Milestones

January 1, 2001 By Denny Lee

Careers

One of the few “Gingrich Republicans” to keep his campaign term-limits promise, Rep. Tom Coburn (R-OK) left Congress at the end of the 2000 term after six years in office. The conservative doctor in the House -- he plans to return full-time to his medical practice -- was a gadfly to many HIVers for his sharp attacks on “AIDS exceptionalism.” A cosponsor of the Ryan White CARE Act, he was also slammed for his push to link federal AIDS funds to mandatory testing of newborns and partner notification.

In another election-year ending, White House “drug czar” Barry McCaffrey will resign this month as director of the office of national Drug Control Policy after accomplishing few of his stated goals -- youth drug use is up, spending on non-TV drug prevention is down. He also won behind-the-scenes battles against needle exchange and medical marijuana -- and the wrath of many drug advocates.

Former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, MD, joined the advisory board of ConnectivHealth in October to help launch a new patient website, SexHealth.com. No word yet on whether she’ll have better luck than her predecessor, C. Everett Koop, MD, whose beleaguered drkoop.com has foundered due to falling stock prices and an investigation by the SEC.

James Loyce was tapped in September to head the AIDS Office at the San Francisco Department of Public Health. Mitchell Katz, the department’s director, said the appointment allows the city’s various AIDS programs -- prevention, epidemiology, health care and research -- to be coordinated through a single officer. “With so many reports of unsafe sex, I felt that it was crucial for the department to have greater focus around AIDS issues,” Katz said. Loyce was the executive director of the AIDS PROJECT Los Angeles before returning to San Francisco in 1998 to serve as the health department’s No. 2.

Partnerships

In September, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that the National AIDS Hotline and the National STD Hotline would be merging to provide “one-stop shopping,” as one rep said, as the CDC National STD and AIDS Hotline. Since its inception in 1983, the AIDS hotline has received 13 million calls, an average of 3,000 queries per day.

Awards

The United Nations Development Program honored four activists with its “Breaking the Silence on

HIV/AIDS" award at a New York City event in October: Maire Bopp DuPont (a journalist from French Polynesia), Catherine Phiri (an openly positive mom from Malawi), Rita Arauz Molina (a Nicaraguan psychologist) and Father Arkadiusz Nowak (a Polish priest).

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded $23.6 million in October to help agencies in 17 states create homes for low-income HIVers. Individual grants range from $1.4 million, which was awarded to San Francisco and Colorado, to $400,000 for Burlington, Vermont. Several AIDS service groups were also awarded, including Housing Works and THE Fortune Society, both in New York City. "Finding a safe and affordable home is the single greatest barrier to proper health care for people with HIV," said HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo. During fiscal year 2000, the department's Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS distributed a total of $232 million.

Deaths

Richard Zayas, an early board member of the Empire State Pride Agenda (ESPA), the leading gay rights group in New York, died September 8 following an extended hospitalization related to HIV. A native of Brooklyn, Zayas, 34, divided his professional life among financial consulting, politics and civil rights. "He was a part of our family from virtually the first day," said Matt Foreman, the group's executive director. "He was funny, intelligent and very committed to the movement." Zayas is survived by his partner, Dick Dadey, ESPA's previous director.

Robert Bradford, the unnamed HIVer at No. 71 in "HIV Crimeline" (*POZ*, August 2000), died of AIDS July 16. At his sentencing two years ago, Bradford said he pled guilty to having sex with an 11-year-old boy, who did not get HIV, because "in jail, I'll have better medical attention."

Robert Ray, whose family in 1987 successfully battled the Florida school board that banned him and his two brothers from classes, died October 20 after surgery to remove his spleen (see "Fire Escape," August 2000 *POZ*). The 22-year-old, who had HIV and hemophilia, was the middle brother -- Ricky, two years older, died in 1992 and Randy, 21, now lives in Orlando. He's also survived by his fiancée, younger sister and parents.

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