DAS Boot?

New York City’s AIDS division spared in approved Giuliani budget

August 1, 1994

New York City’s PWAs breathed a collective sigh of relief recently when the city’s Department of AIDS Services (DAS) was spared in the round of deep program cuts that typified Mayor Rudy Giuliani’s first proposed budget for the city. DAS provides case workers who coordinate the city’s many different services for PWAs, sparing them hours of waiting in line and filling out forms at numerous departments and divisions. *POZ* No. 2 reported that Giuliani had proposed the elimination of DAS in a preliminary budget. The mayor’s proposal was loudly denounced and it was removed from his final budget proposal to the New York City Council. People with AIDS and their advocates praised Giuliani for listening to their concerns and retreating from his original plan.

Nonetheless, Giuliani’s administration has shown that it needs constant monitoring on AIDS issues. Soon after the restoration of DAS in the proposed budget, its actions in other circumstances again left people questioning the administration’s commitment and sensitivity to people with AIDS. When a comatose woman on life support was raped at the city’s Harlem Hospital, it understandably received front page coverage in the city’s newspapers. Included in that coverage was the fact that the woman was HIV positive -- information that was available to the press courtesy of Giuliani’s press office, according to the *New York Daily News*. Deputy press secretary Mann Papir revealed to the press that both the woman and her alleged attacker are HIV positive. Under New York State Health Department law, a health or social service provider who reveals a person’s HIV status could be punished with up to a $5,000 fine and/or a year in jail. Giuliani’s press secretary, Cristyne Lategano pointed out that although it was certainly against administration policy to reveal a person’s HIV status, Papir had not broken the law because he is not subject to it since he is neither a health or social service provider.

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