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our world

AIDS Drug Advertising

WASHINGTON — The federal government is concerned about the messages being sent by advertisements for drugs used to fight AIDS.

The Food and Drug Administration says some advertisements, particularly on the West Coast, seemed to imply that with modern treatment people did not need to worry about AIDS.

An ad might, for example, show two people enjoying outdoor recreation, with the caption that they both tested positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, but were still enjoying life.

The agency's Division of Drug Marketing, Advertising and Communications said it reviewed these direct to consumer ads and concluded that "many do not adequately convey that these drugs neither cure HIV infection nor reduce its transmission."

The advertising in question needs to be changed within 90 days, FDA said, noting that promoting the drugs without displaying their limitations, and using images not representative of HIV patients, is in violation of the federal Food and Drug Act.

New York Mayor

NEW YORK — Could New York be getting a mayor who's in favor of gay marriage?

Probably not. But one of the candidates to succeed retiring Mayor Rudolph Giuliani says that's his view.

Kenny Kramer, the real-life inspiration for the "Seinfeld" character that shares his surname on the television show *Seinfeld* is the Libertarian Party nominee for mayor.

"I'm not gonna run a token campaign, or a campaign just to make a point," Kramer told a meeting of party members. "I'm in it to win it."

Kramer voiced support for the decriminalization of drugs and for gay and lesbian marriages. But he said there were many other issues that he wasn't prepared to discuss because he was not sufficiently well informed about them.

Bullying Bill

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Christian conservatives say an attempt to prevent school bullying is part of the homosexual agenda.

A bill that would have curtailed bullying has stalled in

the Washington state legislature amid opposition from the Christian groups.

Under the measure, school districts would have to write policies against bullying and train employees and volunteers to stop harassment.

Teachers, police, Gov. Gary Locke and Attorney General Christine Gregoire said the legislation is needed to protect picked-on kids.

But the state's chapter of the Christian Coalition said it could be seen as trying to prevent some students from condemning homosexuality.

Rick Forcier, director of the Christian Coalition of Washington, said the measure could lead to homosexual sensitivity training in schools.

"We don't want to see kids beat up on and we would like to see the rules that are already in place enforced," he said. "But I think this one went well beyond what we think is necessary."

ACLU Leader

NEW YORK — The new leader of the leading civil liberties group in the nation is an openly gay man.

Anthony D. Romero, 35, currently serves as a director of the Ford Foundation's program for human rights and international cooperation, overseeing \$90 million in grants.

As the ACLU's executive director, he said he will work to make the civil rights organization more prominent in local communities. He said the ACLU will continue to focus on defending religious liberty, reproductive freedom and the rights of women, minorities and gays.

"I hope to begin my tenure as the leader of this vitally important organization by sparking a new dialogue about the bedrock values of American democracy," he said, adding that his goal is to "promote a new generation of committed civil libertarians and civil rights activists."

German Memorial

BERLIN — Activists in Germany are seeking a memorial in Berlin to the thousands of gay men who were killed during the Holocaust.

"Such a monument would be a lasting symbol against intolerance, hostility and exclusion aimed at gays and lesbians," activists for the Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany said in a statement

launching the initiative.

Although a city spokeswoman said officials in principle agreed such a monument was needed, Berlin Mayor Eberhard Diepgen has opposed creating a so-called "Memorial Mile" in the new capital commemorating various groups persecuted by the Nazis.

Besides gays, groups representing Gypsies, or Roma, murdered by the Nazis are also pressing for a monument in the center of Berlin, seeking equal prominence with a planned memorial for the 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Few of the 15,000 gay men put in concentration camps survived, the federation said. The Nazi regime criminalized homosexuality among men, strengthening the legal code in 1935 and condemning thousands for homosexual acts.

Although there were exceptions, lesbians were not generally targeted by the Nazis.

Nun Honored

PHILADELPHIA — A Roman Catholic nun disciplined by the Vatican for ministering for 22 years to the gay community has been honored at the nation's largest symposium on gays and lesbians.

