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The Wisconsin Light

House Committee Keeps AIDS Funds, but Retains Housing Cuts

Washington, D.C.— In an update to a story in the last issue of *Light*, AIDS activists lauded the House Appropriations Committee on March 3, for its decision to restore \$36 million that it previously had decided to cut from AIDS programs this year. And they asked lawmakers to try also to win back money for an emergency housing program for people living with the disease.

"Too many people with AIDS in this country find themselves shuffled between acute health care hospitals, medically unsafe shelters and the streets," Aimee Berenson, legislative counsel for the AIDS Action Council, told a Capitol news conference.

In the wee hours of Thursday morning, March 2, before passing a GOP spending cuts package of more than \$17 billion, members of the House panel voted to rescind two cuts—\$13 million for the Ryan White CARE Act and \$23 million for AIDS prevention programs runs by the Centers for Disease Control.

But an amendment by Rep. Louis Stokes, (D-Ohio) that would have restored \$100 million for the housing program failed. Activists asked lawmakers to try again when the spending cuts package reaches the House floor.

They said people with AIDS face numerous barriers in getting housing—from discriminatory landlords to financial crises—and have enough to worry about in their illness without the looming threat that they will soon be on the street.

The National Commission on AIDS has estimated that 15 percent of all homeless people are HIV positive and that that number is rising fast.

About 33,000 people with AIDS now depend on the housing program, according to the National Organizations Responding to AIDS, a coalition of AIDS groups.

The program, which Congress created in 1990, provides grant money to state and local governments to help meet the housing needs of people with the HIV virus and AIDS. It is administered by the Department of the Housing and Urban Development.

'Help Us; Do Something,' Gay Students Plead at Madison School Board Forum

By John Quinlan

Madison— There came a point during the recent first-of-its-kind School Board Candidate Forum on Gay and Lesbian Issues and the Schools, when the standard political posturing, techno-babble and statistical analyses came to a dramatic halt, and a hush fell over the standing room only crowd of more than 100 people.

With voices that were somewhat shaky, but nonetheless full of conviction, two Gay and Lesbian high school students spoke movingly and matter-of-factly about the pain and isolation they feel at school each day. And they told of their anger and frustration over the lack of support they receive from their school system.

The Forum, held March 4th at James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Church, was sponsored by Gays, Lesbians and Allies for Diversity in Education (GLADE) and a broadly-based coalition of community groups. It was organized in order to illuminate the special challenges facing Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual youth, staff and families in the Madison schools.

Candidates were asked to speak about their own commitment to the issues, but the most compelling part of the two hour program occurred as audience members rose to tell their stories and to challenge the candidates to action.

Gay and Lesbian Students: "We Need You to Do Something"

The two Gay and Lesbian students, who asked to remain anonymous out of concern about possible harassment, told school board candidates Andy Franken, Ray Allen, Keith Burkes and Eyvonne Crawford-Gray, that they had grown tired of empty promises. "We don't need to hear you say that you'll 'address these problems'," they young Gay man said. "We need for you to do something."

Battle for AIDS Housing Funds Rages on as U.S. House of Representatives Nears Vote



Dancing Queen—Toni Collette plays the title character in P.J. Hogan's new comedy *Muriel's Wedding*. A big hit in Australia, the film went on to win that country's Academy Award for best film. It opens March 24 at Milwaukee's Oriental Theatre.

Gay Teen's Suit Against Ashland, Wisconsin's High School Seen as Pioneering

Minneapolis, MN— From early in seventh grade until he was laughed out of his northern Wisconsin high school, Jamie Nabozny says he was the "class faggot," harassed and ridiculed on a daily basis.

In middle school, two students wrestled him to the floor and simulated a sex act with him, he said, while the rest of the class looked on. In 10th grade, three boys knocked him to the restroom floor and urinated on him.

Nabozny, 19, now lives and works in Minneapolis. In the second week in February, 1995, he filed a suit in federal court against the Ashland, Wisconsin, School District, claiming that his principals and teachers failed to ensure a safe and non-discriminatory learning environment, despite repeated complaints by himself and his parents.

Although sexual harassment claims by stu-

dents have become more common, lawsuits based on sexual orientation are more rare.

"It is a relatively new kind of case," said Evan Wolfson, an attorney with the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. "This is in the first wave of these kinds of cases."

