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Most recently a fundraiser for a faith-based program on aging in Milwaukee, Evertz has also worked for a Catholic AIDS ministry and advised then-Governor Tommy Thompson on HIV/AIDS policy.

Both Smith and Johnson are concerned, however, about the contradictory message delivered in the preliminary numbers from Bush's detailed budget proposal. "They are flat-funding Ryan White and making drastic cuts in programs that provide medical coverage to the uninsured and under-insured," said Johnson. Smith said his organization will work with Congress through the appropriations process to get the funding levels raised, as they have had to in the past.

The Evertz appointment has effectively ended the Bush's honeymoon in the eyes of socially conservative groups who were key in his election.

Rightwing leaders say they are angry and so are many of the voters who will be important to the Republican Party in House and Senate races in 2002, according to a report in the Washington Post. Moreover, they're worried that this could lead to more objectionable appointments.

"This is another case of Republicans trying to ingratiate themselves with natural opponents, and a thumb in the eye of supporters," Richard Lessner of the Family Research Council (FRC) told the Post. "President Bush may think the Log Cabin Republicans delivered him the election. If that is the case, he is sorely deluded."

"While the Bush adminis-

tration may see the Evertz selection as a conciliatory effort towards homosexual activists, it is creating confusion and frustration for millions of pro-family, social conservatives," Dr. James Dobson said in an FRC statement. "I hope the White House will reconsider the potentially harmful message it is sending Americans regarding the issue of homosexuality."

"We are very concerned about the fact that he is an activist - that he opposes the Boy Scouts, supports homosexual marriage - all the homosexual agenda," the Rev. Louis P. Sheldon of the Traditional Values Coalition told the Post. "Evertz's whole approach is homosexuality is a viable life alternative." The White House, he said, is the ultimate spot for visibility.

"We don't want this to become the leak in the dike." Bush has still not addressed the issue himself, but his spokespeople insist Evertz was chosen because he was the best person for the job and his sexual orientation had nothing to do with the decision.

Openly gay former Wisconsin representative and Bush supporter Steve Gunderson responded to the religious organizations' objections in an interview with the Post. "We ought to cut to the chase: Is the real reason they are opposed is that they don't want anyone who is openly gay serving in a Republican administration?"

House Votes to Repeal Anti-Gay Death Tax

WASHINGTON-The Republican-led House of Representatives voted to repeal the federal estate tax - known as the death tax - moving a step closer to lifting a heavy, discriminatory burden on gay and lesbian families across the country.

"This is a major step forward in something positive and tangible for gay and lesbian Americans everywhere," said Rich Tafel, executive director of Log Cabin Republicans. "Until we repeal this discriminatory tax, gay Americans will continue to face hardship and possible bankruptcy at the moment of greatest need - when a loved one dies."

The bill, HR 8, which repeals the tax over 10 years, passed the House on a vote of 274-154. While 215 Republicans voted for repeal and were joined by 58 Democrats and one independent, another 150 Democrats voted with 3 Republicans and one independent to keep the tax in place.

Under current federal tax law, when a gay or lesbian spouse dies, his or her estate is taxed at a rate of up to 55% before it is passed on to the surviving spouse. When the second spouse dies, the remaining estate is taxed again up to 55% before it can be passed on to any children.

Because gay and lesbian couples have no marital benefits or exemptions under current law, they must assemble expensive wills and estate plans to ensure a spouse and family are protected in case of death. The death tax is an added burden which can wipe out savings and pensions and force the immediate sale of a home or closure of a small business. Democratic alternatives which would raise the threshold for the tax would be cancelled out by inflation - in less than a decade by some estimates - leaving millions of people vulnerable again to the devastating effects of the tax within a few years.

"This isn't about the David Geffens of the world, it's about average gay and lesbian Americans who deserve fairness," Tafel said. "If you're a lesbian couple that owns your own home and runs a small business as your sole source of income, this is about you. If you're an elderly gay couple with two homes and retirement savings, this is about

you. If you're a 30 year-old lesbian or gay man who started contributing to your 401(k) at age 22, and you plan on owning a home and having a family with your partner, this is about you."

"This discriminatory tax makes the lack of equal benefits for gay couples even worse," Tafel said. "Death should not be a basis for taxing anyone. We are committed to this issue, not only to end discrimination in the short term, but to protect generations of gay and lesbian families to come."

Log Cabin Republicans is the nation's largest gay Republican organization, with state and local chapters nationwide, a full-time Washington office and a federal political action committee.



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