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Congressional clock ticking AIDS money away July 26, 1984

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By Chris Chrystal

WASHINGTON

A Democratic committee chairman criticized the Reagan administration Thursday for failing to act on a Public Health Service recommendation of nearly \$56 million more for AIDS research.

The recommendation is still on the desk of Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret Heckler as final action on two money bills looms in Congress, said Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., chairman of the House Energy subcommittee on health.

"It is under active consideration. It is receiving priority attention," said a spokesman for Mrs. Heckler.

The recommendation of Dr. Edward Brandt Jr., head of the Public Health Service, was issued May 25 and has taken more than two months getting to Mrs. Heckler's attention, Waxman said.

Brandt proposed adding \$20 million for research into AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) this year and \$35.8 million more in 1985.

Waxman criticized the administration for two months of foot-dragging, and said: "Neither the secretary nor anyone else has requested any of the needed money.

"In just 61 days since the Public Health Service finished its work, more than 600 people have died and at least 1,200 more have been diagnosed. It is almost too late for the information to be useful to the Congress," he said.

The Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta reported that as of Monday, 5,300 cases of AIDS have been diagnosed in the United States and 2,427 people have died of it.

The money bill for 1985 that would be increased if the AIDS recommendation is accepted already has passed Congress and the only way additional funds can be approved is with an amendment from the floor.

Additions to the current budget, known as supplements, have passed the House Appropriations Committee, and the Senate panel is expected to act soon.

Recent figures show 1,159 cases of AIDS in California, where the disease is increasing at the most rapid rate in the country, and 2,133 in New York, which has the most cases, the subcommittee's figures show.

The recommended budget increases include a new proposal for \$2.5 million for state and local health department programs to educate high-risk groups about the dangers of AIDS.

