Puppet Masters

February 1, 2001 By Shana Naomi Krochmal

Two of Bush's cabinet nominees could make a major dent in HIVers' lives. Though controversy surrounds both good ol' boys, at press time their confirmations seemed likely, barring a personal scandal or two.

John Ashcroft

- Most likely to be: U.S. Attorney General
- Last seen: Missouri governor, 1984-1992; U.S. Senator, 1994-2000
- Best known for: Being a Christian Right poster boy and losing his last election to a dead man.
- For the record: Tried to block Surgeon General David Satcher's confirmation by sensationalizing the former CDC head's AIDS policies and voted to ban HIVers from the military.
- What's next: "He could go beyond not supporting our work and actually oppose it," said Lambda lawyer Catherine Hanssens. AG Ashcroft would enforce (or not) the Americans with Disabilities Act and could urge Congress to criminalize HIV transmission.

Tommy Thompson

- Most likely to be: Health and Human Services Secretary
- Last seen: Wisconsin governor, 1986-2000
- Best known for: Overhauling the Badger welfare state, often cited by President Clinton as the model for his controversial federal reforms.
- For the record: His was the second state to request Medicaid for HIVers without AIDS, and the state's extra ADAP funding means no caps or waiting lists for residents who qualify. But the pro-abstinence guv was less savvy with supporting sex ed. Overall considered a pragmatic public official by locals.
- What's next: Sec'y Tom would rule the holy HIV troika: the CDC, FDA and NIH.

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