

COBURN HIV TESTING PROPOSAL APPROVED

From US Rep. Tom Coburn, R-Okla.

■(WASHINGTON) US Rep. Tom Coburn said Wednesday that the lives of infants will be saved because of new HIV testing requirements approved by the US House on Wednesday.

The proposal, written by Coburn, would eventually require states to begin mandatory testing of newborns.

"There were 7,000 infants delivered to mothers who had the AIDS virus last year."

A compromise between House and Senate negotiators will require the mandatory testing if there is not a significant reduction in infants born with HIV.

"This is a caring approach that says public health policy should be about saving the lives of newborns. There were 7,000 infants delivered to mothers who had the AIDS virus last year.

"We now know that we can save the lives of infants whose mothers carry this deadly virus by giving the drug AZT before birth and up to six weeks after birth. We need to do everything possible to identify infants that have AIDS," Coburn said.

Coburn was the author of the House ver-

sion that required mandatory infant testing. The Senate version had only voluntary testing by the mother. A compromise has been reached that supports Coburn's position.

The measure will compel states to enact the Center for Disease Control guidelines re-

garding HIV and pregnant women. If the guidelines fail to make dramatic reductions in the number of AIDS babies within 18

months, states who received Ryan White Care Act funds would be required to enact mandatory HIV testing of newborns.

Coburn, a physician who specializes in obstetrics, has actually delivered babies with AIDS.

"There is nothing more heart-breaking than to deliver a new life that you know will be short-lived. We have an obligation to try to give these infants a chance for life," Coburn said.

There is \$10 million authorized to carry out these provisions. Also part of the Coburn amendment was a provision that requires that spouses of people with HIV are notified.

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sion to serve terms ending June 5, 2001. Senate confirmation is required.

Meribeth Slagell, 45, of Hydro was re-appointed to the Air Quality Advisory Council to serve a term ending June 15, 2003. Senate confirmation is required.

Governor Keating also named Neil Worster, 49, of Norman and reappointed Linda Brown, 53, of Mustang to the Real Estate Appraiser Board to serve terms ending July 1, 2001. Worster succeeds Dorset Story.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FUND REPORT

From the City of Oklahoma City

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The Community Foundation reports the following activity in the Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund as of April 26. Since the last summary on April 19, \$1,092 in contributions were received. Additional expenditures of \$20,073 were made, including \$710 for auto loss, \$1,081 for medical expenses, \$1,092 for housing expenses, \$691 for living expenses, \$2,490 for counseling expenses and \$14,008 for the Memorial Services.

Contributions to the fund now total \$2,197,868. Expenditures total \$1,703,627. Remaining funds total \$494,241.

U.S. DEPT. OF HHS AND THE 1996 BUDGET AGREEMENT

From U.S. Health & Human Services Dept.

■(WASHINGTON) The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services priorities are preserved during negotiations with Congress.

— Congress passed a budget last week that restores \$5.1 billion in 1996 for health and social services, education and training, law enforcement, the environment and other key priorities.

— The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services won substantial gain-backs from the House markup of the appropriations bill last June. Total HHS discretionary spending for programs in the Labor/HHS/Education appropriation is \$29.4 billion. This is \$1.5 billion above the House mark of last June. This final amount represents an overall cut of 1.3 percent from the FY 1995 level for HHS — whereas under the June House mark, the proposed cut was 6.5 percent.

— Add-backs to the HHS budget account for a large percentage of all government add-backs that the Clinton Administration secured during negotiations with Congress.

SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS

— Head Start: The June House mark pro-

vided \$3.397 billion for Head Start. Under the budget agreement, Head Start funding was increased to \$3.570 billion, a 5 percent increase over the House mark.

— Battered Women Shelters: Under the budget agreement, funding for family violence programs and battered women's shelters was increased to \$37.6 million, a 32 percent increase over FY '95 levels.

— LIHEAP: The June House mark eliminated funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Under the bipartisan agreement, LIHEAP will receive \$900 million in FY '96, plus up to \$420 million in emergency funding for FY 1997.

— Healthy Start: The June House mark for this program, designed to stem infant mortality, was \$50 million, more than a 50 percent cut from FY '95 levels. Under the budget agreement, Healthy Start will receive \$93 million, an 86 percent increase from the House mark.

— Ryan White AIDS Programs: The June House mark for Ryan White funding was \$656 million, a full \$67 million less than the President's request. This level would

have severely impacted communities already facing an overwhelming demand for services. Subsequent to the original budget request, the President also proposed a \$52 million amendment to defray costs of new AIDS drugs. As a result of the President's ongoing resolve to protect HIV/AIDS services, the Ryan White funding was increased to \$738.5 million, a 13 percent increase from the initial House mark.

— Substance Abuse Demonstrations: The June House mark proposed \$127.7 million for substance abuse demonstrations, a devastating 72 percent reduction from FY '95 levels. Under the budget agreement, the Administration secured a partial restoration of the funding to \$180 million.

— AHCPR Appropriations: The June House mark for AHCPR was \$65.5 million, representing an 59 percent cut from FY '95 levels. Under the budget agreement, Congress has added back \$59.8 million to bring the FY 96 level to \$125.3, a 91 percent increase from the House mark.