Scumbag Humbug

April 1, 2002 By Staff

In an interview with *Newsweek*'s David France (www.msnbc.com) Tom Coburn, MD, Bush's new AIDS advisor, gave tongue to some opinions -- for example, against protected sex with HIVers (see below) -- that may well become federal policy. *POZ* called around to take the AIDS community's pulse (hey, it's still beating!):

"I would not ever recommend to one of my patients to have sex with someone with HIV with a condom. Because I know the statistics. They break. They slip. What we've done is not told the whole truth about condoms."

-- Tom Coburn, Co-Chair, Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS

"I have been with the same partner for 11 years. I'm positive. He's not."

-- H.R., professor

"I cannot believe that a cochair of the Presidential AIDS Council would make such an irresponsible remark. It is not the work of the council to perpetuate confusion and fear. Dr. Coburn needs to remember that vows of abstinence break more easily than latex condoms."

-- Dr. M. Joycelyn Elders, Former U.S. Surgeon General

"Our job in prevention is not to tell people what to do. Our job is to try to tell the truth and let people make their own decisions about risks and benefits."

-- Walt Odets, psychologist, author

"He's right. I tell young gay men not to have anal sex, period. It is risky over the long haul to have anal sex with guys who are positive, even with condoms, and it's a risk I'm not comfortable with, and it's not one I will urge others to take to be PC or to keep from offending positive guys."

-- Dan Savage, sex-advice columnist

"I challenge Coburn to become better educated and informed about HIV. My guess is that this is an unrealistic expectation. Over the course of this administration, we are going to be seriously fucked, with or without a condom."

-- Susan Rodriguez, President and Founder of SMART University

"I've never had a condom break. Coburn must know something I don't. Still, safety is always to be

valued. For the extra-wary, doubling up on condoms might be a good idea -- and not just because it adds to your penile mass."

-- Michael Musto, entertainment writer

"Who gave him these statistics -- the Family Research Council? I have to blame everyone who did not vote against George Bush. These are the words your cynical naïveté have forced you to hear."

-- Emily Carter, author

"As opposed to having sex with someone with HIV without a condom? Lovely. The co-chair of the Presidential AIDS Council is the front man for barebackcity.net."

-- Tim Horn, treatment activist

"Coburn's concern is heartwarming. And stomach-churning. He has set back AIDS-prevention efforts about 15 years."

-- Jay Blotcher, former publicist for AmfAR, ACT UP/New York

"This is the way most gay men I run into feel. Men who've been very interested in me stop calling the minute I tell them I have HIV. So, if I find these attitudes on the streets of Chelsea, I'm not all that bothered that the Bush administration has the same opinions."

-- John Nalley, poet, activist

"I believe Coburn when he says that he 'has not told the whole truth about condoms.' The bottom line is, it is not the role of a doctor, educator or government to tell people whether or not to have sex -- their role is to provide the most accurate information so that people can make these decisions for themselves."

-- Catherine Hanssens, director, AIDS Project, Lambda Legal Defense

"If Coburn really wants to do something about the flaws of condom use, he should get the feds to unfreeze funds for sexually explicit AIDS prevention materials; back research for microbicides; pump more money into vaccine research; and encourage the manufacturers to come up with more reliable prophylactics."

-- Patrick Califia, author, therapist

"I lost my first partner, [fashion designer] Willi Smith, to this disease in 1987. I was hesitant about getting involved with guys who were positive, but I eventually reasoned that this virus had done enough damage to my life that I wasn't going to let it interfere any more than it had to. As far as condoms go, yes, they do break, and I am positive proof of that. But they kept me safe for 20 years."

-- Peter M, writer

“It’s hard to know what was in Coburn’s mind, but he is parroting the ultra-right-wing line about condoms: The goal is (a) total abstinence before marriage (or among homosexuals who are supposed to abstain for life) and (b) opposing any means of separating sexuality from procreation. He’s certainly walking like a duck.”

-- Gloria Steinem, President, Voters for Choice

“My grandmother told me to never have sex with a Republican.”

-- Sarah Schulman, author, activist

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Scumbag-Humbug-825-7505