

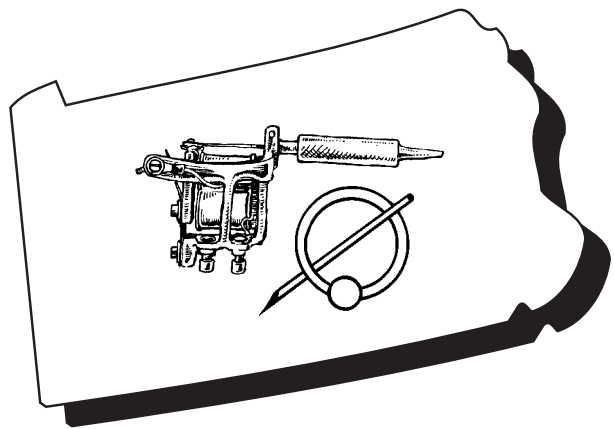
Pennsylvania Coalition of Professional Tattooists & Body Piercers Newsletter

In
Unity
There
Is
Strength!

4th Quarter 1998

I N S I D E !

- THE BILLS ARE DEAD•
- Happy Holidays!•
- Preparing for 1999•
- Coalition in the News•



Coalition Hotline:

412•531•5319

<http://tattoopgh.com>

Editor's Notes

~~House Bill 332~~
~~House Bill 950~~
~~House Bill 2034~~
~~Senate Bill 847~~

Happy Holidays to everyone! I've got some great news - all of the legislation that we've been tracking (House Bill 332, House Bill 950, House Bill 2034 and Senate Bill 847) are all **DEAD!** This year's congressional session ended on

November 30th and with no action on any of this legislation, all of the bills are **DEAD!** Legislation is left to die in committee all of the time, but

I can tell you that Senator Bell's office (which held HB 332) was very impressed by the number of signatures we collected in opposition to HB 332. That, combined with other letters, phone calls and e-mails, and nothing in support of HB 332, lead the Senate committee to simply let the bill **DIE!** Congratulations to everyone on a great job. We've kept tattooing alive in PA for another year.

The only downside to this is that after January 1, 1999, congress is back in session and new legislation could be introduced. The fight is not over by any means, but we've certainly established ourselves with many congressional members and they now know that whatever they do, we'll be watching and waiting!

We've talked for some time about having a meeting on the East side of the state and the organizers of **Forged in Ink** have been kind enough to allow us to host the next Coalition meeting at their convention. The date of the meeting is Sunday, March 28th, at 11AM. The convention is being held at the Valley Forge Holiday Inn in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. Please call me if you need more information.

Bob Stern & The Coalition in the News

Reprinted from *Philadelphia Weekly*, September 16, 1998.

By *Richard Fellingner*

At first, Bob Stern seems like an unlikely political activist. His arms are smothered in tattoos - mostly cats: a lynx, a cougar, his pet Siamese. He wears dark glasses and has an earring in each ear. He has a bushy goatee, pulls his hair back in a ponytail and goes to work in a black T-shirt and sandals.

Think one part biker, two parts aging hippie.

But in fact, Stern, a West Philadelphia native who now practices tattooing at a parlor in the hinterlands of Bucks County, is a soft-spoken student of public policy. A co-founder of the Pennsylvania Coalition of Professional Tattooists & Body Piercers, he has been lobbying for the past year against House Bill 332, a state bill that would place new and sweeping regulations on the tattoo and body piercing industry.

"It's a bad bill," Stern says confidently, much like a veteran lawmaker might critique a bill at a press conference or on the floor of the legislature. "It's unconstitutional.

Introduced last year by a Pittsburgh-area House member, H.B. 332 would require tattooists to pass a written test and open their studios for inspections by state officials. It would also - and this is where tattoo advocates like Stern think the bill goes too far - require tattooists to pay licensing fees and undergo a blood test. In addition, facial tattoos would be outlawed, and anyone with a felony drug conviction would be prohibited from being a tattooist.

Stern objects to the blood test, which would need to be notarized, calling it "a privacy matter."

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Pre-92 Blood Recipients to Get Hepatitis Warning

By *Lauran Neergaard* - *The Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Thousands of people will soon open their mailboxes to find warnings that they may have caught the dangerous liver virus hepatitis C from blood transfusions before 1992. It's the first step in a long-awaited government attack on a hidden epidemic.

Hepatitis C afflicts an estimated 3.9 million Americans, many of whom don't know they're infected because the virus can lurk undetected in their bodies. But now that doctors finally have treatments to offer — a handful of drugs — the government is launching a major campaign to get people tested. First on the list are tens of thousands who received transfusions before in 1992. tests of the blood supply.

Those people shouldn't panic stressed Dr. Louis Katz of the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center, who advised the government on the campaign.

"The message is: Ask your doctor," he said. Many people will just be carriers of the disease, but for those with active hepatitis C, "we now have something to offer."

A few hospitals, including some in Wisconsin and Minnesota, already have begun tracing down at-risk transfusion recipients. But most were awaiting guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, issued yesterday,

so doctors would have the best advice for worried patients.

"Whether you feel sick or not, you should have a blood test for hepatitis C," says an information sheet the American Association of Blood Banks developed to mail to at-risk patients.

