

ISU administration and GLCO in dispute over MU flag display

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by STEVE BOWERS

Daily Asst. University Editor

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A freedom of speech dispute involving the display of an American flag is shaping up in the Memorial Union between the Iowa State administration and the Gay/Lesbian Campus Organization (GLCO).

The flag is dyed blood red and has the statement "102,621 reported AIDS cases as of August 1989" written across the length of it in white letters.

The flag is being displayed in a booth in the basement of the Memorial Union as a part of the GLCO's Awareness Days informational booth.

The flag has been the subject of controversy before at ISU, but the new controversy surrounding its display could end up in court.

Scott Duke, the creator of the flag, was displaying the flag in his office in the Design Center and the Brunnier Gallery, after he created it at the end of last semester.

In an article in the Dec. 15 *Daily* Duke said he created the flag to draw attention to the AIDS issue and to test the flag protection act, which was passed last summer by Congress. At the time of the article no action was taken by the administration.

Now, administration officials say they believe displaying the flag is a violation of an Iowa law that prohibits the display of a desecrated flag.

James Schafer, president of the GLCO, said he will stand up for the right to display the flag even if it means his arrest.

Monica McBride, program director for the GLCO said that if GLCO members are arrested, the national office of the American Civil Liberties Union will assist the GLCO in challenging the Iowa law in court.

Schafer said the flag is a protest of the U.S. government's ignorance of the AIDS crisis.

"The American government has blood on their

hands," Schafer said. "They have been twiddling their thumbs for years while thousands of people have been dying of AIDS."

But administration officials say the flag violates state law and will have to be removed.

Dean of Students Mary Beth Snyder met with Schafer and McBride Tuesday morning and explained the administration's position.

"We looked at pertinent laws, we've talked to the individuals involved and we've viewed the source of the complaint and I've made a determination that there may be a possible violation," Snyder said.

Snyder brought a framed picture of the flag to the meeting and gave the GLCO the option of removing the flag and displaying the picture in its place.

The GLCO decided to continue to display the flag and Snyder called ISU Patrol and Security.

Sgt. Doug Clabaugh of ISU Patrol and Security said that they are investigating the situation and will reach a decision about what to do today.

The flag was brought to the attention of ISU officials by Ronald Schappaugh, EA SC 4 who said he was offended by the display.

"As a child, I was taught that anytime you get the flag dirty, anytime you fold it wrong, anytime you let it drag along the ground, that's desecration of the flag and I don't think that's right," Schappaugh said. "I don't like the idea of seeing the symbol of my country dyed and painted — it has nothing to do with the organization. They could have taken a piece of cardboard and painted their flag on it and I wouldn't have objected at all."

Schafer said he didn't expect the flag to generate so much controversy.

"We were thinking that people would just gloss it over," Schafer said. "People try to ignore (our organization) as much as possible."

However, Schafer said he hopes the controversy surrounding the flag will heighten awareness of the AIDS crisis.