

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda

Dannemeyer introduces two new AIDS bills

Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.) introduced two new pieces of legislation on May 5, H.R. 2272 and H.R. 2273, designed to combat the AIDS epidemic. The bills were introduced with 48 cosponsors.

The first would mandate reporting of those individuals who are carriers of the AIDS virus. Currently, state laws and the guidelines of the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control (CDC) only require the reporting of individuals who show symptoms of AIDS illness, even though all can infect other persons. Dannemeyer criticized the fact that while "persons with a curable, communicable disease, venereal disease" must be reported to health authorities, "persons with a noncurable, communicable, fatal disease are not reportable to public health authorities and, in fact, are not accountable for their acts at all."

The second bill would require mandatory testing of certain categories of individuals, including federal prisoners, immigrants, applicants for marriage licenses, persons convicted of prostitution and IV drug use, hospital admittees between the ages of 15 and 49, and persons being treated for venereal disease. Dannemeyer said it is essential to give "public health authorities the tools to estimate the magnitude of the problem we now face and assess the proper response to control what is now an uncontrollable problem."

Dannemeyer proposed this narrower testing approach because "these groups represent persons who have routine interaction with health authorities and cases in which it would be economical and efficient to perform a test for presence of the AIDS anti-

body. In other cases, the groups represent high-risk populations which should be tested to protect those who may unknowingly interact with these HIV positive individuals."

These bills were introduced as the House Health and Environment subcommittee began hearings May 1 to determine whether national legislation was required for testing and reportability. Subcommittee chairman Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) is pushing for voluntary testing programs with strict confidentiality, arguing that mandatory reporting would drive carriers underground.

Dannemeyer condemned this approach. "In my view this is an irresponsible and irrational reaction to a deadly, infectious disease and is contradicted by data," he said. Comparing Colorado, which has mandatory reporting, to California, which does not, Dannemeyer pointed out that Colorado has done 25% more testing per hundred thousand population.

Complaints voiced on immigration law

Rep. Bill Richardson (D-N.M.) attacked the implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, on May 4. "I voted for this bill with a lot of reservations, as did many others" last year, Richardson said. "What the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] is doing is not what the Congress intended, and not what many of us voted for."

Complaints cut across the spectrum, from discrimination, overly burdensome requirements on employers and aliens who are seeking permanent residency and citizenship, to farmers unable to get help. The

administration's definition of "perishable commodities," which determines whether or not many foreign workers can get into the United States, Richardson charged, "excludes many deserving grower groups and farmworkers."

Richardson added that "by charging close to \$700 per family after all expenses, the INS is trying to finance this program on the backs of the immigrants. That was not the intent of Congress."

In a letter to INS Commissioner Alan Nelson on April 21, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus made its views known on several regulations, including what would constitute a continuous residence for aliens applying for status; the documents required to establish such residence; that courses be established to give applicants the knowledge required for citizenship, and that the same standards apply as for someone seeking naturalization through the normal procedure; and that employers' hiring forms indicate what documentation they are relying on for hiring.

Project Democracy facing vote in House

The National Endowment for Democracy, the public side of the "secret government" operation known as Project Democracy, is expected to face another vote to delete its funding on or about the third week in May.

NED funding is directed through the U.S. Information Agency, and is part of the Department of State authorization bill which is currently being considered by the House Rules Committee. An earlier attempt to bring the bill to the floor was met with objections from the Reagan administration,