

## Gay rights activists criticize Bush health nominee

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By Will Dunham  
Reuters

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Gay rights activists and a top Democratic presidential hopeful criticized President George W. Bush's surgeon general nominee for "anti-gay" writings on Thursday, but the White House defended him as well qualified.

**The Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and other groups opposed Dr. James Holsinger's nomination to be the nation's top doctor, citing a document he wrote in 1991 titled "Pathophysiology of Male Homosexuality."**

In that document written to a United Methodist Church panel studying homosexuality, Holsinger described anal sex as unnatural.

[Sen. Barack Obama](#), an Illinois Democrat, said, "America's top doctor should be a doctor for all Americans, and so I have serious reservations about nominating someone who would inject his own anti-gay ideology into critical decisions about the health and well-being of our nation."

Obama added that "this administration must know that the United States Surgeon General's office is no place for bigotry or ideology that would trump sound science and good judgment."

Surgeons general educate the public about pressing health issues. Some have tackled the hazards of smoking. In nominating him on May 24, Bush said Holsinger would focus on childhood obesity.

"We obviously believe he is a very impressive nominee and he is well qualified to serve in this position," said Emily Lawrimore, a White House spokeswoman.

Lawrimore urged swift Senate confirmation.

### 'SOUND SCIENCE'

Health and Human Services Department spokeswoman Christina Pearson said, "Over 17 years ago, he was asked by a study committee of the United Methodist Church to compile a survey of peer-reviewed scientific data on health issues facing homosexuals, based on information available at the time."

"Since then, the science has deepened with continued research on these issues. Dr. Holsinger remains focused on addressing the health of all in need, including gay and lesbian populations, consistent with sound science and the best medical practices," Pearson said.

In the 1991 document, Holsinger wrote: "The anus and rectum, unlike the vagina contain no natural lubricating function. Thus insertion of unlubricated objects or inadequate dilation of the anus before insertion of a large object can result in tissue laceration," he wrote.

"From the perspective of pathology and pathophysiology, the varied sexual practices of homosexual men have resulted in a diverse and expanded concept of sexually transmitted disease and associated trauma," Holsinger added.

Gay rights groups also faulted Holsinger for opposing a decision to allow a lesbian to serve as an associate pastor in the United Methodist Church, for which he served on a high-ranking judicial council.

Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese said, "It is incredibly troubling to us that this is the caliber of candidate that President Bush would put forward for such an important job."

**Matt Foreman, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director, said by nominating Holsinger, the Bush administration was "throwing red meat to its ravenous anti-gay supporters."**

Holsinger, a cardiologist, has served as Kentucky state health chief and University of Kentucky Medical Center chancellor. He served more than 30 years in the Army Reserve.

Dr. Richard Carmona finished his term as surgeon general last year without a replacement in place.