R.I.P. Terje Anderson, AIDS Activist and Democratic LGBTQ Political Leader

Terje Anderson leaves behind a legacy of progressive change for Vermont, people living with HIV and the LGBTQ community.

April 2, 2026 By Eva Lorenz

AIDS activist and democratic political leader Terje Anderson died in a house fire in Montgomery, Vermont, on March 18, 2026, according to WCAX. Anderson leaves behind a legacy of progressive change for Vermont, people living with HIV and the LGBTQ community.

Anderson was the executive director of the National Association of People With AIDS (NAPWA) from 2000 to 2005, having previously served as the agency's policy director and a board member, according to The Advocate. Founded in 1983, NAPWA was a historic and influential network of people living with HIV; it shuttered in 2013 after filing for bankruptcy.

After stepping down from his position at NAPWA, Anderson became the executive director of Vermont CARES, which provides lifesaving harm reduction services, education and resources to Vermonters affected by HIV, hepatitis C and substance use. He was also cochair of the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian & Gay Rights, a member of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS and worked with the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC).

In a LinkedIn Post, Josè Zuniga, president and CEO of the global health organization Fast-Track Health and IAPAC, wrote:

"I had the honor of meeting and working with Terje Anderson in the mid-1990s and in ensuing years on issues ranging from HIV to LGBTQ advocacy and policy. He possessed a combination of strategic clarity, moral courage, and an unyielding commitment to centering the voices of people too often left unheard.

I am deeply saddened by his sudden passing and call on all of us in the social justice movement to advance his legacy of leadership and commitment to equity, dignity, and the unwavering inclusion of those most affected in shaping the policies that impact their lives. Rest in peace, Terje."

You can read Zuniga's full statement honoring Anderson here.

Anderson served as Vermont Democratic Party chair from 2017 to 2020, during which time he grew democratic legislative majorities, helped reelect statewide officeholders and negotiated with unionized party staff ahead of the 2020 election, according to Seven Days.

"This is a devastating loss for our community, our party and our state," said current party chair Lachlan Francis in an interview with the Saint Albans Messenger. "Through his advocacy and political work, Terje significantly impacted communities across Vermont and those living with HIV/AIDS across America. He was a dedicated and inclusive leader who will be deeply missed."

The Vermont Democratic party mourned Anderson in an Instagram post.

"We are heartbroken by the passing of former Vermont Democratic Party Chair Terje Anderson.

Terje's legacy is defined by courage, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to justice. A prolific activist and dedicated leader, he worked tirelessly to advance equality, strengthen communities, and build a more inclusive Vermont.

His impact reached far beyond our Party, from his leadership in HIV/AIDS advocacy to decades of service uplifting LGBTQ+ Vermonters and organizing for lasting change across the country.

We mourn this profound loss and extend our deepest condolences to Terje's family, friends, and loved ones. His legacy will endure in the progress he helped achieve and in all those who carry his work forward."

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Vermont Democratic Party (@vtdems)

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