Website of the Month

April 1, 2004 By Cindra Feuer

Activists of all species are climbing down from their phone trees—to storm the Internet. Last fall, right-wingers got CBS to ditch an unflattering miniseries about Ronald Reagan (its semifictional Gipper said of PWAs, “They that live in sin shall die in sin”) by recruiting an army of e-mailers. And now, AIDS activists have launched the website www.AIDSVote.org to tutor nonfictional presidential candidates—and to broadcast their varying HIV attitudes.

The site’s organizers—Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC), AIDS Foundation Chicago (AFC), Housing Works, Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization for Power (CHAMP), Project Inform, The AIDS Institute, Stop AIDS Project and National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA)—plied each 2004 hopeful with policy questionnaires. “It’s a critical education for candidates and campaign staff,” AFC’s David Munar said. “Answering the questionnaire gets them to learn and think about policy gaps.”

At AIDSVote.org, you’ll weigh their responses against a 19-point domestic and international AIDS-policy blueprint, written with input from AIDS service organizations across the nation. The site won’t endorse any particular contender, preferring that you decide for yourself. And if you still haven’t plugged in to democracy, you’re one click away from voter registration.

Via e-mail, visitors to the site can directly urge each candidate to back the 19-point platform. “If you want to woo a candidate, you have to start early,” Munar said. A growing list of AIDS leaders and more than 100 organizations have endorsed the platform, and some of the groups are linked.

Though gray and fuzzy, the site’s economy-sized font bears info that’s worth the eyestrain. Supporters get emails updating them on election milestones, and for the webmistresses among us, you can download a red-and-black banner for your own site. With AIDSVote, the activist vanguard has called in its reserves. Let your fingers do the marching.

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