

2.8 percent per year, a rate that is nearly 50 percent higher than in white MSM in the U.S.

Even more alarming, it was found that young black MSM — those 30 years of age and younger — were infected with HIV at a rate of 5.9 percent per year, three times the rate among U.S. white MSM. Overall, the infection rate among black MSM in the study is reported to be comparable to the rate seen in the general populations of countries in sub-Saharan Africa hardest hit by the HIV epidemic.

"These study results show that in proportion to their numbers, Black MSM are bearing the brunt of the HIV epidemic here in the United States, even in comparison to other groups of gay and bisexual men," said study researcher Dr. Kenneth Mayer. "We found that the men had many unmet medical and social service needs. There is an urgent need to focus resources to address these high rates of HIV infection as part of the larger national strategy to combat the AIDS epidemic."

— D.S.

Mitt Gets Worse campaign launch

WASHINGTON, D.C. — American Bridge 21st Century and Courage Campaign Super PAC have partnered to launch Mitt Gets Worse, a new national effort to educate voters about Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney's anti-LGBT positions. The campaign's name is a twist on the grassroots anti-bullying campaign It Gets Better.

Romney has earned a reputation as a flip-flopper — changing his positions in whatever direction advances his career. But, when it comes to LGBT issues, there's one thing you can always count on, his detractors declare: Mitt Gets Worse.

The Mitt Gets Worse campaign is an oral

history of Romney's efforts to diminish the rights and freedoms of LGBT Americans, as told by LGBT advocates and allies who have personally been impacted by his anti-equality agenda. The first video released by the campaign is from Jennifer Chrisler, executive director of the Family Equality Council, which represents more than a million LGBT parents and their children. The video is available for viewing now at Youtube. Over the next few weeks, the campaign will be releasing many more of these first-person accounts.

— D.S.

Rule would extend health benefits

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On July 20, the Office of Personnel Management published a proposed rule that extends health benefits to many children being raised by LGBT federal employees.

The regulation clarifies that children of a federal worker's same-sex domestic partner qualify for health, dental, and vision insurance provided under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program and the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program.

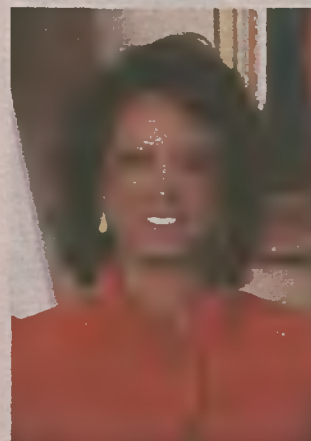
The Human Rights Campaign urged OPM to take this important step as part of its Blueprint for Positive Change, a series of recommendations to the Obama administration for regulatory and policy changes that would improve the lives of LGBT Americans, without the need for Congress to act. President Obama and OPM, under the leadership of Director John Berry, have taken significant steps to extend employee benefits to LGBT federal workers and their families. Among these are sick and bereavement leave, long-term care insurance, relocation assistance, child care subsidies and access to certain retirement annuities.

The proposed rule is currently open for 60 days of public comment, beginning with the date of publication. HRC reps said the group will submit comments and continue to follow the regulatory process to ensure that the strongest possible final regulation emerges.

— D.S.

Lt. Gov. stereotypes black lesbians

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida Lt. Governor Jennifer Carroll (pictured), the highest-ranking black woman ever to serve in Florida government, provoked outrage last month when she



disparaged and stereotyped black lesbians in an effort to refute the claims of a former staffer. The controversy erupted when the ex-staffer said she was fired after walking in on the Lt. Governor in a sexually "compromising

position" with a female aide. In responding to the allegations, Carroll told reporters, "Black women who look like me don't engage in relationships like that."

Her comments drew national criticism from all corners including a widely distributed editorial by Nadine Smith, executive director of Equality Florida. "As a black lesbian from Florida, I personally felt the sting of Florida Lt. Governor Jennifer Carroll's words," said Smith. "Instead of simply denying the claims, she stereotyped black lesbians in order to deflect her own charges. With that one quick statement, Lt. Governor Carroll appealed to racial and homophobic stereotypes that do real harm."

Other black commentators from around the country also criticized Carroll for her comments including Kimberley McLeod, from The National Black Justice Coalition, and Aisha and Danielle Moodie Mills, two D.C.-based lesbians who were the first to be featured in *Essence* magazine's wedding section. Doria Roberts (via *The Huffington Post*) launched the #ThisIsWhatALesbianLooksLike hashtag that many women used to show the diversity of the lesbian community.

— D.S.

Gay candidate seeks office

KIAMBU, Kenya — David Kuria, general manager of the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya, is making history as the first-ever openly gay candidate for Senate. If elected, Kuria would represent Kenya's Kiambu County, which has a population of more than 1.6 million people.

Kuria says many Kenyans will be angered by the simple fact that an out LGBT person is running for office.

However, he refuses to exit the race because of the critical work that needs to be done. "If elected as Senator, we must ensure that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are respected for all people, not just in my own county but also across Africa," he said. "We will only be able to crush the oppressive stereotypes that people have of the LGBTI community if we are publicly seen doing and working for the public interest."

— D.S.

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