

# National News

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## AIDS transmission routes increase

The number of identified ways that the AIDS virus can be transmitted is rapidly increasing. According to letters by medical experts published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, acupuncture and oral sex have now been identified as routes of AIDS transmission.

A letter in the *Journal* published during the week of Jan. 24 from doctors at two hospitals in France, documents the case of a 17-year-old boy who tested positive to the HIV virus after undergoing acupuncture for tendonitis.

The doctors write, "The patient had never had sexual intercourse. He did not have hemophilia and had never had a transfusion. He was not an intravenous drug user, had no tattoo and had not been in jail."

Another report by two Boston area physicians, which will appear in an upcoming issue of the *Journal*, says that a 60-year-old man who is diabetic and impotent contracted AIDS from a prostitute via oral sex. Doctors at the Lahey Clinic did not approach the prostitute because of Massachusetts state laws protecting confidentiality.

The article concludes with a revised warning on practicing "safer sex." It "cautions against exchange of bodily fluids during other sexual practices, such as oral sex."

A 17% increase in AIDS in New York City during 1988 has now made it the third leading cause of death overall, and the leading cause of death in men ages 30 to 44, and women ages 25 to 39. Health Commissioner Stephen Joseph reported on Jan. 24, "To date, almost 19,000 people have been diagnosed with AIDS in New York City."

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## 'Openness' vanishes in new Congress

The opportunity for constituents to provide testimony or public comment to the new Senate has been dramatically curtailed, if

the Senate confirmation hearings on the Bush administration nominees are any indication.

Democrats who controlled the Senate during the Carter administration, and Republicans who controlled the Senate during the Reagan administration, generally provided ample opportunity for attacks on, or backing for, a cabinet nominee to be openly aired. Constituents were generally welcomed before committee confirmation hearings to comment on needed policy changes, or simply to suggest questions for the nominees.

Whether, because of the establishment nature of the Bush administration, or the nature of the Democrats who now control the Senate, or both, the current round of confirmation hearings has ended such openness.

Only the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee chaired by Sen. Bennett Johnston (D-La.), which considers the Secretaries of Energy and Interior, has welcomed all testimony. The Committee on Veterans Affairs chaired by Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) has invited some, but not all, who requested the opportunity.

The Senate Foreign Relations, Banking, Labor and Human Resources, Governmental Affairs, Agriculture, and Environment and Public Works Committees did invite written statements to be submitted for the record.

But the Senate Finance Committee chaired by Sen. Lloyd Bensten (D-Tex.), the Senate Armed Services Committee chaired by Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), and the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee chaired by Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.), have apparently not even responded to requests to give testimony.

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## Thornburgh's war on drugs: cut consumption

Evidence continues to mount that the Bush administration is shifting the focus of the War on Drugs away from law enforcement to other means of cutting domestic consumption of drugs.

U.S. Attorney General Richard Thorn-

burgh confirmed this shift, stating, "To lose the war on drugs, leave it to law enforcement," on the TV news show "Meet the Press" on Jan. 22.

Thornburgh said to cut demand would require "education, rehabilitation, and treatment," and a "change in values" within the population. He said that he expects the new drug czar, William Bennett, to concentrate on the reduction of demand.

The libertarian Cato Institute added its voice for drug legalization in its recently released recommendations to the Bush administration in a report titled, "An American Vision: Policies for the '90s." It calls for "allowing the sale of drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and marijuana" in the same "fashion as sale of alcoholic beverages," because it is the "public disorder and criminality that make the drug-related problem worse rather than better."

According to Cato founder Edward H. Crane, some of the prominent people associated with the institute include Federal Express chairman Frederick Smith, former Delaware Gov. Pierre du Pont, Nobel economist Friedrich von Hayek, and Georgetown University Prof. Earl C. Ravenal.

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## Texas Democrats move to oust Jones

Texas state Democratic Party officials are moving to oust Claude Jones as chairman of the Harris County (Houston) Democratic Party alleging that he failed to support the party nominee, Michael Dukakis, in the presidential election. The move is the culmination of efforts by the party elite to ignore the voter mandate and to strip Jones, a "LaRouche Democrat," of all powers, and seeks to oust him before the 1990 primary gets under way.

Even though Jones has so far only been informed of the allegations and is still chairman, state party chairman Bob Slagle is already holding meetings on the effect the battle over who will replace Jones will have on the next gubernatorial race. Slagle and state party executive director Ed Martin came to Houston to hold an "informal" meeting with