AIDS Activists Arrested During Capitol Demonstration

July 9, 2009

Police arrested 26 AIDS activists earlier today, July 9, for holding a demonstration in the Capitol rotunda, The Associated Press (AP) reports. Demonstrators chanted “Fight global AIDS now” and “Clean needles save lives” while carrying signs in support of HIV prevention programs, treatment access, needle exchange funding and HIV/AIDS housing.

According to Capitol Police spokeswoman Sergeant Kimberly Schneider, 11 men and 15 women—whose names were not immediately released—each face a charge of unlawful assembly, disorderly conduct and loud and boisterous behavior. She said the protesters entered the rotunda and linked themselves together with a white chain at about 10 A.M. The group chanted and marched in a circle before lying on the floor.

The activists arrested were from five AIDS organizations based in DC, Philadelphia and New York, including ACT UP Philadelphia, DC Fights Back, Health GAP, New York City AIDS Network and Housing Works.

The AP article noted that the arrests came one day before President Barack Obama’s arrival in Ghana, where 320,000 people are living with HIV, according to UNAIDS.

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