

Gay National News

ACT NOW '88: AIDS Activists Sieze Control of FDA

ACT NOW '88, a four-day AIDS activist mobilization, October 8-11, in Washington, that opened with an AIDS activist teach-in and culminated with a demonstration that shut down the Food and Drug Administration marked the beginning of a new phase in AIDS activist movement.

Highlighting the weekend's activities, 1500 AIDS activists demanding greater access to drug treatment successfully shut down the Food and Drug Administration in Rockville, Maryland, on October 11. Starting at 7 a.m., demonstrators participated in a wide variety of actions, including die-ins, traffic and pedestrian blockades, and occupying FDA offices. "Silence = Death" and "Federal Death Administration" banners were posted over the main entrance to the building as another "Silence = Death" banner was hoisted up the flagpole. One-hundred and seventy-six individuals were arrested at the action.

The weekend was organized by ACT NOW (AIDS Coalition to Network, Organize, and Win), a network of over fifty direct action AIDS organizations across the country. For more information on ACT NOW, contact Scott Sanders at (202) 234-8801; ACT NOW, P.O. Box 73275, Washington, D.C., 20056.

Hate Crimes Bill Stalled by Helms

The first positive federal legislation to address violence against lesbians, gay men, racial, ethnic and religious minorities, stalled in the U.S. Senate because of threats by Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) to introduce sweeping anti-gay amendments. The Hate Crimes Statistics Act which would require federal data collection on crimes motivated by prejudice against gay people and other minorities, was never brought to the Senate floor despite vigorous lobbying by a coalition of over 50 groups led by the National Gay &

Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF).

Helms planned to introduce a four-part amendment which stated the following:

"(1) The homosexual movement threatens the strength and the survival of the American family as the basic unit of society;

(2) State laws prohibiting sodomy should be enforced;

(3) The federal government should not provide discrimination protections on the basis of 'sexual orientation'; and

(4) School curriculums should not condone homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle in American society."

NGLTF lobbyist Peri Jude Radecic termed the amendment "totally offensive and unacceptable. We will never tolerate codification of this kind of bigotry." Radecic noted that because of Helms' delaying tactics, the Hate Crimes measure must be re-introduced during the next Congressional session and will have to again pass through committees and the full floor of both Houses.

Gay/Lesbian "Marriages" No Longer Uncommon

Gay and lesbian union and marriage ceremonies may be more widespread than commonly assumed. Despite the failure of states to legally recognize homosexual marriage, many couples are honoring their relationship with wedding rituals. The popularity of these ceremonies is suggested by early returns from a national survey of same-sex couples undertaken by Partners: The Newsletter for Gay & Lesbian Couples.

Of the first 136 surveys analyzed, 12 percent of respondents indicated that they had formalized their relationship with a ceremony, and 4 percent said they planned to do so. Another 12 percent relied on other traditional observances, such as celebrating anniversaries. Additionally, 43 percent of the respon-

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