

Gay Republican Will Run White House AIDS Office



Scott H. Evertz

Scott Evertz, a leader among gay Republicans in Wisconsin, has been named director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy.

Members of gay groups said it was the first time an openly gay man or a lesbian had been chosen for appointment by any Republican administration, and the Human Rights Campaign promptly issued a press release praising President Bush for the selection.

But the White House officials, even as they disclosed a step that seemed intended to appeal to gay voters, refused to discuss Mr. Evertz's sexuality or its significance in either politics or policy, saying that Mr. Bush did not take such concerns into account when making appointments.

Mr. Evertz, a 38-year-old AIDS policy

organizer who is the head of the Wisconsin Log Cabin Republicans and has political ties to Tommy G. Thompson, the former Wisconsin governor who is now secretary of health and human services, will take over the office as its role expands to coordinate all domestic and international H.I.V./AIDS policy, a senior official said.

"The president wants to increase the focus on the international aspects of the disease and we believe we have chosen the right director for the office," the official said.

Mr. Evertz, a Roman Catholic who has been a fund-raiser for the Wisconsin Right to Life anti-abortion group and for a Catholic AIDS ministry, told news reporters that he was honored to be the first openly gay appointee in a Republican administration.

"What I appreciate is that the president has said he is appointing people who are qualified and share his philosophy," Mr. Evertz said. "I haven't been treated like a token."

Mr. Evertz, who was one of a dozen gay Republicans who drew attention by meeting with Mr. Bush in Austin, Tex., during the campaign last year, will head an office that the new administration earlier this year indicated might actually shut down. But that idea was scuttled promptly, when it caused an outcry among gays and public health advocates.

In another positive move for AIDS groups, the Bush administration will be keeping in place the Clinton administration's policy to help poor countries obtain drugs

to treat the disease. President Bush has also maintained the Clinton White House initiative which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in federal hiring practices and in granting government security clearances.

"This appointment is a very good sign on all levels," said Richard Tafel, executive director of the national Log Cabin Republicans, the party's leading gay and lesbian advocacy group. "AIDS is a very powerful issue in the gay community, and to have an openly gay official chosen on his merit means we shouldn't have to be afraid and closeted for who we are."

In his new position, Mr. Evertz will sit on the president's domestic policy board to coordinate AIDS policy and will join a new task force headed by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and Mr. Thompson to coordinate the fight against AIDS here and abroad.

A native of Washington, Mr. Evertz moved to Wisconsin to study at Marquette University and stayed on, volunteering in 1986 for Mr. Thompson's campaign for governor. He joined the Wisconsin chapter of Log Cabin Republicans, and in 1994 he ran unsuccessfully for the State Legislature, inciting comment as an openly gay candidate.

Throughout his professional career he has been a fund-raiser for nonprofit organizations, working for the anti-abortion group, and the Order of St. Camillus, a Catholic health care order of priests and brothers with an AIDS ministry. He currently works for a Lutheran foundation for the

aging.

As a volunteer, he worked with Governor Thompson on legislation to allow hospital visiting rights for gay and lesbian partners and raised money for clinics in Wisconsin for people living with AIDS and for a mission hospital in Kenya.

Last year he was one of a dozen gay Republicans selected to meet with Mr. Bush after the Texas governor was assured the nomination, and he worked with Mr. Thompson on the party platform's AIDS plank.

"When I first met Mr. Bush he wanted to hear all of our stories," Mr. Evertz recalled today, "so I told him that the 18-year-old daughter of my partner had just voted for him in the primary, and he seemed pleased and took a note of it."

Officials said that along with the announcement of Mr. Evertz's appointment they will describe the new joint task force on AIDS that will include not only Secretary Powell, but also the president's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, and his domestic policy adviser, Margaret La Montagne.

Mr. Evertz will also sit on the president's domestic policy council alongside other senior advisers.

On air interviews with Mr. Evertz had him making these comments: "Communities of color continue to be disproportionately affected with H.I.V. and AIDS, and that requires developing strategies to prevent the disease and to reach out to those affected with it," he said.

