sex reassignment surgery as a necessary medical expense. The decision overturned a tax examiner's refusal to allow Rhiannon O'Donnabhain's claimed deduction because he viewed her sex reassignment surgery as "cosmetic." As the appeals officer determined, however, O'Donnabhain's surgery was medically necessary and an integral part of a professionally prescribed course of treatment for her diagnosed condition. The decision has important implications for other government programs as well as for private contracts of insurance.

"This important decision recognizes that

sex reassignment can be as medically necessary for some people as an appendectomy or heart bypass surgery," said attorney Karen Loewy, who represented O'Donnabhain in her appeal.

"Any notion that medical treatment for a transgender person is purely cosmetic is based on misunderstanding and prejudice, not medical science." □

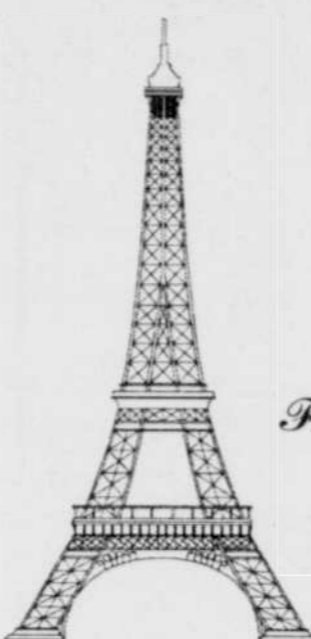
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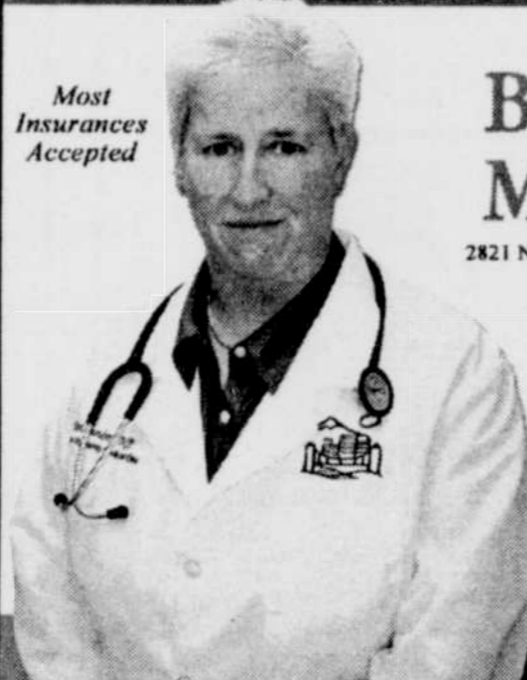
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