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# World and Nation

## Supreme Court says law helps those with contagious diseases

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court, in a ruling likely to help AIDS victims fight discrimination, said Tuesday people with contagious diseases are protected by a federal law helping the handicapped.

The court, by a 7-2 vote, said businesses and government entities receiving federal aid are barred from discriminating — in employment or otherwise — against people with contagious diseases.

Rejecting Reagan administration arguments, the court said employers may be violating a 1973 federal law if they fire employees based solely on a fear that those employees may spread a disease.

The decision did not directly involve Acquired Immune Deficiency

Syndrome, a deadly viral disease. And the court pointed out it was not deciding whether some carriers of AIDS, those who do not suffer from symptoms of the disease, are covered by the 1973 law.

But gay-rights groups and other organizations nevertheless hailed the ruling as a huge victory for efforts to protect AIDS victims from discrimination in employment, housing, insurance and health care.

The ruling kept alive a job-discrimination lawsuit against the Nassau County School Board in Florida by Gene Arline, fired as an elementary school teacher in 1979 because she had tuberculosis, an infectious respiratory disease.

Led by Justice William J. Brennan, the court said allowing bias

based on a disease's contagious effects conflicts with the basic purpose of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 — to ensure that handicapped people "are not denied jobs or other benefits because of the prejudiced attitudes or the ignorance of others."

Brennan said, "It would be unfair to allow an employer to seize upon the distinction between the effects of a disease on others and (its) effects ... on a patient and use that distinction to justify discriminatory treatment."

Jean O'Leary, executive director of the National Gay Rights Advocates, said the decision "certainly bodes well for us."

"It shores up our position and goes against what the Justice Department has said," she added. "It moves

us one step closer to obtaining a federal remedy for discrimination."

Ben Schatz, director of NGR, AIDS Civil Rights Project, said the decision could influence job cases now pending in lower courts.

"My guess is that ... lawyers on both management's side and the plaintiff's side are going to have to understand that AIDS-based discrimination is illegal," Schatz said. "I think that will be the very clear result of this decision."

In a highly publicized memorandum last year, the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel said employers do not violate the 1973 law by firing employees out of a fear even an unfounded one, that they may spread a disease.

## U.S., Soviets continue talks on medium-range missiles

GENEVA (AP) — U.S. and Soviet teams continued talks on medium-range nuclear missiles and President Reagan said the Americans would present new proposals today, when this round of talks originally had been scheduled to end.

Maynard Glitman and Lem Masterkov led the U.S. and Soviet negotiators in Tuesday's meeting. Soviet spokesman Alexander Monakhov said they talked for about 90 minutes at the Soviet Mission, but he gave no details.

Max Kampelman and Yuli Vorontsov, chiefs of the two delegations, had a luncheon meeting Tuesday to discuss procedure.

During an appearance in the White House briefing room in Washington, Reagan said: "I welcome the statement by Soviet Secretary-General Gorbachev on Satur-

day that the Soviet Union will no longer insist on linking agreement on reduction in INF (Intermediate Nuclear Force) to agreements in other negotiations."

Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, proposed that the superpowers reach an agreement apart from other arms negotiations on eliminating medium-range missiles from Europe in five years.

Reagan said he would bring U.S. negotiators home for consultations at the end of this week and, "following these discussions in Washington, I will send a team back to Geneva to take up once again the detailed negotiations for an INF reduction agreement."

He said he had told the American team to begin presenting the U.S. proposals today and added: "I hope that the Soviet Union will then pro-

ceed with us to serious discussion of details which are essential to translate areas of agreement in principle to a concrete agreement."

Among issues to be resolved, he said, "none is more important than verification."

"We will continue to insist that any agreement will be effectively verifiable," he said.

U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms negotiations in Geneva are in three areas: medium-range missiles; long-range, or strategic weapons; and the fields of defense and space.

Gorbachev's offer reversed the Soviet position, taken after his Iceland summit with Reagan last October, that agreement on medium-range nuclear forces must be tied to the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, commonly called "Star Wars."

## Officials defend Nancy Reagan as supportive to the president

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nancy Reagan, victorious in her campaign to drive Donald Regan from the White House, suddenly is being pictured as everything from "a dragon" to a "power-hungry first lady" who has made her husband appear wimpish and helpless.

But Mrs. Reagan's supporters say it's nonsense to assert — as one published report did this week — that the first lady has become so powerful she plans to use the remainder of President Reagan's term to press for an arms-control agreement with the Soviet Union.

"That's silly," Mrs. Reagan's press secretary, Elaine Crispin, said Tuesday. "Sure, she's interested in arms control, she's interested in peace. But she's interested in arms control

only to the point that it affects his (Reagan's) planning and his policy and what he's doing with it."

Mrs. Reagan's former press secretary, Sheila Tate, agreed.

"She gets involved with people, yes. Policy, no," said Tate, a long-time aide now working in public relations.

Few people question that Mrs. Reagan has great influence over her husband or that she acts out of an intense concern about his health and his image.

She often has commented that "all my little antennas go up" when she believes someone is attempting to take advantage of her husband and that she tries to stop it "by telling him or telling someone else."

And she has not been reticent in

recent weeks while the president, out of sight recuperating from prostate surgery, has been battered by the Iran-Contra controversy.

Many who know the couple might argue over how pervasive Mrs. Reagan's influence is. But rare is the White House official or adviser who is willing to have any comments about her attached to his or her name.

Commenting only on condition they not be named, sources had said for weeks she was leading a movement to dump Regan.

"She's making it happen," said one Republican source prior to the chief of staff's departure last week. A senior White House official said, "It looks pretty obvious, she's going to get rid of him, one way or another."

## Indicators for economy post decline

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government's main forecasting gauge of economic activity fell 1.1 percent in January, the biggest nosedive in 30 months, the Commerce Department said Tuesday.

The steep drop in the Index of Leading Indicators was seen by some economists as an ominous sign that the economy could be teetering on the verge of a recession. But other analysts said that the big January setback should be viewed as a correction after a large December advance.

The 2.3 percent rise in December and the 1 percent drop in January represented the biggest two-month swing in the index in more than 36 years.

Analysts attributed the volatility to a temporary surge in spending at the end of 1986 as consumers and businesses rushed to buy new autos and capital equipment to qualify for expiring tax breaks.

Jerry Jasinoski, chief economist for the National Association of Manufacturers, said the January leading index report "conclusively demonstrates that economic activity is falling sharply in the first quarter of 1987."

He said business investment spending is being held back by the loss of tax benefits while consumer spending is weakening because of high debt burdens.

The leading index, made up of a dozen forward-pointing economic barometers, is designed to forecast economic activity six to nine months in the future. Three consecutive monthly declines in the index can be the signal of an impending recession.

Irwin Kellner, chief economist at Manufacturers Hanover Trust in New York, cautioned against reading too much in the one-month decline, which he said was primarily a reflection of buying patterns influenced by the changing tax law.

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