

Koop takes AIDS fight to lawmakers

By Ellen Robinson-Haynes
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SACRAMENTO — U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, in an unprecedented campaign stump against AIDS, brought his grim message to the state capital yesterday, lobbying politicians and state leaders of every stripe.

In private sessions with state leaders, as well as a speech to a rare joint legislative session, Koop sought to convince liberal and conservative private and public citizens that it is their duty to stem the spread of the virulent and fatal disease.

"It's essentially a grim message, and I guess I'm something of a grim courier," Koop said. "My only hope is that every American who hears or reads my message will believe it and do his or her part to stop the spread of AIDS, to protect and save the lives of people at risk, including and especially our unsuspecting young people."

His message focused on the need for aggressive and massive AIDS education of the public, a national resolve to fight discrimination against AIDS patients, a concerted effort by government and private industry to develop AIDS vaccines and drugs, and a commitment by Americans to



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U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, Nobel laureate Dr. David Baltimore, left, and Assemblyman Art Agnos.

observe the tenets of safe sex to stop the spread of the disease.

While he praised the state's expenditure of what he called "social and political capital" on the issue of AIDS to date, Koop challenged Californians to attack the disease, not the people afflicted with it.

"We need to give some thought to the way we will care for the rising toll of AIDS victims," he said.

While praising California's recent decision to initiate AIDS education in the seventh grade, he said in a later news conference

that he would prefer to see it begin as early as kindergarten — a stand that has been criticized by conservatives.

Defending the commitment of both Congress and the Reagan administration to the AIDS battle, Koop said he has yet to discuss AIDS with President Reagan.

"My problem in regard to AIDS didn't begin until he requested the report, and that was just a year ago," he said. "It's unfortunate that just at this time ... that the problems with Iran came to the forefront."