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Contact:
Sue O'Connell
617-266-6670 x 215
Cell / 617-413-7901
soconnell@baywindows.com

Gay Media Leaders Oppose Ban on Ads for Prescription Drugs Fear Risky, Unintended Consequences for People Living with HIV/AIDS

Boston, MA (April 26, 2007) – Sue O'Connell, President of the National Gay Newspaper Guild, an association of America's top gay and lesbian media, expressed the organization's opposition to advertising provisions in the current Senate drug safety legislation (S. 1082) that is expected for a vote as early as next week.

The Senate bill, if enacted, will require a 2-year ban on advertising for newly approved drugs.

"For people living with illnesses like HIV and AIDS especially, a statutory two year silence on advertising new drug options makes no sense at all," said O'Connell. "Worse, it is likely to betray a patient's knowledge and ability to speak to their physician about new therapies as they emerge. Speeding up the cycle of newer drugs, and advertising their efficacy is a key part of patient and physician education."

As newspaper leaders serving America's LGBT community, the member newspapers of the National Gay Newspaper Guild oppose the provisions also as an unjustified deviation from First Amendment protections for commercial speech. The organization's newspapers instead support changes in the legislation that, instead of banning ads outright, would substitute oversight to monitor advertising and to assure it is truthful and will not mislead consumers.

Tracy Baim, NGNG Board member and publisher of Chicago's Windy City Times, said this issue is "core to our mission serving the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. Dubious restraints on advertising set dangerous precedents, and we firmly believe newspaper readers in our communities deserve more and freer expression."

Sue O'Connell also is publisher of Bay Windows, the weekly newspaper of Boston, Massachusetts, serving the entire community on LGBT news, issues and entertainment. Other leading publications that are members of the National Gay Newspaper Guild (www.nationalgaynewspaperguild.com) include: Windy City Times (Chicago), New York Blade, Frontiers (Los Angeles), Philadelphia Gay News, Between The Lines (Detroit), Dallas Voice, Southern Voice (Atlanta), Bay Area Reporter (San Francisco), Gay & Lesbian Times (San Diego), Washington Blade (Washington DC) and Express Gay News (South Florida). Collectively, the Guild newspapers reach more than one million LGBT readers across America.

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