Nabozny's complaint alleges a violation of his constitutional rights of equal protection and due process, said his lawyer, Rae Randolph. Randolph has handled other cases of sexual harassment of students. She called Nabozny's claims some of the most egregious she's seen.

"This systematic refusal by school officials to address this unlawful behavior...forced him into forfeiting what should have been the happiest times of his life," she said.

Steven Kelly, superintendent for the Ashland School District, said the district would not comment on Nabozny's accusations. "We're in the process of having an attorney appointed to take the case," he said.

The harassment, Nabozny said, began in the seventh grade. Word began to circulate that he was Gay after he was sexually assaulted by a local minister, he said. Classmates taunted him, calling him "Queer" faggot and worse, he said.

"I couldn't walk 10 feet down the hallway without something being said to me," Nabozny said.

During science class one day, while the teacher was out of the room, a couple of boys pushed him to the floor and pretended to rape him, he said, goading him by saying, "You know you want it. You know you like it."

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Gay Man Admits Affection for Hetero Male on National TV Taping and Now is Dead

Rochester, MI— He was among the "Secret Admirers" who declared his crush on another man on the Jenny Jones talk show.

Three days later, Scott Amedure was dead of two shotgun blasts to the chest. On March 10, the man to whom Amedure expressed his affection was jailed. He surrendered moments after the shooting.

Jonathan T. Schmitz, 24, of Orion Township was arraigned on March 10 in Rochester District Court on charges of first-degree murder and using a firearm in a felony. He is charged with killing Amedure, 32, also of the Oakland County township 30 miles north of Detroit on Thursday, March 9.

Schmitz stood mute to the charges, and an innocent plea was entered on his behalf. He was ordered held without bond pending a preliminary examination April 4.

Police said the suspect told them after his surrender that his experience on the talk show had "eaten away" at him. Then, on the morning of Amedure's slaying, he found an unsigned note stuck between his storm door and the door of his home.

Sheriff John Nichols said the note contained

Milwaukee— As the *Light* goes to press, another major vote on threatened federal AIDS funding is scheduled to occur in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The full House will vote on an amendment to the 1995 recisions bill that will restore \$186,000,000 in AIDS housing funds that had been cut from the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) program within the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Rep. Chris Shays (R-CT) and Rep. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) are co-sponsoring the amendment to restore the crucial AIDS housing money. Wisconsin Congressman Steve Gunderson (R-WI) has taken a major leadership role in urging his Republican colleagues to support the amendment.

Wisconsin *Light* has learned from reliable Washington sources that Gunderson's leadership is essential for passage of the amendment and that Gunderson's knowledge of AIDS housing needs in Wisconsin and other states across the country is persuasive to moderate House Republicans whose votes are critical for success.

"The AIDS community throughout Wisconsin needs continued funding of HOPWA if we are to avoid homelessness and financial distress among people with AIDS," said Doug Nelson, Executive Director of the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW). "We need a victory on this amendment to avoid a breakdown in the system of housing services for the AIDS community."

"If we fail to restore the funds, Wisconsin will surely lose \$650,000 that is slated for rent assistance, barrier-free housing renovations, and housing support services for people with HIV and AIDS throughout the state," Nelson said.

"We will also lose major HOPWA grants for Madison and Milwaukee which are essential support for our housing program."

Nelson said that more than 500 individuals relied on ARCW's rent assistance program in the past year.

"Rent assistance is a huge need and if we lose these federal funds, we will have a serious housing crisis in Wisconsin's AIDS community."

ARCW on Tuesday, March 14, issued another urgent Action Alert asking its supporters to call their Congressmen to secure votes for the amendment. With Gunderson's support firm, the ARCW Public Policy Office expressed concern that Congressman Scott Klug of Madison and Congressman Tom Petri of Fond du Lac, both Republican moderates, had not yet committed support for the amendment.

"We need their support for a win," Nelson said.

The ARCW Action Alert was part of a national flurry of action among AIDS advocates that is weighing in heavily on Capitol Hill. AIDS organizations from most every state

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EYVONNE CRAWFORD-GRAY

By the time that most young people reach high school age, they are very much aware of their sexual orientation, the young Lesbian woman observed. However, because most young Gay men, Lesbians and Bisexuals don't know of anyone in the schools who they can talk to about their feelings, they are invisible. School staff compound their isolation by making the assumption that everyone is heterosexual.

The young woman related a recent incident in which a teacher decided to simply skip over the chapter on Gay and Lesbian people in a course called Human Growth and development. "My teacher explained that the chapter

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