HIV-Positive Politicians and HIV Advocates

HIV-related insights on the 2016 election.

September 26, 2016 By Benjamin Ryan

Corey Johnson (D)Courtesy of Corey Johnson

Corey Johnson (D)

New York City councilman

In the Times: In 2000, The New York Times profiled his coming out as gay to his high school football team. In 2013, the paper covered him coming out as HIV positive while running for his current seat.

Ending the epidemic: As chair of the city council's health committee, he has been an instrumental force behind the city/state partnership to effectively end New York's epidemic.

With great power: "I feel a real responsibility, and I would say a positive burden that I have to be a fighter and voice for people living with HIV and AIDS. That means everyone of any race, of any

ethnicity, of any sexual orientation or gender identity and, most importantly, of any socioeconomic status."

Greg Harris (D)

Has represented his state's 13th district, which covers part of Chicago, in the Illinois House of Representatives since 2007

Show him the money: As chair of the appropriations committee, he has advocated for adequate funding for HIV prevention and care and for directing those funds toward particular high-risk communities that need it most.

On being out as HIV positive: "I think the most remarkable thing about it is how unremarkable it has been. This is something that I've been public about for many years, and people have taken it in stride."

Bob Poe (D)

Running for the U.S. House of Representatives in Florida's 10th District, which covers part of Orlando

Private life: A broadcaster, entrepreneur and artist, he was behind the launch of the Orlando Magic NBA team.

Public face: He recently came out as HIV positive; if elected, he will be the first openly HIV-positive member of Congress.

Fighting stigma: "One of the things that we experience is that if people don't think they know people who are living with HIV, then it just has this otherness category to it."

Nelson Roman (I)

Holyoke, Massachusetts, city councilor

The phoenix: He was homeless for a time and credits a state-funded grant for getting him housing and back on his feet.

On being openly HIV positive: "Some of my colleagues on the council cringe when I shake their hands."

But some reactions are great: "We just did a vigil for Orlando. KJ Morris, one of the victims, was my friend. A lot of people came up to me and said, 'Nelson, the part where you said, 'I'm gay, I'm Latino, I'm HIV positive, and I'm proud of that,' that changed my whole world."

Scott Wiener (D)

San Francisco board supervisor, representing the Castro, among other neighborhoods. Running for the California State Senate.

The face of PrEP: The HIV-negative advocate came out publicly in 2014 as taking PrEP.

Vanquishing the virus: He has been a key advocate in City Hall for San Francisco's Getting to Zero

campaign to effectively end the city's epidemic.

Looking ahead: "One of my goals is to export locally, nationally and internationally what we've done in San Francisco, creating powerful models connected with care and collapsing infection rates."

Barbara Lee (D)

Has represented Oakland, California, in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1999

Tireless advocate: A former social worker, she has been one of the most important voices in Congress for the HIV cause, coauthoring all the major HIV legislation during her tenure.

Taking herself to task: To promote HIV testing, the HIV-negative advocate has been publicly screened for the virus several times.

Partisan politics: "Conquering HIV and AIDS and getting to an AIDS-free generation by 2030 means we need a Democrat in the White House. We're not going get there with a Republican."

Click here to read more info about HIV and the 2016 election.

Click here to read the party platforms and candidate positions.

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