

# 600 gays held; cops in gloves

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thousands of homosexual activists protesting a 1986 ruling on a Georgia anti-sodomy law besieged the Supreme Court on Tuesday, and police wearing rubber gloves arrested at least 600 demonstrators.

Court police temporarily sealed entrances to the building after groups of protesters tried to make their way inside. It was the first time in its history that access was closed to the building, said court spokeswoman Toni House.

District of Columbia police spokeswoman Shannon Cockett said 600 of the 2,000 protesters were arrested and charged with violating public space. She said the misdemeanor offense carries penalties of \$100, 60 days in jail, or both.

"The force said it was the largest mass arrest since May Day in 1971," said House, referring to the 1971 anti-war protests in Washington in which more than 7,000 people were detained.

Operations of the court were not interrupted, and the entrances were reopened a half-hour after being sealed, said House.

Demonstrators, some carrying signs with messages such as "Say no to the racist, sexist, anti-gay Supreme Court," began crossing police lines at 9:30 a.m. and continued until shortly after 2 p.m.

District of Columbia and court police, including most of the 65-man force, pushed barricades back to allow demonstrators onto the court plaza. There they were arrested by police wearing rubber gloves.

A spokesman for District of Columbia police said no figures on arrests were available.

The demonstration on the steps leading from the sidewalk to the plaza was free of any major incidents with the exception of some



Associated Press

Gay activists try to block the Supreme Court steps Tuesday.

pushing and shoving. It is illegal to demonstrate on Supreme Court grounds.

"There's no need for them to get hurt and no need for us to get hurt," said K.M. Maddox, a district police officer manning the barricades.

The demonstrators sat down in circles on the court plaza, where they were handcuffed by police. Some protesters walked quietly, escorted by police, to waiting U.S. marshals and city buses. Others were dragged across the plaza.

In the rear of the building, police wrestled five protesters to the

ground after they attempted to cross a police barricade at an entrance, a court employee said.

The protesters were handcuffed and led to waiting buses, said the employee.

The civil disobedience action culminates a week in which homosexuals and their supporters from across the country lobbied Congress and staged a march from the White House to the mall adjacent to the Capitol. Police said the march attracted about 200,000 people, while organizers put the number at 500,000.