



# SEX Pistols

**A** CHILL IS FALLING on HIV prevention groups that take federal money. Rep. Mark Souder (R-Ind.), who has railed against needle exchange and medical marijuana, recently prompted an investigation into San Francisco's Stop AIDS Project, which received \$698,000 in 2000 from the CDC, for its explicitly sexual content in outreach for gay men. Souder has also requested a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) look at a \$91,690 federal grant to the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW) for abstinence-only prevention. With track records going back more than a decade each, both AIDS groups say that they have never before been targeted so baldly by the feds.

Another "vast right-wing con-

spiracy"? Not at its source. This dustup was initiated by controversial Frisco PWA Michael Petrelis, who sent Souder the materials for several racy programs at Stop AIDS. Currently under close scrutiny are "Booty Call," a workshop on anal sex, and the "Great Sex Workshop," on making safer sex fun. CDC regs prohibit use of prevention

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funds for anything promoting either homo or het sex as well as anything "obscene."

Souder passed Petrelis' red flag on to HHS honcho Tommy Thompson, who is, like other cabinet members in the Bush administration, not to mention the prez himself, a "just say no" cheerleader. Thompson, in turn, called in Inspector General Janet Rehnquist (daughter of archconservative Chief Justice Rehnquist). In her report to HHS, Rehnquist worded her appraisal

just tepidly enough not to appear out of her jurisdiction, saying the workshops "could be construed as 'encouraging directly...sexual activity' and as 'obscene,' and thus not in compliance with CDC guidance." She promises greater scrutiny for AIDS service organizations that spend the federal dime, and a crackdown on the review panels.

Advocates with dark memories of such anti-gay legislation as the 1987 Helms Amendment were quick to condemn Rehnquist's "obscenity" interpretation, pointing out that the Supreme Court requires that each community define for itself what constitutes the obscene. "San Francisco's standards...may not be the same as those of Washington," said Steven Gibson, Stop AIDS's co-ED, adding that, in his opinion, homophobia in the high ranks of government is responsible. "I want to be very clear that I think the reason why Stop AIDS is under so much scrutiny is because we're a gay organization," he said.

ARCW's ED Doug Nelson complains of being similarly singled out. "Because we may be a 'nontraditional' provider, I think the traditional providers are attacking us." —Benjamin Ryan

## BRIEFS

### • SUICIDE BOMB:

In a November decision rare for both its independence and its invective, U.S.

District Judge Robert E. Jones blocked Attorney

General John

Ashcroft's recent

move to subvert

Oregon's assisted

suicide law. Issuing

a five-month stay

against it, Jones

slammed the AG's

order that MDs

who complied with

the 1997 law

would lose their

licenses, claiming

that he had

interfered with

Oregon's right to

regulate its own

medical profession.

—Ben Ryan