HIV Leaders Congratulate (and Warn) Joe Biden and Kamala Harris

"We stand ready for the fight and are happy to have an ally in the White House."

November 8, 2020 By Trent Straube

It's official: Joe Biden beat Donald Trump and will become the nation's 46th president. When the announcement was made Saturday afternoon, November 7, that Biden is the president-elect and Kamala Harris the vice president–elect, the news was followed by much dancing in the streets—and by official statements from HIV organizations across the nation. AIDS leaders offered congratulations along with their insights on the challenges that awaited and the goals that are within reach. Below is a roundup of excerpts plus a few social media posts; more will be added as they come in.

View this post on Instagram

We are looking forward to working with President-elect @JoeBiden, Vice President-elect @KamalaHarris

and the incoming administration to continue the momentum toward ending the HIV epidemic in the United States. . . Swipe to read our full statement. . . #AIDSUnited #Election #Election2020 #Election2020Results #BidenHarris2020 #JoeBiden #KamalaHarris #HIV #EndHIV #EndHIVEpidemic #HIVtreatment #HIVawareness #HIVprevention

A post shared by AIDS United (@aidsunited) on Nov 7, 2020 at 10:32am PST

Amida Care Inc., a nonprofit health plan in New York that covers people with complex needs such as those who are HIV positive or are of transgender experience, congratulated Biden and Harris on their historic victory, noting that it "represents a moment of pride for many of us, especially those who see themselves represented in Vice President-elect Harris." Amida Care's CEO and president Doug Wirth added:

> "We have much work to do to heal and recommit to our efforts to advocate for the world we want to live in. Now is the time to bring our diverse voices together to help advance health and equality in our nation.
>
> "Amida Care will continue to work to end the national HIV epidemic, improve access to health care by strengthening Medicaid and building on the Affordable Care Act, dismantle systemic racism, promote LGBTQ and women's rights, and break down barriers so we can all live in a healthier, more just society."

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) offered congratulations and noted that across the globe about 1.7 million people contracted HIV in 2019 and that nearly 690,000 died of AIDS-related illness the same year; what's more, the United States has invested more than a total of $85 billion in the global response to the HIV epidemic through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Winnie Byanyima, the executive director of UNAIDS, stated:

> "UNAIDS looks forward to working with the new United States administration on the challenge of ending AIDS, for which there is still no vaccine and no cure. The colliding pandemics of COVID-19 and HIV are evidence that global solidarity and shared responsibility is needed now more than ever before to ensure that no one is left behind and that medicines, services and solutions can be accessed equitably."

Five organizations that collaborate as the Partnership to End HIV, STDs, & Hepatitis released a joint statement about the election results. The partnership includes AIDS United, NASTAD, the National Coalition of STD Directors, NMAC and The AIDS Institute. As you'll see below, several of these groups also released their own individual statements. The partnership's statement reads in part:

> "President Trump has spent the last four years attacking and undermining the Affordable Care Act (ACA) which provides lifesaving health care to millions of Americans, and a global pandemic continues to devastate our communities.
>
> "We call on Congress and the incoming Biden Administration to not only protect and expand the ACA, but build a strong and robust public health infrastructure that addresses our country's ongoing health emergencies and systemic racism. The science is clear—we can end these epidemics. But to do so, we must create a better system that provides access to comprehensive testing, treatment and prevention services, free of discrimination and stigma.
>
> "We will hold the new administration and Congress accountable and demand that they address racism as the public health crisis that it is. Through our decades of work, we have seen firsthand the devastating effects white supremacy has on health outcomes. President-elect Biden has committed to working toward ending structural racism, and we look forward to working together to strengthen public health and improve outcomes for underserved and at-risk communities by increasing federal funding, ending homelessness, passing comprehensive criminal justice reform, ensuring equal rights and protections for LGBTQ Americans, fighting for racial justice, and addressing the opioid epidemic."