Once the hospitals have traced everybody they can, the CDC said yesterday it will launch an advertising campaign next year to urge even more people to be tested.

Hepatitis C, which kills up to 10,000 Americans each year, is the most common blood-borne infection in the United States and the leading reason for liver transplants.

Some people overcome the virus without medical help. But 85 per- cent develop a chronic, simmering infection that they can spread to others. Most will suffer at least some liver damage, especially if they also drink alcohol, and 15 percent will have severe damage.

Sharing intravenous drug needles is the chief source of hepatitis C, causing 60 percent of cases. The CDC recommended testing for:

- Anyone who ever injected drugs — even once as a teen-ager 20 years ago.
- Hemophiliacs who used clot- ting factors before 1987, when they became better purified.
- Recipients of organ transplants or blood transfusions before 1992.

If the intention is to prevent the spread of HIV and other communicable diseases, the blood-test requirement is misguided, says Stern. Tattooing is done with a pin-like needle, not a hypodermic needle which carries fluids. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has no record of HIV transmission through tattooing, says a spokeswoman, who adds that the risk of transmission still exists because can occur.

The fees worry Stern because the bill, as written, does not specify how much they would be, and he's afraid they could be high. That, he fears, would force some tattooists out of business, and force those who remain to pass on the costs to their customers.

As for the proposals to ban facial tattoos and prevent drug convicts from practicing tattooing, Stern simply calls these "bizarre."

If you have a drug conviction, Stern notes with sarcasm, "you can be the mayor of Washington, D.C."

State Rep. Anthony DeLuca, the suburban Pittsburgh Democrat who introduced the bill, says he wanted to regulate tattoo parlors after a controversy erupted in his district over a parlor near a school bus-stop. He says he learned about the lack of regulations for the industry at a community meeting, and later talked to medical professionals who feared communicable diseases could be spread through tattooing.

"We license and we have regulations for barbers, hairdressers and other things, says DeLuca.

The Pennsylvania Coalition of

Professional Tattooists & Body Piercers was formed by Stern and tattooist Tim Azinger after they met at a Statehouse hearing on the issue last year. There are now 75 members out of an estimated 200 tattooists and body piercers statewide.

The coalition meets every few months in Carlisle, mapping out legislative strategy and updating members on developments. They have also collected some 4,000 signatures on petitions opposing H.B. 332, says Stern.

There is a state law already on the books concerning tattooing. But it only prevents someone under 18 from getting a tattoo without parental consent.

Stern suspects part of the uproar in the Statehouse has stemmed from the popularity of body piercing. This is not included in the existing tattoo regulation, so 14- and 15-year-old kids are coming home with pierced tongues and navels.

Stern is open to amending the current law so that body piercing would also be outlawed for minors who do not obtain parental consent. He's also open to some tenets of House Bill 332, like the written exam on health standards. He took one a few years ago and says, "That's the right way to do [a law]."

Stern also likes the way Philadelphia may regulate tattooing and body piercing in the city. The city's Department of Health is considering a set of regulations that mostly concern health and cleanliness standards. These regulations will go into effect if City Council

approves a bill that would permit the Health Department to regulate tattoo parlors, and if the Board of Health approves the Health Department's plan.

As for House Bill 332, it has already passed the House. It was a unanimous vote, 190-0.

But in the Senate, the bill may not even make it to the floor for a vote. It's currently sitting in the Consumer Protection and Licensing Committee, chaired by Delaware County Republican Clarence Bell. Bell seems to be in no hurry to do anything with it, and Stern, who met with a Bell aide in July, is hoping the bill dies there.

"On any controversial subject like that, I will not move [the bill] unless we have a public hearing on it," says Bell, whose committee has been busy this year with hearings on the Y2K computer glitch. And because senators will only be in Harrisburg for 15 more days before the current session ends in November, it's unlikely that Bell's committee will have time for hearings.

Asked why he thought the bill passed the House so easily, Bell replied, "Frankly, I don't think they even knew what was in the bill."

DeLuca says he's willing to consider removing some tenets of the bill — like the medical exam — if constitutional questions generate opposition. But he's not willing to reconsider licensing fees, and he's not willing to abandon his bill. He vowed to introduce it again if it dies in Senate committee this session.

COALITION CLASSIFIEDS

Welcome to the Coalition Classifieds! Ads may be purchased under the following guidelines: Price is \$10 for one (1) issue, \$20 for three (3) issues. Ad size is one (1) column inch which translates to five (5) lines of typeset characters. The Editor reserves the right to edit copy to conform to space constraints. All ad copy should be typed or printed and should be mailed along with payment (check or money order payable to **Pennsylvania Coalition**) to: Pennsylvania Coalition, PO Box 502, Carnegie, PA 15106. Please indicate the number of insertions and include your phone number. Please call for pricing on larger ads. **412-531-5319**

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Pennsylvania Coalition of Professional
Tattooists & Body Piercers
PO Box 502
Carnegie, PA 15106

 **NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING** 

Sunday, March 28th, 1999 @ 11:00 AM

Holiday Inn Valley Forge, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

This meeting will be held in conjunction with the Forged In Ink Tattoo Convention.

Please call if you need directions.

Please RSVP Attendance by Monday, March 22nd, 1999!

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