Washington, DC, May Host 2012 International AIDS Conference

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The International AIDS Society (IAS) is eyeing Washington, DC, as the location for the next International AIDS Conference, slated for 2012. The final decision would hinge on whether the United States removes a ban that forbids HIV-positive foreigners from entering the country.

Congress removed the travel ban last year as part of its reauthorization of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). But the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has yet to officially lift the 22-year-old restriction.

"The IAS's opposition to the ban is rooted in its history as the convener of the International AIDS Conference," the group's president, Julio Montaner, MD, said in a statement. "A fundamental principle of the IAS is that people living with HIV should be able to participate fully and without restrictions at HIV conferences. Hence, the conference has not been held in the U.S. since 1990 because of the ban on entry of people living with HIV."

The United States remains one of the nine countries in the world that continue to ban foreigners from entry or immigration on the basis of their HIV status. The other countries are: Brunei, China, Oman, Qatar, South Korea, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

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