AIDS testing approved

Baton Rouge, La. (AP) — Couples applying for marriage licenses would have to be tested for the antibody associated with the AIDS virus under a bill approved overwhelmingly by the House on Thursday.

The 95-7 vote sent the bill by Rep. Wilford Carter, D-Lake Charles, to the Senate.

Supporters said the test for the AIDS virus is needed to protect unborn children from the deadly disease.

Rep. Margaret Lowenthal, D-Lake Charles, said she disagreed with those who contended that people wanting to be married were among those least likely to be infected with the AIDS virus.

“Moral have changed and lifestyles have changed. I don’t consider marriage a low-risk group anyone,” she said.

Rep. Evelyn Blackmon, D-West Monroe, said recent figures projected that as many as one in every 30 men had been exposed to the AIDS virus.

“That means over three of the men in this chamber are affected with AIDS,” she said with a laugh.

Rep. Raymond Jetson, D-Baton Rouge, asked Blackmon about the effects on engaged couples who get a false reading.

“My concern is the people that will marry not knowing the other is infected,” she said.

The state could be found liable for the consequences of tests that falsely show a person has been exposed to the virus, said Rep. C.R. Jones, D-New Orleans.

A precedent for such liability was set during the 1970s when the federal government paid damages caused... (See AIDS, page 2)

AIDS

(Continued from page 1)

by an influenza vaccination program, he said.

“The problem with the AIDS test is the large number of false-positive readings it produces,” Jones said.

“You place a large burden on people, perhaps unnecessarily.”

Jetson said there were too many unanswered questions about the cost and the liability of the tests.

“We’re going to drive people underground with mandatory testing on every front,” he said.

Rep. Mike Thompson, R-Lafayette, said acquired immune deficiency syndrom was “perhaps the most serious public health epidemic we’ve ever had because we know so little about it ... I’m not convinced we have the knowledge to handle this bill this year.”