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Gay activists rally support for AIDS victims

AUSTIN (AP) — About 100 gay rights activists protested Monday by chanting and clapping in the rotunda of the Capitol building and drawing hundreds of chalk figures on sidewalks to depict Texas victims of AIDS.

The protesters, part of about 15,000 who rallied at the Capitol Sunday, also attended state House and Senate sessions Monday as lawmakers approved resolutions commending people who care for AIDS sufferers.

"We aren't going back into the closet," said William Waybourn, president of the Dallas Gay Alliance. "AIDS has killed too many people."

The Capitol rally also attracted about 40 counter-protesters. Earlier, the gay rights group had unfurled banners from the third floor of the Capitol that were imprinted with chalk-drawing-type figures like those lining the sidewalks and the Great Walk leading to the Capitol south steps.

The group clapped and chanted for several minutes, calling for legislation to help AIDS victims and to stop what they say is discrimination against homosexuals.

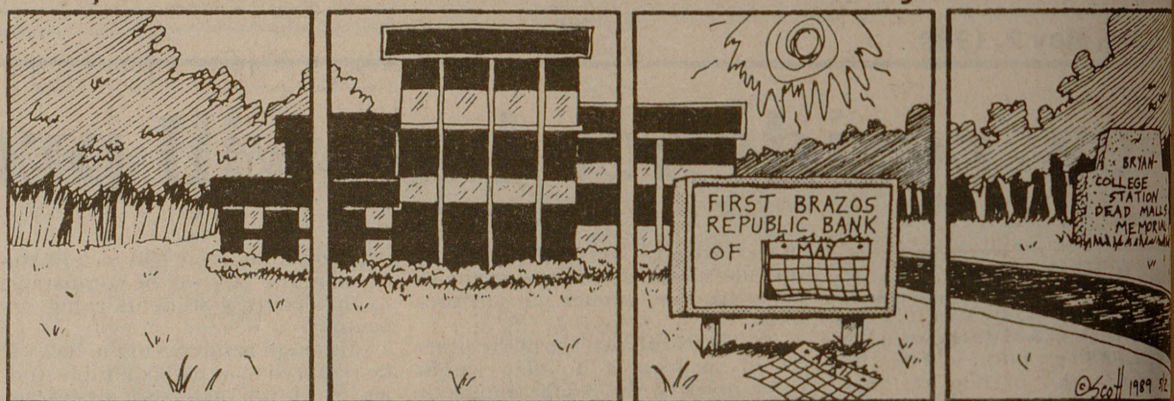
Mark Weaver, Texas leader of the American Family Association, led the counter-protesters, who held signs saying, "You Don't Have To Be Gay."

Weaver said his group believes AIDS is being spread through homosexual acts in adult video shops and bookstores.

The House and Senate approved resolutions commending "educators and care givers on the front lines of the battle against AIDS," or acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

"All of us realize that in this session we have to address the question of AIDS," said Sen. Craig Washington, D-Houston, a member of the legislative task force on AIDS, who sponsored the Senate resolution.

Warped



by Scott McCulla

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Adventures in Cartooning

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Churches entering local political races; candidates respect religious interests

DALLAS (AP) — Religious congregations and their ministers, traditionally aloof from local political races, have increasingly become involved with candidates and issues, officials said.

Political observers have always respected the political clout of Protestant denominations in the Afro-American community.

But more Anglo churches may be realizing the value of some form of political involvement in city races, said political consultant Lisa LeMaster. "You can't knock on doors on Sunday morning, and that's because people are gone," she told the *Dallas Morning News*. "So you go where they are."

Political candidates are visiting more churches during the council election season than during the early 1980s, she said.

But another political consultant, Carol Reed, said that election participation by Anglo religious groups is still small by comparison to their black counterparts.

"In the majority community, you don't see much of that, and you still don't see politicking going on at the churches," said Reed, who heads Dallas Mayor Annette Strauss' campaign.

Catholic officials, in an attempt to gauge grassroots opinions among parishioners, created the Justice and Peace Commission.

When the panel asked parishioners about problems, issues like crime and school dropout rates were mentioned, said Tony Mansueto, commission director for the Catholic Diocese of Dallas.

"As we began to analyze behind that, some of the causes of those problems related to the lack of adequate representation," Mansueto told the newspaper.

He said single-member council districts were

envisioned as a method to provide better representation for Hispanics, along with black poor Anglos and other disenfranchised groups.

Bishop Thomas Tschoepe has urged parishioners in a letter to "work actively" to restructure city council districts so that minorities will have a larger role in Dallas government.

A 14-member charter review committee is now considering reshaping the city charter.

Tschoepe said the current configuration of eight single-member council districts and the at-large seats discriminates against minorities. "said racism is a sin that 'offends the fundamental dignity of the human person.'"

Church officials do not endorse any candidate but "I try to encourage the people to vote, look at the issues, study the issues and vote according to their conscience," said Tschoepe.

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