



POZ Awards 2025 / Best Reason to Keep Acting Up

Read about the nominees, then scroll down to vote for your favorite!

October 1, 2025

Welcome to the 10th Annual POZ Awards, spotlighting the best representatives of HIV and AIDS in media and culture.

The POZ editorial staff selects the nominees, but POZ readers choose the winners.

Eligible nominees were active or were presented, published or produced between October 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025.

Voting is now closed.

BEST REASON TO KEEP ACTING UP

[Inflation & the Economy](#)

As Democratic strategist James Carville once said, “It’s the economy, stupid!” With possible stagflation in America’s future, and tariffs and a pretty rough job market wreaking havoc on American bank accounts, there’s no denying that many people are hurting financially. Of course, as AIDS activists know, there is a direct link between poverty and risk for HIV. While many governmental policies could exacerbate the ongoing AIDS crisis, the current economic downturn could be the one that has farthest-reaching public health consequences.

[Foreign Aid Cuts](#)

When the U.S. government froze foreign aid in January, it put into motion a series of events that would have global consequences for people living with HIV around the globe. With the dissolution of USAID, and the program being brought under the State Department, only foreign assistance that can “advance American interests” will be allowed. And, sadly, with the loss of data, “the lights have gone out,” author Emily Bass recently told [NPR](#). “We don’t know what has happened in the countries where PEPFAR has been supporting programs. We simply don’t know.” Though a lawsuit against the government is currently making its way through the U.S. courts, one [UNAIDS analysis](#)

surmised that, if AIDS assistance programs under USAID are nixed, it would lead to 6.6 million new HIV acquisitions globally, with an additional 4.2 million AIDS-related deaths by 2029.

Trans Rights

Trans people continue to garner right-wing ire for no discernible reason. Statehouses continue to churn out anti-trans legislation barring gender-affirming care, trans athletes are fighting to be able to compete in their own sports divisions and, recently, the conservative right has started to blame trans people for the country's gun violence epidemic, despite the fact that no data support the theory. The assault on trans life is multi-pronged, affecting bodily autonomy, health care decisions and the right to flourish; but, if the onslaught is on many fronts, so too should activists' response.

RFK Jr. and the CDC

As pointed out by many former officials of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is endangering the health of every American. In an open letter written in The New York Times, several former CDC directors wrote that Kennedy's reign at the agency is "unlike anything we had ever seen at the agency and unlike anything our country had ever experienced." Not only has Kennedy gutted the agency at every level, but he has also minimized the importance of vaccines in favor of unproven treatments and replaced experts with people who embrace unscientific outlooks.