Sister Jeannine Gramick was presented the annual Tom Stoddard National Role Model Award, given annually to a person who has fought for civil rights for gays and lesbians. It was given by PrideFest America, a weeklong celebration of gay and lesbian culture.

Gramick used the awards ceremony as an opportunity to apologize for her church.

"As a Roman Catholic sister, I want to ask pardon of the lesbian and gay community for my part in any oppression on the part of my church," she said.

Gramick was prohibited last May from publicly discussing her work with gays and lesbians or the process that led the Vatican, in 1999, to order Gramick and a priest to stop their pastoral work with gays.

Gramick no longer leads spiritual retreats for gays, but she has refused to obey the church's admonition to stop talking about homosexuality.

For the past year, she has traveled the country to lecture about civil rights for homosexuals and about the Vatican's efforts to stop her.

Hate Crimes

AUSTIN, Texas — A hate crimes bill has become law in Texas.

President Bush opposed the proposal while he was governor. A new bill was introduced and pushed through the legislature this year and new Republican Gov. Rick Perry signed it.

The James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act was named for the black man who was dragged to his death from a pickup truck in 1998 by three whites.

"With my signature, Texas now has stronger penalties against crimes motivated by hate," said Perry, who had been noncommittal until the signing. "This law sends a signal to would-be criminals that if you attack someone because of their religion or race or gender, you face stiffer penalties."

The bill strengthens penalties for crimes motivated by a victim's race, religion, color, sex, disability, sexual preference, age or national origin.

Texas already has a hate-crimes law that increases penalties if a crime is proven to be "motivated by bias or prejudice," but it does not list specific categories of people who are protected. Some prosecutors have said it is too vague to enforce.

Arts Funding

SAN ANTONIO — A federal judge has ruled the city acted unconstitutionally in withholding \$62,000 from a cultural arts group that sponsored a gay and lesbian film festival and other events.

In an 85-page decision, U.S. District Judge Orlando Garcia said the city's 1997 decision punished the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center for exercising its right to free speech. "We have triumphed today in the belly of the beast," Esperanza representatives said in a statement.

Attorneys for the nonprofit center argued the city of San Antonio cut off funding because of the group's viewpoints and pressure from residents who opposed promoting a gay lifestyle.

Mayor Howard Peak said he didn't think Esperanza qualified as an arts organization and the city chose not to give it money because of limited funds.

"I don't see anything wrong

with that," Peak said. "It's not an annual entitlement. It's a competitive allocation with no guarantees."

Funds for most arts groups were cut 15 percent in September 1997, but Esperanza was cut off completely. The group had been receiving money for seven years.

Obit-Basker

SAN FRANCISCO — The founder of one of the nation's first gay rights groups has died.

Bob Basker was 82.

Basker helped found Mattachine Midwest in 1965 to protest Chicago police raids on gay bars and the photographing of patrons for publication in the city's newspapers.

He got his start in activism in the student peace movement in the 1930's in New York City, where he grew up.

Basker lied about his sexual orientation in the 1940's to join the Army during World War II and saw combat in Europe.

He wrote two books about the lives and struggles of gay men in the 20th century, *The Other Side of Silence* and *Quiet Fire*.

Lesbian Ordination

LOS ANGELES — The ranking Lutheran bishop in southern California has been asked to resign for participating in the ordination of a lesbian.

Bishop Paul W. Egertson, whose son is gay, said he has not decided whether to comply with the request, which comes just months before his term expires Aug. 31. He was not expected to seek re-election.

Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson asked Egertson before the ceremony to reconsider his participation, said John Brooks, a spokesman for the Chicago-based Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Egertson became the church's first active bishop to participate in the ordination of a lesbian when he took part in the ceremony for Anita Hill, who is in a relationship with another woman. Hill was made a minister during an ordination at a church in Minnesota.

Egertson's action was in defiance of church law.