Conservatives React to Evertz Nomination

Many Urge Rejection of Log Cabin Gay Rights Proponent

By Elliot Joseph

Social conservatives, in a significant break with the administration, are mobilizing to try to kill President Bush's selection of Scott H. Evertz, a gay Republican, to run the White House Office of National AIDS Policy.

Leaders of the right attacked Evertz, 38, a fundraising executive with a religiously oriented senior citizens' program in Milwaukee and formerly a development official for an AIDS ministry. They contend that he opposes the Boy Scouts' refusal to allow gays to be scoutmasters and that he wants black ministers to stop describing homosexuality as a sin.

"We are very concerned about the fact that he is an activist, that he opposes the Boy Scouts, supports homosexual marriage — all the homosexual agenda," said the Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, chairman of the Traditional

Values Coalition.

"Evertz's whole approach is homosexuality is a viable life alternative . . . that it's part of God's design in humanity. Bible-believing Christians don't believe that for one second."

"This is another case of Republicans trying to ingratiate themselves with natural opponents, and a thumb in the eye of supporters," said Richard Lessner, executive director of American Renewal, an arm of the Family Research Council. "President Bush may think the Log Cabin Republicans [a gay group] delivered him the election. If that is the case, he is sorely deluded."

Lessner and others contended that Evertz's appointment will anger social conservatives, lowering voter turnout in the 2002 election and endangering Republicans in the Senate and House.

Bush spokesman Scott McClellan said

Bush remains committed to Evertz, whose appointment does not require Senate approval. "President Bush is an inclusive leader who appoints qualified people who share his commitment to implementing a compassionate conservative agenda," he said.

Steve Gunderson, a former Wisconsin representative who is gay, defended Evertz. "He is a pro-life Republican who is as committed to faith-based institutions and conservative politics as you are going to find, and the fact is, he happens to be gay," said Gunderson, a Bush supporter.

As for the objections voiced by Sheldon and others, Gunderson said: "We ought to cut to the chase: Is the real reason they are opposed is that they don't want anyone who is openly gay serving in a Republican administration?"

Evertz, Gunderson said, wants to



Steve Gunderson

eliminate the "stigma" of homosexuality in the black community, where attitudes prevent those with AIDS from getting prompt treatment and prevent discussions of ways to reduce transmitting AIDS.

In the case of the Boy Scouts' policy prohibiting gay scoutmasters, Evertz wrote in a column for a gay-oriented Wisconsin magazine that he disagrees with the policy but supports the right of the Boy Scouts as a private organization to discriminate.

Annual Strictly Positive Wellness Conference

Hope and Help Center of Central Florida Hosts Event at the Walt Disney World Dolphin



By Robin Richards

Winter Park, FL - The Strictly Positive Wellness Conference has announced its 8th anniversary this year, which will be held on Saturday, June 9 at the Walt Disney World

Dolphin Hotel. Registration begins at 8am and the conference runs from 9am-5pm.

The all-day event promises to offer the latest information on health and overall wellness, as well as updates on new information regarding HIV/AIDS.

Last year's conference drew a record number of nearly 700 participants and included men, women and children. Once again, the conference will host nationally recognized speakers and presenters as well as a trade show including booths from pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, employment agencies, and other social, health and wellness related organizations.

The trade show will feature exhibitors

showcasing a variety of products and services and will offer many free samples, health exams and demonstrations. This year's conference is expected to draw more than 1,000 people.

Event Coordinator Scott Pruitt said, "The conference is a combination of tradeshow and workshops, ranging from health and wellness, exercise and nutrition, issues dealing with women and children and returning to work." He went on to say, "One of the issues we're focusing on is to help those who want to return to work get back into the workforce."

Additionally they will offer bilingual presentations for Hispanic participants as well as a free children's activity center. Children will be entertained while parents

have an opportunity to attend the conference and trade show.

The Florida College of Natural Health will offer free massages and the Central Florida Quilt Project will have the AIDS Quilt on display.

The cost of the conference is \$5.00 for people infected/affected by HIV if paid prior to May 18, 2001. For professionals who specialize in the care and treatment of people the fee is \$50.00. The cost includes lunch, refreshments and parking.

The Hope and Help Center of Central Florida, an AIDS Service Organization serving the needs of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS host the Strictly Positive Conference. For more information, please call 407-645-2577 ext. 23.