AIDS United's president and CEO Jesse Milan Jr., issued a statement that's posted in full on the group's POZ blog. It reads in part:

> "As I watched results flow in since Tuesday, I have been incredibly struck by just how divided this country is. We have much healing and coalition building to do. Ending the HIV epidemic is a bipartisan effort, and I encourage the incoming Biden administration to focus on it as a way of building support across party lines. With bipartisan support, ending the HIV epidemic is achievable."

To learn how Milan proposes Biden's administration could end the epidemic, read the full blog post.

BREAKING: @JoeBiden has just won the U.S. presidential election. Here's what we think the #POTUS and @KamalaHarris' administration will mean for our work: https://t.co/LrEltsGq4Q pic.twitter.com/SOcsBLzVHW

— Health GAP (@HealthGAP) November 7, 2020

Health GAP, the international advocacy group focused on ensuring all people across the globe have access to HIV meds, describes itself as "clear-eyed" about the struggles ahead but offers steps to take. Here are brief sections from the Health GAP statement:

> "Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have been elected to lead the United States at a moment of crisis. Since Donald Trump's election in 2016, America's worst tendencies domestically and globally have been not just exposed, but thrust into prime time and catalyzed with jet fuel.... Now, the health and lives of people most affected by HIV around the world hinge on whether President-elect Biden will use his time in pursuit of a world where all people living with HIV have access to lifesaving treatment, where health care is a human right, where the U.S. uses its power to confront pharmaceutical company greed, where LGBTQ+ rights and women's rights are protected, and where COVID-19 treatments and vaccines are accessible to all, no matter where they live....
>
> "As candidates, Biden and Harris made bold commitments about how they would work to end pandemics. Their administration must act quickly to turn those commitments into concrete action. We know that if those plans are going to succeed, the incoming Biden-Harris administration must also reject false scarcity and work with Congress to deliver the emergency COVID-19 relief funding that will protect hard-fought gains against HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria....
>
> "A commitment to global health is key for justice and equity—in the U.S. and in the world. Fighting for justice is core to our work, following the lead of HIV+ leaders, Black leaders, queer leaders, women, and young people. A Biden White House gives us a shot, but we are clear-eyed about the fact that it's going to take relentless activism and greater commitment from U.S. officials to achieve global health justice—particularly for the poorest and most marginalized among us."

LGBT advocacy group Human Rights Campaign, which also champions HIV issues, has described the Biden-Harris ticket as "the most pro-equality ticket in history." HRC president Alphonso David notes:

> "The election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris proves once again that equality is a winning issue.... President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris are not just willing to be our allies, but they are true advocates for equality. And they've done it for decades. From Biden's work championing hate crimes protections in the 1980s to Harris performing some of the first marriages for LGBTQ couples after Prop 8 was overturned, these leaders have a clear vision that centers unity over division. A vision where LGBTQ people are protected from discrimination and are afforded the freedoms and rights we should all have. A vision where transgender and gender nonconforming people don't fear for their lives walking down the street. A vision where LGBTQ children are loved, embraced and protected from bullying.

> “But hard work lies ahead. Trump, Pence and anti-equality forces left us with unlawful and regressive policies that have stripped away protections marginalized communities have had for years. In the coming days, the Human Rights Campaign will release our Blueprint for Positive Change, charting the path forward for equality under Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. The future of our democracy and the quest for equality is bright.”

Congratulations President-elect @JoeBiden on your election as the nation’s 46th president. @HIVHep looks forward to...

Posted by HIV and Hepatitis Policy Institute on Saturday, November 7, 2020

The HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute issued a statement from its executive director Carl Schmid. It reads in part:

> “During the campaign, Biden committed to ending HIV by 2025, five years earlier than the Trump administration’s current initiative to end HIV…. The FY2022 budget proposal Biden’s administration will submit to the Congress will be a strong indicator whether current efforts to end HIV will be ramped up.
>
> “HIV+Hep also urges President-elect Biden to declare ending hepatitis a priority. Hepatitis B and C are two infectious diseases that can be easily prevented by vaccination for hepatitis B and cured for hepatitis C.
>
> “Finally, HIV+Hep looks forward to working with President-elect Biden on ensuring all Americans have access to affordable quality healthcare. We remain committed to ensuring the Affordable Healthcare Act (ACA) remains the law of the land and is improved, as necessary, to better meet the needs of patients.”

