

## News notes

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measure to launch a US Senate bid. As the state's main attorney, Norton vigorously defended Amendment 2, which would have voided existing gay rights laws and banned passage of future ones. Norton expressed deep disappointment when the US Supreme Court struck down Amendment 2 in May 1996. Norton lost her Senate bid and remained attorney general until last year. She had served in the Interior Department during the Reagan administration.

### DC TG survey reported

WASHINGTON, DC — The Transgender Needs Assessment Survey released its findings November 30, showing that nearly half the 252 respondents have no health insurance; 42 percent are unemployed; 40 percent have not finished high school; 25 percent have imagined committing suicide; and there was an overall HIV infection rate of 25 percent. The report also recommends that HIV prevention methods stop looking at male-to-female transgender women as part of "men having sex with men" population, as their needs are unique. Survey criteria allowed anyone who was visibly "gender-variant" and a resident of DC to participate. It is not known whether results would be similar in other communities.

### Outright VT Director fired

BURLINGTON, VT — The executive director of Outright Vermont has been dismissed, in part because of a dispute over the denial of the state Education Department's funding for the organization. Keith Elston was fired last week, officials said, after the Education Department's decision that \$12,000 would not be turned over to Outright, although the money had originally been appropriated for that purpose. Elston and Outright said at the time that they understood the state's decision and were supportive of Education Commissioner David Wolk. Subsequently Elston, upset with what he believed were implications in news reports about the funding denial suggesting that Outright Vermont's school programs would be ending as a result, telephoned Wolk at home and expressed his concerns in what he described as an "inappropriate way." Outright Board Chairman David Ryan said the incident was not the only factor that led to the dismissal. Ryan said that Outright would continue offering its services, but its board was examining what its focus should be.

### MTV lists hate-crime victims

NEW YORK — MTV broke away from regular programming for 17 hours on January 10 to run a continuous list of hate crime victims' names. Guest celebrities read a short synopsis of numerous hate crimes, along with the person's name, date and location in which the crime occurred. This began at 10 pm EST and kicked off a year-long public service campaign against discrimination. The commercial-free airing of victims' names, along with information on how to gain assistance, cost MTV about \$2 million in advertising, said Brian Graden, the network's programming president. The campaign is prompted, at least in part, by MTV's own corporate soul-searching over its role in the rise of Eminem. During the same week, the cable music channel aired a made-for-MTV movie about the bias-related murder of Matthew Shepard and an MTV News special on hate crimes.

### Gill director leaving

DENVER, CO — Katherine Pease, Gill Foundation Founding Executive Director, will leave the foundation this spring. In 1994, Pease became the foundation's first employee. Since then, the charitable organization has grown to include 40 full-time staff members. The foundation's mission is to secure equal opportunity for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Pease said the time she has spent at the foundation has been rewarding. Founder Tim Gill, former chairman of software company Quark, Inc., said the search for Pease's replacement will begin at once.

### LA sodomy law contested

NEW ORLEANS — Gay rights activists are seeking to overturn Louisiana's 196-year-old law that bars sodomy, maintaining that it unfairly targets gays and lesbians. In 1999, Judge

Carolyn Gill-Jefferson upheld the law, ruling that it violates Louisiana's right to privacy, but does not violate other rights protected by the state constitution. An appeal was filed by the Louisiana Electorate of Gays and Lesbians (LEGAL) Inc., and nine gay and lesbian individuals, on grounds that the law denies GLBT people the possibility of having sex under any circumstances.

### Poll: Religious right okay

UTICA, NY — More than half of all Americans say the religious right represents their political views at least some of the time, according to the recent Zogby "American Values" poll. In a survey of 1,005 likely voters, 46 percent said religious conservatives sometimes represent their point of view, 13 percent said they reflected their point of view all the time, compared with 35 percent who said they never represent their own opinion. A majority of those polled also said the National Rifle Association (NRA) more closely represents their views than either the religious right or the AFL-CIO. The poll had a margin of error of +/- 3.2 percent.

### International

#### Gay men increasingly unsafe

LONDON, UK — Unsafe sex between men is becoming increasingly acceptable in the West and appears to be a backlash among the

gay community against what are seen as monotonous health campaigns, according to British research released in December. Michele Crossley of Manchester University told a British Psychological Society conference in London that "barebacking" — unprotected anal intercourse — was often a reaction to men being told not to do it. Crossley cited British and US statistics showing a significant rise in unprotected sex among gay men. Crossley put the trend down to a number of factors including complacency over safety issues particularly among young gay men, but also noted that the promotion of good health as a symbol of moral rectitude was triggering a reverse reaction in Britain and the United States. Gary Taylor of Sussex University said his research showed that the perception of HIV had shifted since the early 1980s, when it was usually associated with full-blown AIDS and, ultimately, death. But rather than simply encouraging men to have unprotected sex more frequently, the treatments were actually being cited by people to reduce anxiety after they had had unprotected anal intercourse.

#### Belfast gay man murdered

BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND — Neighbors heard an alarm and called firefighters to a flat on Eglantine Avenue in Belfast at 2:26 am. Minutes later, a crew broke into the flat and extinguished a small fire in

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the kitchen. On searching the home they found Alister David Holmes, whom police identified as a gay man at the outset of the investigation, and determined that he had been "severely assaulted and stabbed" sometime before the blaze was detected. By late on the night of January 1 police had arrested a 16-year-old youth in connection with Holmes' murder and were questioning him.

### AIDS activist near death

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA — Nkosi Johnson, one of South Africa's most well-known AIDS activists, is seriously ill. The boy, who was born infected with HIV, became unconscious after suffering convulsions, said Dr. Ashraf Coovadia of Coronation Hospital. Though he has regained consciousness, he is not communicating, the doctor said. It is impossible to predict how long the boy can cling to life, the doctor added. He became well-known in 1997 when he and his foster mother waged — and won — a public battle to force a primary school to accept him despite his infection. Johnson has been lauded for being open about his HIV-status in a country where people who are suspected of carrying the virus often are shunned by their families and chased away from their communities. About 4.2 million South Africans — roughly 10 percent of the national population — are estimated to be HIV positive. ▼



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