

www.sfgate.com[Return to regular view](#)

Turnout for AIDS Ride suffers from lawsuit, competing ride

OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ, Associated Press Writer

Saturday, June 1, 2002

©2002 Associated Press

URL: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/news/archive/2002/06/01/state2151EDT0159.DTL>

(06-01) 18:51 PDT SAN FRANCISCO (AP) --

Organizers of the California AIDS Ride said Saturday that a competing ride and a lawsuit claiming the event doesn't give enough of its proceeds to research have cut by half the number of participants in this year's trek.

About 1,200 people have signed up for the grueling seven-day ride between San Francisco and Los Angeles along Highway 1, and organizers said they expect about two thirds of those will actually embark Sunday on the 575-mile trek. Last year, the AIDS Ride attracted 2,600 participants.

One reason for the low turnout is that some riders participated in the AIDS/LifeCycle Ride, which took place two weeks ago, according to Craig E. Thompson, an AIDS Ride organizer and executive director of AIDS Project Los Angeles.

"There is this group of ... people who do rides and now we have forced them to make a choice," Thompson said. "We have forced a division, and that's unfortunate."

The Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation organized the LifeCycle Ride after claiming that not enough funds are going toward their programs.

In 2000, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation received 65 cents of every dollar raised. Last year, spokesman Gustavo Suarez said, that went down to about 50 cents. Expenses generally should not exceed 35 cents per dollar, according to the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance.

A lawsuit filed by a Berkeley bicyclist in April made a similar claim that AIDS Ride organizers were taking too much of the money they raised.

Mark Cloutier sued Los Angeles-based Pallotta Teamworks, alleging the AIDS Ride organizer has misrepresented and mismanaged the amount of money distributed to nonprofit agencies for research. Cloutier said Pallotta delivered less than one-third of the \$28 million it received from its 2000 and 2001 Vaccine Rides to charities that conduct AIDS vaccine research.

Still, hundreds riders who came to San Francisco to register Saturday said that while they're aware of the legal problems, they believe in the cause.

"I didn't follow the whole thing," said Jeff Marmelstein of New Jersey. "But it still raises a lot more money than if nothing was done."

Since 1994, 11,000 cyclists have participated in the AIDS Ride, raising \$40 million. This year's ride will benefit 18 AIDS organizations across the state, organizers said.

©2002 Associated Press