

## **Funding will remain intact after attempts to block grants for Kinsey study, other sex research**

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The Kinsey Institute will retain funding for a study of mood and sexual behavior despite conservative efforts to block federal grants for the research. Last Thursday, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 212-210 to defeat an amendment proposed by Rep. Patrick J. Toomey, R-Pa., that would have prevented the National Institutes of Health from funding the Kinsey study and three other sex research projects.

The Kinsey project, titled Mechanisms Influencing Sexual Risk Taking, is led by Associate Scientist Erick Janssen and examines the effect of the emotional state on sexual behaviors and decisions. According to the abstract of the study, the consequences of sexual risk-taking include the continued spread of the HIV infection and high rates of sexually transmitted disease.

Jennifer Bass, head of information services at the Kinsey Institute, said the question they are exploring is why people engage in risky sexual behavior even when they know the consequences.

"We can't look at AIDS, teen pregnancy and other social issues without understanding the sexual nature behind them," she said. Bass said that despite the education that exists for these problems, people continue to take risks.

"We want to know how these people are different, what contributes to this tendency and how this information can be used for prevention," she said.

Nancy Lethem, director of development at the Kinsey Institute, said the institute was pleased that the vote turned out in their favor, but was surprised at how close it was and disappointed in some of the legislators involved. She said it is necessary to educate legislators for the future and critical that such research studies go forward.

"The recent vote was only carried by two, so obviously a lot of people really don't understand the research," she said. "Culturally and historically, it's something we don't discuss, and as time goes on it becomes more and more critical to take a deep, serious look at how sexuality affects many aspects of human behavior."

Lethem said she hopes once legislators learn more about sex research, they will not stand in the way of "real science."

"Education is an ongoing part of our plan at the Kinsey Institute," she said. "We do that by writing articles, responding to journalists, making research reports and making every effort to make people understand how sex research is an integral part of human behavior that needs to be dealt with seriously and scientifically."

Bass said she is also concerned legislators, and much of the public, do not understand the nature of sex research.

"We welcome our legislators who are curious about what this research really is to visit the institute and our Web site rather than make an assumption based on the word 'sex,'" she said.

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