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Gays and Lesbians Flood Congress with Mail

The results are in from an unprecedented drive to make gay and lesbian voices heard on Capitol Hill, and the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF) Field Division has now signed up thousands of people nationwide for its Speak Out message campaign.

HRCF signed up more than 15,000 individuals for the Speak Out program at 1989 Gay and Lesbian Pride events around the country and at the Names Project quilt appearances. Approximately 400 canvassers converged between 30-40 Pride events in more than 20 states.

Speak Out is a massive constituent mobilization effort that is generating tens of thousands of hard-hitting constituent messages to the U.S. Congress on gay and lesbian-related legislation.

By joining the Speak Out campaign, gays and lesbians and their supporters authorize HRCF to send one-day Western Union messages to their senators or representatives as critical legislation arises.

Speak Out currently has between 20,000 and 25,000 people enrolled in the program. Every state has Speak Out participants.

HRCF has sent messages to Congress on several important bills, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Hate Crimes Statistics Act and the Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights bill. Mailgrams have also been used to counter various anti-gay amendments, including Jesse Helms' "no promo homo" amendment.

"We've been able to translate grassroots pressure from rhetoric to reality," said Steve Endean, HRCF Field Division direc-

tor. "So often people mean to write to Congress but don't get around to it. Speak Out allows concerned individuals to bridge this gap of good intentions."

"The impact on Capitol Hill has been truly amazing," added Endean. "The current enrollment of 20,000-25,000 is staggering compared to our community's previous one-time high of just 500 letters on a specific AIDS or lesbian and gay rights bill."

The phenomenal increase in messages can be attributed to the unprecedented canvassing undertaken at Pride and other events. HRCF plans to continue its canvassing operations, and is inviting people interested in canvassing to call HRCF at (202)628-4160 for more information. (*see related article page 9*)

In addition to canvassing, HRCF has produced and distributed more than 1.5 million Speak Out brochures. The brochures, sponsored by local gay and lesbian businesses, were inserted in more than 100 gay newspapers and magazines around the country and were distributed along with mailings of other national and local groups.

For maximum visibility, 3,000 Speak Out "take one" displays are being distributed to gay and lesbian bars and businesses nationwide.

2nd Annual N.C.O.D..

If you've been thinking about taking the next step in your lifelong coming out process, October 11 is the day to do it. Set aside as National Coming Out Day in 1987 after the March on Washington, this annual event is intended to promote the freedom of lesbians and gay men everywhere. It is hoped that by having the entire community walk out of our collective closet in unison, we will each feel safer and more courageous in 'taking the next step'.

If you have completely liberated yourself, do something to help the community. If you're completely in the closet, try cracking open the door a little. If you're having trouble thinking of strategies, try one of these old favorites:

- Wear a pin, maybe a pink triangle. Promise yourself that you'll give an honest, straightforward explanation of its meaning if someone asks.

- Write a letter to your local newspaper announcing Coming Out Day and address the universal benefits of validating close, same-sex relationships.

- Confront the jerk at the office who always makes homophobic jokes.

- Write that cataclysmic letter to a parent, sibling or friend. LOTS of people will choose this day to do it and maybe you can get together with one of them for some catharsis and mutual congratulations afterwards.

Whatever you choose to do, know that it's being done across the country. Keep in mind that we are a huge, pervasive minority and our power is in being seen.

Research from page 7

CNS Tomoplasmosis

Toxo Study- This is a study to evaluate the toxicity, tolerance and efficacy of pyrimethamine and dapsone in the treatment of CNS toxoplasmosis in persons with AIDS who are either refractory or intolerant of conventional therapy. Contact: Debbie Ogata-Arakaki, RN (301)496-9565.

CMV Retinitis

Foscarnet Study- This is phase II/III randomized study to evaluate the toxicity and efficacy of foscarnet for the treatment of CMV retinitis. Persons with non-sight threatening CMV retinitis who have not received previous treatment with Ganciclovir are eligible. Contact: Barbara Baird, RN (301)496-9565.

OITM Calendar Dates

October	November
6 Open House 7:30-9:30 pm at our office 30 Elmwood Ave, Burl.	7 Article Deadline for December's issue
7 Article Deadline for November's issue	10 Editing and general meeting planning January's issue 7:30pm at our office
9 Editing and general meeting-planning December's issue 7:30 pm at our office	18 Pouring galleys at Laserimage 10am-12
14 Pouring galleys at Laserimage 10am-12	25 Layout at Laserimage 10am-4pm
21 Layout at Laserimage 10am-4pm	December
27 Stuffing subscription envelopes 8:00 pm at our office (30 Elmwood Ave)	1 Stuffing subscription envelopes 8:00pm at our office