Lambda Legal, the national nonprofit legal defense team that advocates for LGBT people and people living with HIV, issued a statement from its CEO, Kevin Jennings:

> “We celebrate the election of Vice President Biden and Senator Harris, both of whom have been key supporters of civil rights for LGBTQ people and everybody living with HIV. But, we are also mindful of the hard work ahead. Now that our opponents have lost their control of the

executive branch, we know we will face renewed efforts to litigate away our rights through the judicial branch over the next four years using the Trump-appointed judges that Mitch McConnell has rammed through over the past four years.

"We stand ready for the fight and are happy to have an ally in the White House to fight alongside us. We look forward to working with the Biden-Harris administration to roll-back some of the most egregious efforts of the previous administration to deny and dilute the hard-won rights we have secured since our founding almost 50 years ago."

Congratulations to President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris. ????

The people of this country came out in record numbers for this election and the results are unequivocal. https://t.co/Na9gQeNPYN

— Lambda Legal (@LambdaLegal) November 7, 2020

A joint statement from Latino Commission on AIDS and the Hispanic Health Network expressed not just congratulations but hope that "Biden and his transition team will seek advice and feedback from all sectors in the American society to craft an upcoming administration driven by the urgent public health needs, diverse voices, social and economic priorities that we face as a nation."

Guillermo Chacon, president of the Latino Commission on AIDS and founder of the Hispanic Health Network added:

> "Congratulations to President-elect Joseph Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. It's time to move beyond politics and put science first in order to address the global COVID-19 pandemic and begin protecting and caring for our nation and US Territories. Our hope and desire is that the incoming administration will unify our country for a better, fair and equal future for all. We congratulate the new members of the House and Senate and look forward to advancing public health goals to protect and better build our economy and address our country's urgent needs State by State and US Territories."

NMAC (formerly the National Minority AIDS Council, which organizes the annual U.S. AIDS conference) released the following statement from executive director Paul Kawata:

> “NMAC congratulates President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. We are pleased that the new administration is committed to not only an aggressive approach to end the HIV epidemic but to address issues of systemic racism and inequities that cripple minority communities’ access to health care. We look forward to working with the new administration to more aggressively pursue the plan to end the HIV epidemic by 2030 and to work to end the related epidemics of STDs and hepatitis. We ask this new administration to look through the lens of racial justice and health equity as they develop their priorities for the next four years. And we will continue to remind them of those commitments as we go forward.”

A congratulatory statement from The AIDS Institute also spells out the challenges facing the Biden administration:

> “President-elect Biden will inherit multiple public health crises that must be immediately addressed. To date, over 235,000 people in the US have died from COVID-19, viral hepatitis cases are skyrocketing, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has warned of HIV outbreaks across the nation as public health resources have been diverted and constrained to address COVID-19. There are effective public health programs working to combat the spread of infectious disease, but they have been resource starved for years. President-elect Biden must implement a comprehensive national strategy to get the COVID-19 pandemic under control while rebuilding the public health infrastructure needed to eliminate HIV and viral hepatitis and to keep our nation safe from infectious diseases.

> “The AIDS Institute thanks President-elect Biden for his campaign commitment to aggressively work to end the HIV epidemic in the United States. We look forward to working with his administration and with Congress to build on and expand existing efforts to end HIV. To achieve that lofty goal, significantly greater resources will be required as well as leadership dedicated to ensuring that these plans are responsive to the needs of people living with and at risk of HIV.”

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/hiv-leaders-congratulate-warn-joe-biden-kamala-harris