

# National News

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## Minnesota court backs 'grass tax' law

The Minnesota Supreme Court has handed down a ruling upholding the state's pro-marijuana "grass tax" law, which is being hailed by proponents of drug legalization as a model for the rest of the country.

The 1986 law, the first in the country, provides that the state sell drug stamps to drug pushers. Drug stamps can be purchased through the mail or at the state revenue departments at the price of \$3.50 for each gram of marijuana, or \$200 per gram of cocaine.

According to the Supreme Court decision, revenue officials must guarantee confidentiality to those buying stamps, in order, in the view of the court, to ensure that drug dealers are allowed the constitutional guarantee against self-incrimination.

At least 12 other states have already patterned laws after Minnesota's, the most recent being Utah and Illinois, which imposed drug taxes this year.

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## Inspection of migrant labor camps cut back

Inspection of migrant labor camps in Belle Glade, Florida and the surrounding area of Palm Beach County will be cut in half, due to cutbacks in state funding for county health departments. The Florida state legislature has cut \$5.5 million from health programs, and the Palm Beach County budget will suffer cuts of \$600,000.

Belle Glade has one of the highest densities of AIDS infection in the country, and a particularly high density of "non-high-risk-group" cases.

The cutbacks in inspections for the area were admitted to *EIR* by a spokesman for the Palm Beach County Health Department, who also reported that the department has frozen hiring of new personnel as a result of the cuts in state funding for certain programs. County Health Unit personnel who

previously inspected migrant camps full time will now be assigned to additional duties.

County Health Department spokesmen would acknowledge only an "indirect effect" on the AIDS situation in the area, claiming that the AIDS problem does not exist in the migrant labor camps as such, but in nearby boarding houses, which are not inspected by the county health departments.

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## AIDS found rampant among runaway teens

There are now 20,000 homeless or runaway teens on the streets of New York City, the *New York Post* reported on Sept. 7, and, according to a survey conducted by Montefiore Medical Center's AIDS in Adolescence Program, AIDS is running rampant among this population.

Covenant House and Montefiore Center are testing teenagers for AIDS on a voluntary basis only, and so far, at Covenant House, 30-40% are testing positive.

According to Dr. James Kennedy, medical director of Covenant House, "These were all sexually transmitted infections. There were no intravenous drug users in the test group. The significant thing is that we're seeing as many infected girls as we are infected boys. . . . This is a very real issue . . . they are acquiring and transmitting the virus. . . . If you look at the overall number of people we were seeing infected in the gay community in 1979 and 1980, we're seeing at least as many now in the street kid population."

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## Dukakis's 'war on drugs' called a sham

Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakis's war on drugs is "a sham," wrote *Boston Herald* columnist Don Feder, in a commentary on Sept. 1. Rejecting the Massachusetts governor's criticism of the Reagan-Bush war on drugs as hypocritical, Feder goes on to examine the Dukakis record in

his home state of Massachusetts:

- At St. Margaret's Hospital in the Dorchester area of Boston, 10% of newborn babies test positive for cocaine.

- The Roxbury-Dorchester neighborhood is being turned into a shooting gallery. The Boston Police Department reports that 34% of the homicides in the city in the first six months of 1988 were drug-related, up 9% from the previous year.

- Between Dukakis's furlough system for convicts and prison breakouts, the Massachusetts correctional system has become a "revolving door" for drug pushers. Dukakis has also pardoned 21 drug pushers in the last four years, including cocaine and heroin distributors.

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## Cap Weinberger sees dangerous shift in U.S.

In an Aug. 12 interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation, former U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger warned about "a very substantial, unfortunately substantial, isolationist, protectionist mood in the United States," and blamed Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakis for exploiting this mood for political gain.

The shift in mood, Weinberger said, "takes many forms. One of them is trying to find some rationalization for bringing the troops home. They can't find it in any improved behavior in the Soviets or any lessening of the basic Soviet threat, and so they find it in some kind of complaint about Europe or Asia . . . not doing enough themselves. There's nothing that is going to help world security by bringing the American troops home. The American troops serve a very important purpose for our own country, and also for the allied countries, and I hope very much that the isolationist mood doesn't ever reach a majority in the United States. . . . It's very dangerous, it's very unwelcome."

He attacked "people like Mr. Dukakis, who continually talk about how it will be safe for us to spend less on defense, to serve their own political purposes."

Weinberger also attacked as "absolutely